

## FORENSIC LINGUISTICS STUDY: ONLINE HATE SPEECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA INSTAGRAM (INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT)

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### INFO ARTIKEL

Diterima: 02 Februari 2026  
 Direvisi: 21 Februari 2026  
 Disetujui: 14 Maret 2026  
 Tersedia Daring: 30 April 2026

### Kata Kunci:

Instagram; Linguistik Forensik, Tindakan Wacana; Tindakan Ilokusi; Ucapan Kebencian

### ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya penggunaan media sosial sebagai ruang komunikasi publik telah menyebabkan munculnya ujaran kebencian secara luas, khususnya di kolom komentar Instagram yang berkaitan dengan isu-isu pemerintah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manifestasi ujaran kebencian melalui tindakan ilokusi di akun Instagram @presidenrepublikindonesiadan@kemensetneg\_ri, mengklasifikasikan bentuknya berdasarkan Surat Edaran Kepala Kepolisian Nasional No. SE/06/X/2015, dan mengidentifikasi jenis yang paling dominan yang ditemukan dalam data. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif yang didukung oleh analisis kuantitatif. Data terdiri dari 200 komentar Instagram yang dikumpulkan dari unggahan yang berkaitan dengan kebijakan publik dan kegiatan pemerintah. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan pragmatis berdasarkan tindakan ilokusi, khususnya tindakan ekspresif, direktif, dan asertif seperti yang dikemukakan oleh John Searle, dan selanjutnya diklasifikasikan ke dalam kategori ujaran kebencian seperti penghinaan, pencemaran nama baik, dan provokasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindakan ujaran ekspresif adalah yang paling dominan, menunjukkan bahwa pengguna terutama mengekspresikan emosi negatif seperti kemarahan, kekecewaan, dan sarkasme. Dalam hal klasifikasi ujaran kebencian, penghinaan muncul sebagai kategori yang paling sering, diikuti oleh pencemaran nama baik dan provokasi. Meskipun sebagian besar ujaran tidak sepenuhnya memenuhi kriteria hukum berdasarkan Undang-Undang ITE, ujaran tersebut tetap berpotensi menimbulkan dampak negatif dalam komunikasi digital. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa batasan antara kritik dan ujaran kebencian masih belum jelas di kalangan pengguna media sosial dan menyoroti pentingnya memahami penggunaan bahasa dalam konteks digital.

### ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Instagram; Forensic Linguistics, Speech Act; Illocutionary Act; Hate Speech

*The increasing use of social media as a public communication space has led to the widespread emergence of hate speech, particularly in Instagram comment sections related to government issues. This research aims to analyze manifestations of hate speech through illocutionary acts on the Instagram accounts @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemensetneg\_ri, classify their forms based on the National Police Chief's Circular Letter No. SE/06/X/2015, and identify the most dominant types found in the data. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach supported by quantitative analysis. The data consists of 200 Instagram comments collected from posts related to public policy and government activities. Analysis was conducted using a pragmatic approach based on illocutionary acts, specifically expressive, directive, and assertive acts as proposed by John Searle, and further classified into categories of hate*

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*speech such as insults, defamation, and provocation. The results of the research indicate that expressive speech acts are the most dominant, suggesting that users primarily express negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, and sarcasm. In terms of hate speech classification, insults emerged as the most frequent category, followed by defamation and provocation. Although most of the statements do not fully meet the legal criteria under the ITE Law, they still have the potential to cause negative effects in digital communication. These findings indicate that the line between criticism and hate speech remains unclear among social media users and highlight the importance of understanding language use in a digital context.*

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## 1. Introduction

The development of digital technology has changed the way people communicate in everyday life. In the past, communication mostly happened through direct face-to-face interaction, where people could understand meaning not only from spoken words but also from gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Today, communication has increasingly moved into digital platforms because of the rapid growth of information technology. Kurniawati, Kencana, Solehah, Saputra, and Siddiq (2024) describe this change as a transformation in communication patterns, where people now interact and exchange information through technology-based media.

