

THE USE OF SPEECH ACT IN ONLINE NEWSPAPER: A CASE STUDY OF DETIK.COM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the realization of Speech Acts within online news media, specifically focusing on articles published in the Law and Criminal section of Detik.com, one of Indonesia's most popular news portals. Drawing on the Speech Act Theory introduced by J.L. Austin (1962) and further developed by John Searle (1969), the research explores how language in online journalism functions not merely as a tool for reporting facts, but as a mechanism for performing actions such as persuading readers, framing social issues, and constructing public opinion. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study analyzed utterances, statements, and quotations sourced from legal authorities, victims, and suspects in Detik.com articles published between January and October 2025. The findings indicate that assertive/representative speech acts dominate the reporting in the Law and Criminal section. These acts are primarily employed by authoritative sources, such as the police, to provide factual, objective, and instructive accounts of events, thereby shaping the meaning of the case for the public. Furthermore, the study identified the presence of Commissives (used by officials to commit to future actions or disclosures) and Expressives (used by individuals to convey psychological states like relief or shock). This research fills a gap by demonstrating that Detik.com journalists actively perform linguistic actions that construct public trust and shape moral judgments, highlighting how linguistic choices reflect broader social and legal ideologies within institutional discourse.

Keywords: Illocutionary Force, Law and Criminal Reporting, Online News Discourse, Pragmatics, Speech Act Theory

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti realisasi Tindakan Tutur dalam media berita daring, khususnya berfokus pada artikel yang diterbitkan di bagian Hukum dan Pidana Detik.com, salah satu portal berita terpopuler di Indonesia. Dengan mengacu pada Teori Tindakan Tutur yang diperkenalkan oleh J.L. Austin (1962) dan dikembangkan lebih lanjut oleh John Searle (1969), penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana bahasa dalam jurnalisme daring berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai alat untuk melaporkan fakta, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme untuk melakukan tindakan seperti membujuk pembaca, membingkai isu sosial, dan membangun opini publik. Menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis ujaran, pernyataan, dan kutipan yang bersumber dari otoritas hukum, korban, dan tersangka dalam artikel Detik.com yang diterbitkan antara Januari dan Oktober 2025. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tindakan tutur

asertif/representatif mendominasi pelaporan di bagian Hukum dan Pidana. Tindakan ini terutama digunakan oleh sumber-sumber otoritatif, seperti polisi, untuk memberikan laporan peristiwa yang faktual, objektif, dan instruktif, sehingga membentuk makna kasus bagi publik. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi adanya Komisif (digunakan oleh pejabat untuk berkomitmen pada tindakan atau pengungkapan di masa mendatang) dan Ekspresif (digunakan oleh individu untuk menyampaikan keadaan psikologis seperti lega atau terkejut). Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan dengan menunjukkan bahwa jurnalis Detik.com secara aktif melakukan tindakan linguistik yang membangun kepercayaan publik dan membentuk penilaian moral, menyoroti bagaimana pilihan linguistik mencerminkan ideologi sosial dan hukum yang lebih luas dalam wacana institusional.

Kata kunci: Kekuatan Ilokusi, Hukum dan Pelaporan Kriminal, Wacana Berita Online, Pragmatik, Teori Tindakan Tutar

A. Introduction

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a way of performing actions. Through words, people make promises, give orders, express feelings, and influence others. This idea is central to Speech Act Theory, introduced by J.L. Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin explained that when we speak, we are not just saying something, we are *doing* something. Later, John Searle (1969) developed this idea further and categorized speech acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. These categories highlight that every utterance carries a purpose or intention (the *illocutionary act*) and has an effect on the listener (the *perlocutionary act*).

In today's digital era, the use of language has expanded far beyond face-to-face interactions. Online communication, particularly through digital media and online newspapers, plays a major role in shaping how information and opinions are shared. In this context, language does more than report facts, it performs actions such as persuading readers, framing

social issues, or constructing public opinion. As Fairclough (1995) points out, media discourse is never neutral; it always involves choices that reflect certain perspectives and intentions. Therefore, understanding how speech acts work in online journalism helps reveal the hidden meanings, intentions, and effects behind the words used by news writers.

