

A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in @pepekomik's Political Satire Comics

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Abstract

This study examines the use of illocutionary speech acts in @pepekomik's political satire comics and highlights their role in conveying satire and criticism through dialogue. The analysis emphasizes how language functions as action, with utterances serving not only to inform but also to perform communicative acts that reflect social and ideological positions. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the primary data consist of conversations taken from selected comic panels published on pepekomik account on Instagram. These dialogues are analyzed using speech act theory as developed by Austin and Searle, supported by recent pragmatic studies on comics and social media discourse. Data collection was conducted through non-participatory observation and note-taking, ensuring accuracy and contextual relevance. The findings demonstrate that illocutionary speech acts in @pepekomik's comics operate as instruments of humor, satire, and civic engagement, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how political messages are articulated in digital comic discourse.

Keywords: *Speech acts in comics, political satire, digital comics, illocutionary acts, pragmatics*

Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a medium for performing actions. When individuals express ideas on social media, they are not simply transmitting information but also carrying out actions through their words. These actions are known as speech acts, which analyze how utterances function as acts (Yule, 1996). Communication requires context to interpret meaning, and the most crucial dimension of speech acts is the illocutionary act, which focuses on the speaker's intention in producing an utterance (Searle, 1969). Illocutionary speech acts highlight how language functions as action rather than description, making them central to pragmatic analysis (Austin, 1962).

Social media has become one of the most influential platforms in shaping communication patterns. Instagram, as an image-based platform, encourages users to combine text with visuals, producing discourse that is both linguistic and contextual (Rahardi, 2020). Beyond personal use, Instagram has evolved into an effective medium for disseminating information packaged in the form of cartoons, caricatures, or short narratives (Adriana, 2018). In Indonesia, Instagram comics have emerged as a popular vehicle for satire and social commentary, with accounts such as @pepekomik employing humor and caricature to critique political and social issues.

Illocutionary speech acts are intended to express actions embedded in speech or to achieve specific purposes. They occur when speakers make statements with the aim of

not only conveying information but also performing an action. (Searle, 1969) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. These categories provide a framework for analyzing how comics like @pepekomik employ language to critique political and social issues while engaging audiences through humor and satire. (Vidya Mandarani, 2022) emphasize that speech acts reveal the relationship between language and social norms, while (Cummins, 2019) highlights the importance of situational and cultural context in pragmatic interpretation.

Several studies have examined speech acts in digital comics and social media. (Chattopadhyay, 2024) analyzed how speech act theory operates in visual narratives, while (Rahmatika, 2024) focused on sarcasm and criticism in Tahilalats comics. (Haryanti et al., 2024) investigated illocutionary acts in President Jokowi's Instagram account, and (Izar et al., 2021) explored expressive speech acts in Bintang Emon's comics. Other research includes (Mutiar Pratama Putri, Ajar Pradika Ananta Tur, 2024) on interpretation in comics, (Winarti & Hidayatulloh, 2022) on female comic creators, and (Rizky Ananda Putri, 2024) on the Webtoon Witch Hunt.

Further contributions come from (Dharma Putra & Maulana, 2024), who examined speech acts in Nobita comics, and (Devi Ayuningtyas, Senowarsito, 2023), who analyzed The Masked Fables. (Antyka & Nugroho, 2023) studied exclamative acts in Smile Brush, while (I Ketut Adi Sucipta, 2023) investigated Sherlock Holmes comics. (Anwar & Santoso, 2025) analyzed illocutionary acts in @komik.grontol, (Sibuea, 2021) studied Tintin, and (Suastha & Kesi, 2025) examined expressive acts in Ken Dedes.

Supporting research on implicature and humor in online comics and memes has been conducted by (Adena et al., 2024), (Umamah et al., 2023), (Damayanti et al., 2023), and (Budiawan et al., 2024).