This transformation has created a new social environment known as digital space. In this environment, people are able to communicate, express opinions, and respond to issues without meeting each other directly. One of the most common examples of this development is social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that social media refers to internet-based applications that allow users to create and share content. Because of this, social media is not only used for communication but has also become a public space where people freely discuss various topics.

Compared to face-to-face communication, interaction on social media has different characteristics. Conversations happen openly and can involve many users at the same time. In addition, comments and opinions can spread very quickly because there is little filtering of user-generated content. According to Salsabila and Zuhria (2025), social media algorithms often prioritize controversial content since it attracts more engagement from users. As a result, provocative information tends to spread faster than neutral discussions.

In Indonesia, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms used by the public. Through the comment feature, users can directly express their thoughts, emotions, criticism, or judgments about certain issues and public figures. Androutsopoulos (2014) argues that language used in digital communication often reflects the attitudes and perspectives of its users. However, many people express their opinions online without considering the possible impact of their words, which sometimes leads to offensive or harmful comments.

This situation has contributed to the growing phenomenon of hate speech on social media. Hate speech can appear in many forms, such as insults, provocation, defamation, incitement, and hostile expressions directed toward individuals, groups, or government institutions. In many cases, comment sections on official government Instagram accounts become places where users express anger and frustration through aggressive language. This phenomenon shows that language on social media is not only used for communication, but can also become a form of verbal attack that may create social and legal consequences.

Fortuna and Nunes (2019) explain that hate speech is closely related to the speaker's intention expressed through language. Harahap and Siregar (2022) also state that hate speech should not simply be seen as rude language because it can function as verbal violence that harms others psychologically and socially. Brown (2015) further explains that hate speech is sometimes delivered indirectly, which means that understanding the context of an utterance is important in identifying its meaning. In Indonesia, hate speech is regulated through the National Police Chief's Circular Letter No. SE/06/X/2015 and the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law).

To analyze this issue, this study uses a forensic linguistics approach. Olsson (2008) explains that language can be used as evidence in legal contexts because every utterance contains meaning and intention. Similarly, Coulthard and Johnson (2007) define forensic linguistics as the application of linguistic knowledge in legal settings. Gibbons (2003) also argues that language used in communication, including on social media, can be examined as evidence because it may contain certain intentions and effects. In addition, Correa (2013) states that linguistic analysis is important to avoid misunderstanding in legal interpretation, while Ajeng Puspita et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of analyzing language to identify speakers' intentions in cases related to defamation and hate speech.

This research is also related to pragmatics, which studies meaning based on context and language use. Yule (1996) states that pragmatics focuses on the meaning intended by the speaker, while Levinson (1983) highlights the importance of context in understanding utterances. Mey (2001) adds that language use is closely connected to social conditions, and Purba (2017) explains that pragmatics examines the relationship between language and its users. Therefore, the meaning of an utterance is influenced not only by its linguistic form but also by context, intention, and social situation.

In addition, this study applies speech act theory. Austin (1962) divides speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Searle (1969; 1979) later developed the theory by classifying illocutionary acts into several categories, including assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts. Levinson (1983) argues that this classification is important for understanding the speaker's intention in communication. In social media interactions, hate speech often appears in the form of expressive and directive speech acts containing insults, mockery, or provocation (Yule, 1996; Cutting, 2002). In digital communication, language is not only a form of text but also a social action that may have real impacts on society and even legal consequences (Harahap & Siregar, 2022; Wirahyuda & Harahap, 2024; Komara et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have examined hate speech on social media. Amalia (2024) analyzed hate speech in Instagram comments using a pragmatic perspective, while Harahap and Siregar (2022) focused on forensic linguistic analysis. Komara, Hasani, and Firmansyah (2025) also discussed hate speech in the comment sections of public figures' Instagram accounts by examining linguistic forms and legal aspects. Although those studies provide valuable contributions, most of them focus only on general hate speech or comments directed at individual public figures.