Detik.com, one of Indonesia's most popular news portals, offers a rich site for examining how language is used to perform various communicative functions. The Law and Criminal section of *Detik.com* provides a rich source of linguistic and pragmatic data. News articles in this section often report sensitive cases such as corruption, domestic violence, murder, fraud, and court proceedings. These reports are not only informative but also perform a variety of speech acts that influence how readers perceive justice, morality, and authority. For instance, headlines such as "*Polisi Tangkap Pelaku Pembunuhan di Depok*" (Police Arrest Murder Suspect in Depok) or "*Jaksa Tuntut Hukuman Mati untuk Tersangka Narkoba*"

(Prosecutor Demands Death Penalty for Drug Suspect) do more than deliver facts. They assert, declare, and evaluate simultaneously. The verbs “tangkap” (arrest) and “tuntut” (demand) carry an *illocutionary force* that signals authority and finality, reflecting institutional power through language.

Previous studies on speech acts have mostly focused on spoken communication or printed newspapers (Yule, 1996; Mey, 2001; Cutting, 2002). Wiana and Khairani (2020) examined speech acts in *Waspada* newspaper headlines and found that locutionary and representative acts dominated, showing that even short headline texts can perform powerful communicative functions. Similarly, Helvira et al. (2025) analyzed *Tribunnews* online articles and identified a predominance of representative and directive acts, which reflected how online journalists not only inform but also influence readers through linguistic choices. On an international scale, Hidayoza and Muslim (2024) explored BBC News headlines during the Palestine–Israel conflict, demonstrating that assertive speech acts are often used to construct specific frames and shape public perception. These studies collectively reveal that news language carries pragmatic intentions that go beyond factual reporting.

Despite these contributions, there remains a gap in studying how online news platforms like Detik.com use speech acts to construct legal and moral narratives. Most previous studies have treated online news as a source of factual reporting rather than a form of action-oriented communication. Therefore, this study

aims to fill that gap by analyzing Detik.com’s Law and Criminal section through the lens of speech act theory.

In this sense, *Detik.com* journalists are not only narrating events but also performing linguistic actions that construct public trust, frame social issues, and shape moral judgments. These pragmatic actions align with Austin’s (1962) idea of language as action and Searle’s (1969) classification of illocutionary acts. The choice of words and sentence structures often indicates specific communicative purposes, whether to inform, warn, justify, or persuade. Furthermore, online readers engage with this content in real time, often through comments or social media sharing, which amplifies the perlocutionary effects (the emotional and behavioral impact that news language can trigger). Hence, the *Law and Criminal* section offers valuable insight into how speech acts operate within institutional discourse and how linguistic choices can reflect broader social and legal ideologies. Therefore, this study seeks to address the problem of how speech acts are realized in *Detik.com*’s Law and Criminal articles. Specifically, what types of speech acts are used, how they are employed, and for what communicative purposes they serve in the context of Indonesian online news.

B. Literature Review

Speech Acts Theory

Language is part in human communication. People use language not only to say something but also to do something. In linguistics, this is called “Speech acts”. Between 1952 and 1954, J. L. Austin gave a series of lectures at Oxford University introducing the

Speech Act Theory (Alfge & Mohammadzadeh, 2021). In Austin views, speech acts are utterances that convey meaning and may push individuals to take specified actions. Austin distinguished between constative and performative utterances in that the former reflects the process or status of things, but the latter tries to accomplish an action and is not truth-evaluable (Chen et al., 2023). Widodo (2016) cited (Wiana & Khairani, 2020) define speech acts are the smallest units of linguistic communication and can include statements, questions, orders, and others.

Speech acts theory developed by J.R Searle (1969). For him, a speech act is a language action that allows a speaker to start interacting not only with himself/herself, but also with other individuals around him/her (Tsoumou, 2020). Speech acts focus on a conversation's semantics rather than its linguistic, literal meaning (Searle, 1999; Argyris et al., 2021). According to (Nasser, 2022) speech acts is a study which deals with how to do things with words.

Based on the definitions above, speech acts do not convey literal meaning of words, but also express the speaker's intentions, such as asking, ordering, promising, refusing, etc., which may influence the listener.

