

An Illocutionary Act in World Health Organization Instagram Caption

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the functions of illocutionary acts in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Instagram captions about COVID-19. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study analyzes the captions to understand their purpose. Instagram is a popular platform where people share ideas and moments. Pragmatics, which looks at language meaning in context, is important for understanding the illocutionary acts in Instagram captions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Instagram has been used to discuss and raise awareness about the virus. Users share slogans, updates on cases, live broadcasts from hospitals, and captions addressing pandemic issues. The research identifies illocutionary acts in WHO's Instagram captions, such as providing information, issuing warnings, giving advice, expressing solidarity, and promoting health protocols. These acts effectively convey messages and influence behavior. The study contributes to linguistics by providing insights into illocutionary acts in Instagram captions. It also helps writers and readers interpret captions better. Teachers can use the findings to teach pragmatic language use. In conclusion, the research enhances understanding of illocutionary acts in WHO's COVID-19 Instagram captions. It emphasizes the importance of context in interpreting captions and benefits linguistic research, writers, readers, and teachers.

Keywords: Caption, Illocutionary, Instagram, WHO

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is an application that can be used to convey someone's ideas, opinions and feelings. Besides that, users also share daily activities or beautiful moments with other users. Instagram is a social media that is widely used to deliver assumptions, tips or just share an important thing. This application also provides several features that can help users to be creative, such as uploading photos or videos, commenting on other user accounts, giving likes, tagging friends with the @ symbol, creating captions related to uploaded images or videos and share them on various social networking services such as facebook, twitter or whatsapp (Bambang, 2012). Deeper, instagram users have an access to take photos or videos with various edits provided, write captions related to the photos or videos and share them with friends by mention other users or use hashtags (#).

Through the pandemic situation, people discussing Covid-19 on their instagram accounts such as sharing slogans advising reader about health protocols, informing the number of Covid-19 patients every month, composing live broadcasts covering hospital conditions or even creating captions related to Covid-19 issues. To focus on Instagram captions, which is a type of written communication to express what something means based on certain situations, pragmatics becomes the right reference to analyze the function of particular language.

Studying the meaning of language, context is a necessary and very influential scope. The same time, place, and situation become important components that explain the speaker's (writer) intent and purpose in a speech to be understood by the listener (reader). Khairi (2021, p. 2) in his thesis stated that pragmatics include three points; 1.) the use and interpretation of an utterance depends on the basic knowledge possessed, 2.) the sentence structure used is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the listener (writer and reader), 3.) the speaker (writer) use and understand the speech acts.

Austin (1962) stated that a speech act is an action performed through speech. In

addition, Paltridge (2016) believes that the concept of speech act is a way for someone to do something physically similar with doing an action through language such as giving orders, giving advice, making requests or any speech act that contains other meanings than literal ones. Specifically, Austin (1962) argues that speech act has 3 kinds which are locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is a sentence that has a meaning and is easy to understand. As for illocutionary act, it is a speech that denotes an ulterior motive for the real sentence. Then a perlocutionary act is a reaction from other people that understand the utterance in a discussion.

Utterance	Locutionary act	Illocutionary act	Perlocutionary act
It is hot in here.	Someone talks about the temperature.	A request to other person to turn on the fan or air conditioning.	Someone gets and turns the fan or air conditioning.

Table. 1. The illustration of the types of speech act from Paltridge (2006, p. 55)

An illocutionary act is a topic that is analyzed based on its type or function. To notice the functions of illocutionary act, Leech (1983) mentioned 4 functions such as competitive, convivial, collaborative and conflictive. Through these types and functions, speaker or writer's point can be categorized in detail and clearly without confusing listeners/reader (ambiguity).