Comparative studies also highlight the socio-cognitive dimensions of political cartoons. (Alochukwu L.M. Ikele, 2025) analyzed hate speech in Nigerian newspapers and social media, while (Olowolayemo Bright, 2024) examined politically motivated cartoons in Nigeria. Pragmatic studies in educational and virtual contexts, such as (Rejeki, 2021), further reinforce the relevance of speech act analysis. These studies demonstrate that speech act theory is widely applicable across domains, including comics, memes, and online discourse.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in (Austin, 1962) and (Searle, 1969) who established the principles of speech act theory, and (Yule, 1996) who emphasized the importance of context. In the Indonesian context, (Rahardi, 2020) provide insights into language use in social media and comics. Perspectives from (Vidya Mandarani, 2022) and (Cummins, 2019) further strengthen the framework by clarifying socio-cultural and situational dimensions of speech acts. Together, these references establish the theoretical basis for analyzing illocutionary speech acts in comics as instruments of satire and critique.

Based on the descriptions above, the problem addressed in this research is the form and function of illocutionary speech acts in @pepekomik's political satire comics. In line with this problem formulation, the study aims to describe the types of illocutionary speech acts and explain their role in reflecting social norms and ideological positions. Illocutionary speech acts in @pepekomik are not only humorous but also serve as instruments of political satire and public participation.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze illocutionary speech acts in the political satire comics of @pepekomik. The core data consist of dialogues and textual expressions in selected comic panels. The data were obtained through observation and note-taking, focusing on utterances that reveal pragmatic functions in the comics (Austin, 1962). A coding sheet was used to classify each utterance according to its pragmatic features during the analysis.

The analysis was guided by Speech Act Theory. Searle (1969) provided the classification of speech acts into representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives, which served as the analytical framework. Each comic panel was examined to identify the illocutionary force of the utterances. To strengthen the interpretation, contextual insights were drawn from Yule (1996), who emphasized the importance of situational meaning, and from Indonesian discourse studies such as Rahardi (2020) and Adriana (2018). These references supported the reliability of the categorization and clarified the socio-cultural dimensions of the speech acts.

Further support was drawn from Mandarani and Fediyanto (2022), who highlighted the relationship between speech acts and social norms, and Cummins (2019), who stressed the role of cultural context in pragmatic interpretation. These perspectives ensured that the analysis was not only descriptive but also theoretically grounded. Validation of the interpretations was achieved through triangulation with prior studies, which confirmed the consistency of the findings.

In summary, the methodological design integrates descriptive qualitative research with pragmatic analysis to explore speech acts in digital satire. Data were collected through observation and note-taking, analyzed using Speech Act Theory, and validated through triangulation with expert sources and previous studies. This framework provides a rigorous basis for examining how illocutionary speech acts in @pepekomik's comics function as instruments of satire and public participation.

Results



Figure 1. Celebration scene with national symbols

"UDAH 80 TAHUN AJA, YA"

"IYA! SEMOGA INDONESIA SEGERA JADI NEGARA MAJU"



Figure 2. Interaction at a siomay stall

"SIOMAY 10 RIBUAN 3 YA, PAK"
"EH! ANTRE DONG, BUK"



Figure 3. Characters expressing frustration

"KAYAKNYA MASIH LAMA MAJUNYA"

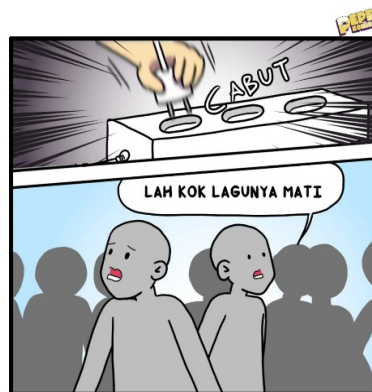


Figure 4. Sudden silence at a social event

"CABUT"
"LAH KOK LAGUNYA MATI"



Figure 5. Performer addressing the crowd

“BAYAR ROYALTI DULU”



Figure 6. Flag misunderstanding scene

“PAK LURAH, BENDERANYA HILANG!”



Figure 7. Judge responding to reporters

“Pak Hakim, kenapa Pak Budi cuma dihukum 5 tahun setelah merugikan negara trilyunan?”

“Karena, Pak Budi berkelakuan baik ...”



Figure 8. Man presenting a briefcase of money

"INI UANG 1 MILYAR"



Figure 9. Man gesturing toward a car

"ADA MOBIL"



Figure 10. Man presenting a luxurious house

"Sama 1 unit rumah dari Pak Budi"
"Wah, Pak Budi baik sekali~"



Figure 11. Official speaking to reporters

“... DAN KOOPERATIF”



Figure 12. Man whispering while holding a briefcase

“INI F*RTUNER-NYA BISA DIGANTI ALPHRD AJA GAK, PAK?”