Types of Speech Acts

Speech acts can be classified in different ways. J.L Austin regarded as a pioneer in developing a fresh-start theory of speech acts and establishing three influential components of an utterance, there are locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary act (Simon & Dejica-Cartis, 2015; Tsoumou, 2020).

- a. A locutionary act, which is the study of meaning and requires the uttering of a sentence with a specific sense and reference (i.e. the study of meaning).
- b. An illocutionary act is a function or intended act performed through saying it, which assumed the making of a request, statement, promise, offer, asking a question, issuing an order, etc. in uttering a sentence;
- c. A perlocutionary act that the sentence will have an impact on the addressee or recipients, depending on the specific conditions of the utterance (i.e., all the planned and unintentional effects/consequences caused by a particular speech in a particular scenario).

After criticizing Austin's (1962) classification and criteria, Searle (1969) developed guidelines for accurate classification of speech acts (Ramadhani Nyagani & Musa, 2022). Searle's framework of five types of illocutionary speech acts (Heidari et al., 2020; Suon et al., 2020) namely representatives, directives, commissive, expressives and declarations. Representatives to state or describe something true or false by assertions, conclusions and descriptions, speakers try to represent the realities of the world based on their own beliefs. For example, when someone makes a statement "*all swans are white*", they are making an assertion about physical entity based their own personal experiences. Representative speech often involves the use of verbs like assert, define, remind, tell, deny, correct, state, guess, predict, report, describe,

inform, insist, assure, agree, and claim.

Directive whereby to make someone do something. For example, “*Close the window!*”, the utterance reflects the speaker’s desire to close the window. The types of directives are begging, requesting, suggesting, recommending, demanding, permitting, etc. Otherwise, commissives are speech acts that commit the speaker to a future action, like promising, threatening, offering, refusing, etc. For instance, a directive like “I’ll help you!”, represents the speaker’s promise about a possible action in the future.

In addition, expressives are utterance that indicate a psychological condition, like express feelings or emotions. This speech acts like thanking, apologizing, greeting and congratulating reflect the speaker’s feeling about themselves or the world. For example, “I am sorry, I come late”, the speaker attempts to apologize to the listener. Lastly, declarations are a type of speech act that can change reality through words, but their success depends on the speaker’s recognized authority within a social context. Understanding such acts requires awareness of the sociocultural norms that govern communication. Therefore, differences between a speaker’s native language (L1) and the target language (L2) can hinder EFL learners’ comprehension of meaning in real-life interactions, since effective interpretation depends on context, social roles, and cultural conventions.

Speech acts can be found in daily life and written text, such as an online newspaper. Critical discourse analysts claim that news media

professionals can strategically use specific linguistic elements to reveal some hidden meanings in news media articles without having to explicitly stating them (Fowler, 1979; Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1989; Biadi & Zih, 2021). According to Meldiana et al. (2021) news is written to provide accurate information about an incident or occurrence to a larger audience (Alimah & Prayitno, 2025). The news media creates a sense-making narrative by shaping, reflecting, and reinforcing cultural ideas and experiences (Selman et al., 2021). While Jacob (1996) in (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021) the newspaper covers all events happening in the world and presents them as reality recording. Therefore, it is said that the newspaper is providing information about an event in the world or an incident to a wider audience and creating a narrative that shapes, reflects, and strengthens cultural ideas and experiences.

One of Indonesia’s most well-known internet news sources is Detik.com. The usage of speech acts in newspaper like Detik.com allows for the pragmatic analysis of a wide range of language phenomenon. The language style chosen by the journalist or news writer has a significant impact on building reality and shaping the reader’s perspective of the event being reported. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that the language used in the newspaper’s headlines and body material represents the news editors’ and journalists’ thoughts and attitudes toward the events reported in the news (Suon et al., 2020).

C. Methodology

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design

because the purpose of the study was to identify and analyze speech acts used in online newspaper articles. According to (Creswell, 2014) qualitative research is used to investigate and understand phenomena in depth, especially related to language use in social contexts. The qualitative approach allowed the researchers to interpret language used based on meaning, intention, and communicative function with the articles.