However, studies that specifically examine hate speech in official government Instagram accounts by combining illocutionary speech act analysis, hate speech classification, and legal perspectives based on the Indonesian ITE Law are still limited. Previous research also rarely discusses how hate speech is expressed linguistically in public responses toward government institutions in digital communication. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing hate speech comments on the Instagram accounts @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemasetneg\_ri using pragmatic and forensic linguistic approaches.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts and the forms of hate speech found in the Instagram comment sections of @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemasetneg\_ri. This research is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatics and forensic linguistics studies, especially in the discussion of hate speech in digital communication, and also to increase public awareness about the responsible use of language on social media.

## 2. Method

This study applied a descriptive qualitative method because the research focused on understanding the meaning, intention, and context behind hate speech comments found on social media. The data were taken from comments posted on two official Indonesian government Instagram accounts, namely @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemasetneg\_ri. The researcher selected comments uploaded between December 2025 and February 2026 because during this period many public discussions and reactions toward government issues appeared in the comment sections. In this research, the researcher acted as the main instrument in identifying, interpreting, and classifying the data. To make the data easier to organize, each comment was given a specific code such as D1/PR or D1/KS, where "D" refers to the data number, "PR" refers to @presidenrepublikindonesia, and "KS" refers to @kemasetneg\_ri.

The data were collected through documentation techniques by taking screenshots of comments containing indications of hate speech. This study used purposive sampling because the researcher only selected comments that were relevant to the research objectives. A total of 200 comments were chosen and all usernames were anonymized to maintain research ethics and protect users' privacy. After the data had been collected, the comments were transcribed and grouped based on their linguistic characteristics. The analysis focused on identifying the types of illocutionary speech acts and the forms of hate speech appearing in the comments.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In analyzing the data, the researcher used Searle’s (1979) theory of illocutionary acts to identify the communicative intentions behind each comment. Furthermore, the comments were classified into hate speech categories based on the National Police Chief Circular No. SE/06/X/2015 and then connected to the legal perspective of the ITE Law No. 19 of 2016. To support the findings, simple descriptive statistics were also used to calculate the frequency and percentage of the dominant speech act types and hate speech categories found in the data.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### Result

This research analyzed 200 comments purposively selected from the government’s official Instagram accounts, namely @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemensetneg\_ri. In presenting the findings, each data point was systematically coded as D[No]/[Source], where the symbol “D” refers to the data, the number indicates the comment’s sequence, and the code PR refers to the President’s account while KS refers to the ministry’s account. The analysis focuses on two main aspects: types of illocutionary acts based on Searle’s theoretical framework (1979) and the classification of hate speech based on the National Police Chief’s Circular Letter No. SE/06/X/2015.

#### Types and Dominance of Illocutionary Acts

This section presents the results of the interpretation of illocutionary acts found in Instagram comments on the @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemensetneg\_ri accounts. The research data consists of 200 comments analyzed based on Searle’s speech act theory, which were then classified into three main categories: expressive, directive, and assertive, along with an identification of which category was most dominant. The results of this classification are presented in a table to facilitate understanding of the distribution of each type of speech act identified.

**Table 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts**

No	Types of Illocutionary Acts	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Expressive	156	78%
2	Directive	29	14.5%
3	Assertive	15	7.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the table above, expressive speech acts are the most dominant type. This indicates that communication in the comment section serves primarily as a means of emotional venting rather than as a vehicle for conveying objective information. From Searle’s (1979) perspective, every utterance possesses illocutionary force that is, the intention the speaker aims to achieve through the utterance. Thus, the analyzed comments not only carry literal meaning but also contain specific purposes and the potential to impact readers.

In expressive (dominant) speech acts, the illocutionary meaning focuses on conveying the speaker’s psychological state. Netizens use this type to express raw

emotions (such as anger and hatred) as well as negative attitudes toward authority. For example, in the data [D1/PR] “I regret choosing you, sir,” the speaker expresses deep disappointment; illocutionarily, the aim is to delegitimize past political choices and foster a collective perception that the current leadership is a failure. Direct insults, such as in data [D77/KS] “that super-bastard official,” express extreme social judgment; their illocutionary meaning is not merely a curse, but a conscious attempt to undermine the target’s social status and dignity in the public eye. In the form of sarcasm, as in data [D15/PR] “acting like a late hero” and [D188/KS] “the most polite person, with no sense of shame,” the speaker expresses a cynical attitude. Its illocutionary meaning is a sharp jab aimed at humiliating the target by highlighting the contradiction between their public image and the reality of their performance. Age-based attacks in data [D89/KS] “old fogey” reveal discriminatory social judgment, intended to undermine the target’s leadership relevance based on physical condition.