Figure 13. Man smiling and accepting a request

“BISA”

“WAH, KOOPERATIF SEKALI~”

Discussion

The first posting “Dirgahayu Indonesiaku” presents several comic panels that blend humor with the festive atmosphere of Independence Day

The utterances are not only literal statements but also carry specific intentions that demonstrate illocutionary force. Through simple dialogues, the comic conveys national aspirations, enforces social norms, and expresses the emotional attitudes of competition participants.

In figure 1, this dialogue illustrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative, because the utterances state a fact about the nation’s independence while also emphasizing hope for the future. The first expression “UDAH 80 TAHUN AJA, YA” refers to historical reality, acknowledging the long duration of independence. Meanwhile, the second expression “IYA! SEMOGA INDONESIA SEGERA JADI NEGARA MAJU” conveys encouragement and optimism. Thus, the speech act does not stop at delivering information but becomes an expression of collective aspiration. The festive setting with flags and cheering crowds reinforces the illocutionary meaning, situating the utterances within a context of pride and hope.

In figure 2, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Directive, since the utterance is intended to influence the interlocutor’s behavior. The first expression “SIOMAY 10 RIBUAN 3 YA, PAK” is a transactional statement, informative in nature. However, the response “EH! ANTRE DONG, BUK” carries the force of a command, compelling the speaker to follow the rule of queuing. By presenting this situation humorously, the comic transforms a simple directive into social satire. The exaggerated gestures and expressions of the characters strengthen the illocutionary force, showing how speech acts can simultaneously regulate conduct and critique everyday practices.

In figure 3, this dialogue represents an illocutionary act categorized as Expressive, because the utterance conveys frustration about waiting for a competition turn. The expression “KAYAKNYA MASIH LAMA MAJUNYA” reveals the psychological state of the speaker, who feels impatient and weary. The comic uses light satire to depict a familiar experience among participants in Independence Day contests, making the sentiment relatable to readers. The visual portrayal of tired and restless characters reinforces the illocutionary meaning, turning the utterance into both an individual feeling and a reflection on the lively yet demanding nature of the event.

In figure 4, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative since the utterances describe a factual situation where the music stops because the cable is unplugged. The first expression “CABUT” indicates the physical action of pulling the plug, while the second expression “LAH KOK LAGUNYA MATI” reflects the speaker’s realization of the immediate consequence. By presenting this moment humorously, the comic highlights how entertainment can be controlled or interrupted at will. The scene delivers a satirical critique of power misuse, suggesting that even technical actions can symbolize authority restricting public enjoyment. The connection to copyright issues becomes clear in the following panel, where the stoppage of music is linked to demands for royalty payment.

In figure 5, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Directive since the utterance functions as a firm command to the audience. The expression “BAYAR ROYALTI DULU” carries the force of compelling others to fulfill an obligation before continuing the activity. The speaker’s posture, standing on a chair with a microphone, strengthens the illocutionary force by emphasizing authority and urgency. The comic uses hyperbolic style to satirize copyright issues, so the command becomes a social critique wrapped in humor.

In figure 6, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative since the utterance reports a situation perceived as unusual. The expression “PAK LURAH, BENDERANYA HILANG!” conveys the boy’s observation that the national flag is missing, although in reality the pirate flag of One Piece is raised at half mast. The comic uses irony to create humor while delivering a deeper satirical message. The replacement of the national flag with a pirate symbol critiques how corruption and neglect can erode national values. It suggests that although the country is officially independent, the spirit of independence feels lost or replaced by selfish interests. The pirate flag becomes a metaphor for a nation still struggling to protect its integrity, turning the boy’s simple report into a sharp commentary on the state of governance.

Next, the second posting titled “Pak Budi orang baik” presents a sharper critique of corruption and judicial injustice

Unlike the first posting, which highlighted the festive atmosphere of Independence Day and everyday social interactions, this series focuses on satire about power, wealth, and the legal system. The utterances remain simple, yet they carry strong illocutionary force and deliver explicit social commentary. Through brief dialogues and hyperbolic visuals, the comic illustrates how money and authority can distort justice and public perception.