The data in this research were taken from online newspaper that reported law and criminal cases. The articles were sourced from reputable Indonesian online news platform such as Detik.com. The platform was chosen because they frequently published real-time criminal news and were widely accessed by the public.

The data consisted of sentences and utterances in the newspaper that contained speech acts. The data collection procedure was conducted as follows,

1. Selecting articles related to law and criminal cases published between January until October of 2025 was identified and collected.
2. The articles contained direct reported speech, statements, or quotations from legal authorities, from police, judges, lawyer, victims, or suspects were selected.
3. Relevant sentences containing speech acts were identified and extracted from the articles, together with information about their sources, speakers and contexts.

The data were analyzed using the speech acts theory proposed by Austin (1962) and further developed

by Searle (1976). The analytical procedure included identifying Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Acts. Then, classifying illocutionary types. Finally, interpreting findings. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the analysis, the researcher applied peer discussion which is consulting academic advisor to clarify ambiguous instances.

Finding and Discussion

The researchers took five news from detik.com in law and criminal context. For the first data in this research were taken from the news entitled “Terungkapnya Pemicu Seorang Pemuda di Bekasi yang Tega Menganiaya Ibunya Sendiri Hingga Terjatuh”, the meaning in English is “Revealed His Mother's Trigger to the point of Falling” Published by Detik.com on 22 of June 2025.



The analysis focused on the speech acts uttered by the police as an authoritative source in conveying information to the public. In this news, the police convey the chronology and triggers for the assault, as seen in the quote below:

*“Pelaku memukul
korban dikarenakan
korban tidak bisa
menuruti kemauan
pelaku yang meminta
korban untuk
meminjam motor*

kepada tetangga." kata Kasat Reskrim Polres Metro Bekasi Kota Kopol Binsar Hatorangan Sianturi saat dihubungi, Minggu (22/6/2025).

Commissioner Binsar Hatorangan Sianturi, Head of Bekasi City Metro Police's Criminal Investigation Unit, stated, "The perpetrator hit the victim because the victim could not comply with the perpetrator's wishes, who asked the victim to borrow a motorbike from their neighbour". The researchers analyze based on Austin's Theory the sentence above which is locutionary, identifies the victim rejection of perpetrator's request as the reason for the violent act. The illocutionary, informs the public of the case's motivation. Because it presents a true account of events, it is classified as an assertive/representatives speech act. Perlocutionary this sentence, gives the reader the impression that the offender's acts were the consequence of a struggle between a request and a rejection.

"The perpetrator hit the victim because the victim could not comply with the perpetrator's wishes...", this is an assertive/representatives speech act because the speaker (the Head of Criminal Investigation) explains the background of the incident. It is the facts of the incident based on the investigation's findings. According to Searle's theory, an assertive/representatives speech act is one that states the truth, provides information, reports, or describes a situation.

Another statement from the Head of Bekasi City Metro Police's Criminal Investigation Unit, are:

"Motor tersebut akan digunakan pelaku untuk bermain atau keluar dari rumah. Ibunya nggak enak pinjam motor tetangga melulu. Lalu menyuruh pelaku pakai sepeda yang ada," ujarnya.

The perpetrator planned to use the motorbike to play or leave from the home. His mother did not feel comfortable constantly borrowing a neighbour's motorcycle. So, she told him to use the bike she had," he explained. In Austin' theory, researches analyze the locutionary in this statement describes the perpetrator's plan to use the motorcycle and the mother's refusal to do so. An illocutionary, the speaker intends to convey more information about the dynamics of the family quarrel before the assault. This demonstrates that this statement is assertive/representatives, as it is intended to explain and clarify facts to the media. The perlocutionary, the reader realizes the emotional and social context of the violence.

"The perpetrator plans to use the motorcycle to play... ", this is an assertive/representatives speech act because the speaker (the Head of Criminal Investigation) explains the perpetrator's intentions, but still provides factual information.

"His mother does not feel comfortable borrowing the neighbor's motorcycle...", this is an assertive/representatives speech act because the speaker (the Head

of Criminal Investigation) explains what the perpetrator's mother reasons. This is a description of a social situation, not a command or the speaker's personal feelings.