In assertive speech acts, netizens express personal opinions framed as if they were objective facts in order to build the audience’s trust. In terms of illocutionary force, this utterance functions as destructive labeling. For example, in data [D33/PR] “you are a killer,” the speaker is not providing legal information, but rather expressing a highly emotionally charged opinion to create a negative stigma. The goal is to influence public opinion broadly so that the target is viewed as a criminal. A similar pattern is seen in data [D184/KS] “Most Indonesian officials are idiots,” which expresses a collective social judgment against government agencies to create a narrative of systemic distrust.

Meanwhile, directive speech acts express an oppositional attitude and a strong desire to bring about change through verbal pressure. In the data [D18/PR] “just step down, sir,” the speaker uses an illocutionary act of urging aimed at forcing the addressee to take a specific action (resign) as a consequence of the speaker’s dissatisfaction. Data [D51/KS] “Replace the Minister of Forestry, please” demonstrates an illocutionary act of instruction expressing an opinion regarding a specific minister’s incompetence, with the aim of dictating the leader’s strategic decisions. Finally, data [D119/PR] “Which president does the team want to replace with a protest??” expresses a confrontational attitude aimed at social mobilization, sparking negative solidarity to encourage physical action in the real world.

In general, the prevalence of expressive speech acts indicates that communication on social media tends to be emotionally driven. Meanwhile, the presence of assertive and directive speech acts suggests that language is also used as a tool to shape opinions and influence behavior. In terms of perlocutionary effects, such utterances have the potential to produce tangible consequences, such as provoking anger, reinforcing negative perceptions, and even spurring collective action

### **Analysis of Hate Speech Categories**

This section presents an analysis of hate speech found in Instagram comments on the @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemasetneg\_ri accounts. A total of 200 comments were analyzed and categorized into three groups based on the National Police Chief’s Circular Letter No. SE/06/X/2015: insults, defamation, and incitement. The classification

results are presented in a table to provide a clearer picture of the distribution of each category of hate speech.

**Table 2. Categories of Hate Speech**

No	Classification of Hate Speech	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Insult	107	53.5%
2	Defamation	35	17.5%
3	Provocation	16	8%
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Insults (53.5%) were the most prevalent finding. Netizens attacked individuals' dignity using derogatory language such as "fat Prabowo" ([D17/PR]) and "unworthy" ([D7/PR]). Similar verbal abuse was found on ministry accounts through the label "tolol" ([D67/KS]) and age based attacks such as "tua bangka" ([D89/KS]). In terms of illocutionary force, the use of these aggressive personal labels manifests emotions of hatred and is intended to humiliate the subject in public, which legally intersects with the elements of a violation of Article 27A of Law No. 1 of 2024 on Information and Electronic Transactions regarding attacks on a person's honor in the digital space.

In the defamation category, netizens presented negative opinions framed as facts without evidence. Data [D21/PR] "the ministers are lying" and data [D27/PR] "don't care, as long as there's money" indicate attempts to damage individuals' reputations. On the ministry's account, implicit corruption allegations appear in data [D102/KS] "public funds are being embezzled by officials" as well as allegations that ministers do not visit the field in data [D20/PR]. The act of spreading these unverified allegations risks constituting a criminal offense under the ITE Law due to the potential for reputational harm to both the institution and individuals.

The category of provocation manifests as confrontational incitement aimed at sparking social conflict. This is evident in aggressive calls to "spit" ([D69/KS]) or accusations of treason against the nation through the label "foreign stooge" ([D96/KS]). On the President's account, separatist narratives appear in post [D14/PR] stating "Sumatra deserves independence," along with calls for mass protests in post [D119/PR]. In terms of illocution, these statements transform into tools for destructive mobilization that are highly susceptible to violating Article 28(2) of the ITE Law, regarding the dissemination of information that incites intergroup hostility.