With the elaboration of the caption above, the researcher has the initial basic to compose a new breakthrough in identifying the function of the illocutionary act. With the key theory from Leech (1983) that mentioned 4 functions of the illocutionary, they are competitive, convivial, collaborative and conflictive, this research focused on several Instagram captions that discuss about Covid-19 on World Health Organization (WHO) Instagram accounts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Leech (1983) that pragmatics is a study of a meaning in a speech. It is explaining that the meaning of language cannot be separated from a context. Language and context are interrelated in actualizing a communication. In this

concept, language is the real of expression and potential meaning. Meanwhile, the situation and the cultural context are sources of meaning. Through this relationship between language and context, pragmatics becomes a separate study that can investigate several aspects such as deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech act and other aspects of discourse structure. Focusing on speech act, Yule (1996) stated that everyone expresses themselves through an action or utterance, but in an utterance does not only lade the sentence structures but also perform an action that refers to the speech act. With action-response in communication, speech acts are divided into 3 types; locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

Types of speech act

Several experts in linguistic such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Yule (1996) and Paltridge (2006) agreed to classify the types of speech act into locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

- **Locutionary act**

Paltridge (2006) state that locutionary act is the basic meaning of a word or sentence. This type interprets sentences instantly. While according to Austin (1962), the interpretation of locutionary act is concerned with meaning. It means that type locutionary act is the meaning of language in accordance with what is said or written. For example, someone says 'put on your mask!' then the speaker means a person who is not wearing a mask to use the mask. The sentence 'put on your mask!' becomes a locutionary act whether it can be understood by a listener who has similar concept meaning of the words 'put', 'on', 'your' and 'mask'.

- **Illocutionary act**

Illocutionary act is an intention of a speaker or writer expressed through words (orally or in writing). This is emphasized by Austin in his book "how to do things with words" (1962) that the illocutionary act can be simplified by the concept of 'by saying something, we doing something', for example a priest declares a man and woman as husband and wife in front of audience, then indirectly, the priest has made an asseveration between the husband and wife and all invitations have understood that asseveration exists and become an agreed symbol to integrate a husband and wife. In this case, the asseveration has become a promise, where the promise is a part of the illocutionary act. Similar with Searle (1969) who assumed that the illocutionary act was more inclined to the effect of words in an action. For example, there is a different range of the sentences 'I swear' and 'I hereby swear'. Through statement 'I hereby swear', the listener believes and feel comfortable with the speaker's promise.

- **Perlocutionary act**

Paltridge (2006) said that perlocutionary act is the impact of a person's expression to others have the form of thoughts or actions. Also according to Austin (1962) the

perlocutionary act is a person's reaction to a speech. Therefore, it can be simplified that a perlocutionary act is a response in the form of a person's thoughts or actions from other speech.

Through the three types above, everyone expresses certain characteristics, such as apologizing for a mistake, making promises for a belief, assigning a name or brand, etc. Searle (1969) stipulates that each person performs 3 different speech acts when speaking, namely the utterance act, the proportional action and the illocutionary action. The act of speech serves only as an easy-to-understand string of words. Meanwhile, proportional and illocutionary actions are actions in uttering sentences with consideration of context and seeing the specific intent of the speaker.

Function of illocutionary act

As Levinson (1983) stated that pragmatic is a study related to the meaning of language and context, which environmental conditions affect the language use. In this case, an utterance that is influenced by the context described the word in different functions such as apologizing, informing news, offering services, warning of important things, cursing, thanking, ordering, stipulating, promising, etc. With those functions, it will be grouped based on Leech (1983) theory that focused on maintaining and establishing harmony of social goal, they are: collaborative, competitive, convivial and conflictive.

a. Collaborative

Collaborative is an illocutionary act function that does not care about the goal of social harmony. According to Leech (1983), this function refers to several speech acts that prioritize a fact while ignoring social goals such as reporting, instructing, asserting and announcing.

b. Competitive

Competitive is one of the functions of the illocutionary act based on the category of Leech (1983). He (1983) stated that the competitive function looks at several speech acts that are close to the side of impoliteness

such as how a person adjusts what he/she wants to say with the actual level of politeness. Competitive goals such as: asking, demanding, ordering and begging.

c. Convivial

Convivial is one of the functions of the illocutionary act that pays attention to politeness in every speech act of the community. In other words, convivial is related to positive politeness, where speech acts are able to reinforce the social harmony such as congratulating, inviting, thanking, greeting and offering.

d. Conflictive

Conflictive is an illocutionary function that is very contrary to the goal of social harmony. Leech (1983) explained that through this function, several social speech acts that are deviated to politeness can be categorized such as accusing, threatening, reprimanding and cursing.