Researchers analyzed the two explanations from the Head of Bekasi City Metro Police's Criminal Investigation Unit above. Both data points indicate that assertive speech acts dominate the information delivery in this crime news report. This is consistent with the police institution's role as the authority that issues official reports to the public. Assertive/representative speech acts shape the meaning of the case in a factual, objective, and instructive manner, allowing the public to grasp the reason and sequence of events.

detikJabar > Hukum Dan Kriminal

Jabar Sepekan

'Jalan Pintas' yang Membawa Pria Bandung Barat ke Penjara

Tim detikJabar - detikJabar

Minggu, 09 Feb 2025 19:00 WIB

During a press conference at Mapolres Cimahi, E stated, *"Istri lagi hamil, butuh uang buat lahiran. Ya kepikiran aja seperti itu, soalnya di sekolah adik saya juga ada barang elektroniknya"* ("My wife is pregnant and needs money for the delivery. I just thought of that because there are also electronic goods at my sister's school"). In this utterance, E confessed that his criminal act emerged spontaneously, driven by an urgent financial need to cover his wife's impending childbirth expenses.

From the perspective of Austin's Speech Act Theory, the utterance functions primarily as an Illocutionary

Act of *explanation and justification*, in which E seeks to rationalize his wrongdoing by presenting situational motives. According to Searle's classification, this statement falls under the Representative (Assertive) category, as E is making factual assertions that he believes to be true. He asserts the reality of his wife's pregnancy and the financial necessity it entails (*"Istri lagi hamil, butuh uang buat lahiran"*) and acknowledges the spontaneous nature of his decision (*"Ya kepikiran aja seperti itu"*). The illocutionary force, therefore, lies in E's attempt to represent his circumstances as genuine and to justify his behavior within a framework of personal necessity rather than criminal intent.

detikBali > Hukum Dan Kriminal

Regional

Kisah Bilqis: Balita Makassar yang Diculik, Dijual, hingga Ditemukan di Jambi

Tim detikSulsel - detikBali

Minggu, 09 Nov 2025 19:29 WIB

Based on Austin and Searle's Speech Act Theory, the statements from the Detik.com news about the missing child Bilqis can be grouped by their purpose, or illocutionary force. The main types found are Assertives, Commissives, and Expressives. In this news story, several utterances can be categorized as Assertives. The reporter states a factual event: *"Balita bernama Bilqis (4) yang dilaporkan hilang... akhirnya ditemukan."* Assertives are speech acts used to state facts or provide information. The speaker uses this type of act to express something believed to be true about a situation or event.

Commissives are found in the statements made by the police.

Kapolrestabes Makassar, Kombes Arya Perdana, shows a commitment to future disclosure when he says: “*Inshaallah akan kita release di hari Senin.*” He further adds: “*Termasuk nanti detail pengungkapannya dan berapa tersangkanya akan kita sampaikan.*” These statements show the speaker’s intention to take responsibility and to share future updates about the investigation.

Expressives are speech acts used to express the speaker’s feelings, attitudes, or emotional reactions. Bilqis’s father expressed relief and gratitude after hearing the news about his daughter’s safety, saying: “*Alhamdulillah kami sudah dapat informasi,*” and “*Alhamdulillah dalam keadaan sehat, selamat.*” In contrast, the suspect, Ana, expressed surprise upon learning that the child had been sold again, saying: “*Saya juga kaget.*” These utterances reveal the emotional responses of both individuals (happiness and relief from the father, and shock from the suspect) showing how language reflects personal emotions within the event.

D. Conclusion

This study examined speech acts in Detik.com’s law and criminal news using Austin and Searle’s Speech Act Theory. The analysis shows that three main types of speech acts (Assertives, Commissive, and Expressives) are dominant in the news discourse. Assertive acts are most frequent, as they function to report facts, explain events, and describe the motives of those involved. Commissive acts are used mainly by law enforcement to express commitments to future actions, such as revealing investigation results. Expressive acts appear in statements

that convey emotion, such as gratitude, relief, or regret, reflecting the human side of legal news. Overall, the findings indicate that Detik.com’s law and criminal reports are not only informative but also performative: they use language to shape truth, express feelings, and establish authority. This highlights how language in online journalism functions as a tool to construct social meaning and influence public perception of justice and morality.

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