In figure 7, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative because the utterances present a legal fact and its justification. The reporter’s question highlights the imbalance between the enormous financial loss and the light sentence. The judge’s reply “Karena, Pak Budi berkelakuan baik ...” sounds formal, but within the comic it becomes a satirical punchline. The scene critiques the leniency of the judicial system toward corrupt figures, where good behavior is used as a superficial excuse to reduce punishment. The calm demeanor of the judge surrounded by microphones reinforces the absurdity, turning a legal justification into a symbol of systemic injustice.

In figure 8, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative because the utterance declares the presence of a large sum of money. The expression “INI UANG 1 MILYAR” is delivered with dramatic emphasis, supported by the visual of a briefcase and the character’s confident posture. The comic uses this moment to satirize the culture of flaunting wealth that is normalized in corrupt environments. The absence of further context or reaction suggests that such displays are routine, pointing to a society where money dominates without question. The panel critiques how financial power is accepted as unquestionable authority, reducing ethics to mere spectacle.

In figure 9, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative because the utterance identifies the presence of a car. The expression “ADA MOBIL” is simple and declarative, yet the comic exaggerates the moment with dramatic lines and framing. This emphasis transforms a mundane statement into a symbol of status and materialism. In the context of the previous panels, the car becomes part of a narrative where wealth and appearance overshadow moral responsibility. The comic satirizes how luxury items are used to signal success, even when they fail to reflect integrity or social accountability.

In figure 10, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative, since the utterances state a fact about Mr. Budi’s gift of a house. The first expression “Sama 1 unit rumah dari Pak Budi” conveys information about an

extravagant reward, while the response “Wah, Pak Budi baik sekali~” expresses exaggerated admiration. By presenting this situation humorously, the comic transforms a factual statement into social satire. The exaggerated depiction of the house strengthens the illocutionary force, showing how speech acts can simultaneously deliver information and critique superficial interpretations of generosity.

In figure 11, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Representative, since the utterance provides an assessment of someone’s behavior during legal proceedings. The expression “... DAN KOOPERATIF” functions as a justification, suggesting leniency in sentencing. By presenting this moment humorously, the comic satirizes how the term “kooperatif” is often manipulated to soften the perception of serious crimes. The exaggerated gestures of the official strengthen the illocutionary force, showing how speech acts can simultaneously report behavior and critique the permissiveness of the judicial system.

In figure 12, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Directive, since the utterance is intended to influence the interlocutor’s decision. The expression “INI F*RTUNER-NYA BISA DIGANTI ALPHRD AJA GAK, PAK?” is framed as a polite request, but carries the force of negotiation, suggesting an upgrade from one luxury vehicle to another. By presenting this moment humorously, the comic transforms a seemingly casual inquiry into a sharp satire of transactional corruption. The whispering gesture and the presence of a briefcase reinforce the illocutionary force, showing how speech acts can simultaneously mask unethical intent and critique the normalization of bribery in elite circles.

In figure 13, this dialogue demonstrates an illocutionary act categorized as Expressive, since the utterances convey emotional responses to agreeable behavior. The first expression “BISA” shows approval of a request, while “WAH, KOOPERATIF SEKALI~” delivers exaggerated praise. By presenting this situation humorously, the comic satirizes how cooperative behavior can mean compliance with unethical demands. The exaggerated expressions of the characters strengthen the illocutionary force, showing how speech acts can simultaneously express emotion and critique corrupt practices that undermine institutional integrity

Conclusion

This study concludes that illocutionary speech acts play a central role in shaping meaning and satire in *pepekomik* on Instagram. Analysis of 13 panels shows that Representative, Directive, and Expressive speech acts are consistently used to celebrate independence, regulate social behavior, express collective emotions, and expose corruption as a threat to justice. Applying the frameworks of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), these findings confirm that comics transform ordinary speech into incisive social critique, demonstrating how language functions simultaneously as communication and as a reflection of societal values.

Beyond these immediate findings, this study highlights the broader implication that comics can serve as effective objects of pragmatic study, offering insights into how everyday language is reframed to challenge injustice and strengthen integrity. Future studies could expand this analysis by exploring perlocutionary effects on readers, examining implicatures in digital comic discourse, or comparing speech act strategies across different comic genres and platforms. Such investigations would deepen our understanding of how comics, as cultural texts, contribute to critical consciousness and the negotiation of meaning in contemporary society.

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