Covid-19/ Corona virus

Covid-19 is a disease caused by the acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus. This disease causes respiratory system disorders, ranging from mild symptoms such as flu to lung infections such as pneumonia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this virus causes mild flu to more severe respiratory infections such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. The corona virus is zoonotic, which is a disease that can be transmitted between animals and humans such as rabies and malaria. However, beside the virus spread from animals to humans, the corona virus can also be transmitted from human to human. Alodokter.com reveals that transmission can be through the following ways:

- Accidentally inhaling the droplets that come out when a person with COVID-19 sneezes or coughs.
- Holding mouth, nose, or eyes without washing hands after touching objects affected by droplets of people with COVID-19.

- Close contact (less than 2 meters) with people with COVID-19 without wearing a mask.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization is an international organization that works together to create and maintain health systems around the world. Founded in 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) is mandated to prevent and eradicate epidemics and to improve the nutritional, sanitary, hygienic and environmental conditions of people around the world. The WHO's official website explains that this team consists of more than 8000 world-leading health professionals such as doctors, epidemiologists, scientists and managers who jointly coordinate in providing services in the health sector such as responding to emergencies, informing and promoting well-being, providing tips on preventing disease and expanding access to health care. Through these social media, WHO accounts often post about health topics such as informing health systems in several countries, sharing knowledge about health (e.g. how vaccines work or a healthy lifestyle in dealing with COVID-19) and commemorating special days related to health (e.g. #WorldAlzheimersDay or #WorldFoodSafetyDay). Specifically, WHO's Instagram account is one of social media accounts that post about 2,700 news related to health information. It can be seen from the WHO official account information, this account was created on June 2011 by an admin in Switzerland.

Instagram's caption

According to the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, caption is brief text over or under a picture in a book, magazine, or newspaper that describes the picture or explains what the people in it are doing or saying. While the definition of caption according to Vocabulary.com, a caption is a brief description accompanying an illustration. Before social media existed, caption text was already used in newspapers

or magazines to explain the photos, pictures or graphics listed in the newspaper or magazine.

Nowadays, caption text can be found on social media and articles on the internet with the same purpose, which is to explain or provide information about the photos, images or videos that are loaded. Caption has a social function, which is to provide basic information about an object so that writing captions also requires interesting and informative grammar. Kompas.com states that writing captions has three parts such as opening, content and closing through easy-to-understand vocabulary.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

In finding and analyzing data related to caption Instagram about Covid-19, qualitative methods would be implemented in this study, which is Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative method is a type of research that explores and understands meaning of individuals or groups of people originating from social problems. Qualitative research in general can be used for research on people's life, history, behavior, concepts or phenomena, social problems, and so on. From several types of qualitative methods, this research used descriptive qualitative method.

Data and data source

In this study, the data focused on several Instagram captions (sentences) from World Health Organization (WHO) Instagram account that discuss about Covid 19. The data are English sentences that captured and categorized to the types and the functions of the illocutionary act, whether one type or more. As for analyzing data, the researcher used several theories related to illocutionary act, types and function through several sources such as books, articles, online journals, etc.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Function of illocutionary act from Leech

Talking about the function of the illocutionary act, there are many opinions with a number of different functions. As stated earlier, this study uses Leech's (1983) theory which focused on four components of the illocutionary act function. Previously, He (1983) grouped functions into four categories by paying attention to the relationship between social goals and illocutionary goals such as how to maintain a sense of politeness in speaking or writing (illocutionary acts). In this study, 53 data are included in 3 functions of illocutionary acts with each amount based on Leech's (1983) theory; Collaborative has 42 captions, Competitive has 10 captions, and Convivial has 1 caption. While for Conflictive functions was not found.