## Discussion

An analysis of 200 Instagram comments revealed a concerning communication pattern, in which the government's digital space is overwhelmingly dominated by expressive speech acts (78%) that fall into the category of insults (53.5%). These findings indicate that Indonesian netizens tend to use the comment sections of the @presidenrepublikindonesia and @kemensetneg\_ri accounts not as channels for healthy policy discussion, but as o The use of derogatory metaphors, such as the terms "lackey," "dog," and even "puppet," reflects a deliberate attempt at dehumanization in the public sphere. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the use of such language is a strong indicator of mens rea or malicious intent to damage the reputation and delegitimize the dignity of the targeted individual. Furthermore, the emergence of assertive speech acts containing severe labels such as "murderer" or accusations of "normalizing robbery" demonstrates

how a personal opinion is presented as if it were an established fact to foster widespread negative stigma within the digital community.

This finding is in line with several previous studies discussing hate speech and digital communication on social media. Harahap and Siregar (2022) explain that many online users often consider offensive comments as a normal form of expression or criticism, even though the language used may contain elements of verbal violence and legal violations. Similarly, Komara, Hasani, and Firmansyah (2025) found that hate speech on social media is frequently directed not only at public policies but also at personal aspects of public figures, such as appearance, age, or private matters that are unrelated to their official roles. This condition shows that public criticism in digital spaces often shifts into personal attacks, especially when users communicate emotionally and without considering ethical boundaries.

In addition, previous research also shows that provocative language on social media can influence wider social reactions in society. Amalia (2024) argues that directive expressions containing provocation or invitations to act aggressively may increase tension among internet users and potentially trigger conflict outside the digital space. This supports the findings of the present study, where several comments contained directives encouraging demonstrations or inappropriate physical actions toward government figures. From a legal perspective, these forms of expression may lead to violations of the ITE Law because the utterances do not only contain insults but also have the potential to provoke hostility and social conflict. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of improving digital literacy and public awareness so that social media can function as a healthier and more constructive space for public discussion.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research identifies patterns of illocutionary acts and classifications of hate speech in digital interactions on official Indonesian government accounts. In response to the research objectives, it was found that netizens use three main types of illocutionary acts expressive, directive, and assertive to convey their dissatisfaction; three categories of hate speech were also identified in the National Police Chief's Circular Letter No. SE/06/X/2015, namely insult, defamation, and provocation. Key findings reveal the absolute dominance of expressive speech acts (78%) and the category of hate speech involving insults (53.5%), demonstrating that comment sections more often serve as outlets for negative emotions rather than spaces for objective policy discussion. This finding also reveals a strong pragmatic-legal correlation: uncontrolled emotional expressions consistently result in violations of personal dignity that could potentially be prosecuted under Article 27A of the ITE Law. Meanwhile, the use of assertions without concrete evidence and provocative directive statements indicates the presence of conscious intent (*mens rea*) to delegitimize state authority, which carries serious legal implications under Article 28(2) of the ITE Law.

In the context of education, particularly for English language education practitioners, these findings highlight the importance of integrating pragmatic understanding and language ethics into the language learning curriculum. Language instruction should not focus solely on mastering grammar and vocabulary but must also emphasize critical digital

literacy and the ability to analyze speech acts so that students, as future social media users, can distinguish between constructive criticism and hate speech that violates the law.

As a suggestion for future research, future researchers are recommended to conduct cross-platform comparative analyses, such as comparing the characteristics of hate speech on Instagram with those on TikTok or X (Twitter), to examine the influence of algorithms and anonymity on netizens' linguistic behavior. Currently, research on mitigating hate speech through the strengthening of content moderation policies by social media platform providers is ongoing and remains a crucial topic in the field of cyberlaw. This indicates that efforts to balance freedom of expression and the protection of dignity in the digital public sphere remain a dynamic challenge requiring continuous monitoring.

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