1. Collaborative

Leech (1983) described the collaborative function as a neutral function to show social goals. An utterance or writing that falls into this category actually prioritized facts rather than politeness. He (1983) also explained that this function is more often found in written discourses that are **reporting, asserting, instructing, and announcing**. In general, a written discourse that has this characteristic is used to express the truth without considering the politeness, means that courtesy is not a standard to express something. As the WHO caption discusses the impact of Covid-19 on the treatment system for Malaria cases, this function is found through a statement that describes the 'report' in the caption. The WHO reports that the Covid-19 pandemic has had many impacts, including disruption of health care and the decline of specialized health facilities for treating malaria worldwide such as the caption below:



Figure 1. (December 06th, 2021)

The caption above is categorized as a collaborative function because it refers to the **reporting** component based on the last statement ‘new report’ on that caption. Moreover, the WHO also found valid data related to malaria cases which have increased since the pandemic hit several parts of the world in 2020 with a death toll of 627,000 people. In 2019, there were 558,000 deaths due to the same case. Through this report, the WHO embeds an accurate statement with a language structure readily accepted by readers so that it can be concluded that the illocutionary goal is in a ‘neutral’ position with social goals. In short, this caption ‘reports’ increasing malaria cases based on observations in several countries with a simple and non-offensive language structure, which leads this caption to the characteristics of the collaborative function.

2. Competitive

In Leech’s theory, the competitive function is a function that places the author in a situation to say something that is almost impolite and prioritizes the desirable conditions based on the author’s point of view, such as **asking, demanding, ordering, and begging**. He (1983) also stated that impolite remarks are not only grammatical errors or incorrect use of vocabulary but also a concern for other people’s situations. Several reasons make

the reader uncomfortable or disagree with the statement to the extent that it is considered impolite.

One of the WHO captions with this function is a caption that recalls the pandemic situation ahead of Christmas and New Year celebrations. The WHO again reminded the readers that the new variant of Covid-19, Omicron, has a faster transmission rate than other variants. Although the WHO has not yet answered how this new variant works, the chances of avoiding the new variant will be huge by implementing health protocols in dealing with different variants. This is conveyed in the following caption:



Figure 2. (December 24th, 2021)

This function can be seen through the WHO caption mentions several rules for handling Covid-19 by welcoming the New Year holidays. As the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary states, an order statement refers to situations where rules are obeyed, and people do what is expected of them. The WHO has ordered readers to welcome the New Year holidays by sharing these rules. This command has an important role and aims to help the reader but does not pay attention to politeness in conveying it. Through this caption, the WHO has limited the reader’s activities who want to spend the Christmas and New Year holidays with the people around them in a pleasant atmosphere which is leads to uncomfortable meaning. Leech (1983) explained that the competitive function refers to speech or

writing that describes the social goal of ‘competing’ with the illocutionary goal, which the writer showed when prioritizing health protocol orders by ignoring the reader’s enthusiasm to celebrate Christmas and New Year without feeling constrained.

3. Convivial

One of the functions of the Illocutionary act, the convivial function, is included in Leech’s theory. He (1983) described that statements in the form of oral or written that fall into this category are polite or signify positive politeness. Positive politeness means respecting or carrying out the principles of courtesy such as greeting, offering, congratulating, inviting, or thanking. A caption example with the characteristics of this function is the WHO caption which offers information related to the Delta variant of the Covid-19 virus. The reason is that this variant is higher than the previous variant, and many people do not know the detailed information. Therefore, since conducting research related to the Delta variant virus, the WHO provides essential information to handle and prevent transmission of this variant in the following caption:



Figure 3. (July 27th, 2021)

This caption is included in the convivial function because it leads to offers related to Delta variant information. The WHO found that this variant had a higher transmission

rate than the previous variant, so WHO reminded the public to continue implementing health protocols. The structure of “Listen to Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove shares what is known so far about the delta variant and how we can keep ourselves safe” illustrating politeness that is readily accepted by the reader so that illocutionary and social goals ‘cooperate’ towards a perfect, friendly and easy-to-understand statement.

CONCLUSION

This study used Leech’s theory (1983) to analyze the function of the illocutionary act, in which four components become standard. Unfortunately, only three components comply with the criteria through the utilization of this theory; Collaborative (42 data), Competitive (10 data), and Convivial (1 datum), and found no data related to conflictive function. In the previous explanation, it has been explained that Leech (1983) determines four functions of illocutionary acts based on a person’s level of politeness in conveying a statement or considering the illocutionary goals and social goals position. Through observation, it is concluded that the WHO Instagram account pays attention to realistic reports with an impartial level of politeness to the reader. Thus there is no conflictive function, and many collaborative functions appear in this analysis.

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