

GLOBAL ACTIVISM IN ARAB DIGITAL SPACE: ANALYSIS OF USER COMMENTS ON RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT NEWS

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ABSTRACT

The availability of comment columns on social media, it can influence the thoughts that develop in the public sphere. Therefore, it is necessary to study global activism not only from the form of speech acts and their functions, but also the intentions of the speech according to the context in digital space. The global activism studied is contained in speech acts on youtube accounts related to news of the Ukrainian and Russian conflicts with the theory of illocutionary speech acts. This is because the news related to the Russia-Ukraine war is still a hot topic of discussion. This research includes qualitative research, descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. The data is obtained from a Sky News Arabiyah youtube channel with the link <https://youtu.be/nkMlxVmmUqY>. The data is in the form of speech and comments of social media users on youtube. The data were collected by downloading, listening, and tabulating. The analysis is done by referring to Searle's Illocutionary Acts Theory. The results of this study indicate that digital activism does not originate solely from Middle Eastern countries but encompasses the entire world, making it a global phenomenon in response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The discourse trend in this study is criticism of Ukraine due to the audio-visual factors of the video and the ideological basis of the speakers who are against Nazism.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, not only information battles are taking place on digital platforms, but also opposing speeches, competing propaganda, and the spread of news and facts that influence public opinion in the digital space. This has led to deepening divisions and increasing tensions among the public (Saputra, 2024). The phenomenon related to this speech can be seen in user comments on the YouTube channel *سكاي نيوز عربية* (Sky News Arabia) in the news regarding Ukrainian soldiers executing Russian prisoners on April 7, 2022, thus triggering public uproar and condemnation (Arabiyah, 2022). As one of the most widely used social media, YouTube has become a new platform for representing activism. (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2020a; Andén-Papadopoulos, 2020b). Departing from this linguistic phenomenon, the speech delivered by commentators certainly greatly influences the thoughts that develop in the digital space which gives rise to public activism in capturing and organizing the masses, not only in the local scope but also interpreted globally (Arabiyah, 2022).

In the linguistic research treasury, the phenomenon of language use in digital space gives rise to threatening speech and critical speech language. The speakers' speech is filled with anger and criticism with language that violates politeness, it attempts to move cyber activism to raise resistance from society, in this case against Israeli occupation (Faisol & Rahmat, 2021a, 2021b). Threat narratives have spread massively in the digital world, giving birth to a group that carries out hacktivism by providing negative propaganda to persuade the public and put political pressure on the object of the threat (Refinaldi et al., 2024). Regarding the issue of conflict reporting, digital platforms have a very large role in disseminating information, so that speech in the cyber world becomes a weapon in mobilizing the public and inciting the masses very quickly to create division. (Almarsomi, 2023; Khairunnisa, 2024).

In line with this, the phenomenon of impolite language dominates on the user comment platform available on Arabic language YouTube channels. (Hassan, 2019). One of the most common phenomena in the Youtube comment column is the expression of racism. This has become a trigger for attention to the language used by Youtube and social media users. (Perrino, 2017). Not only on the YouTube platform, hate speech is also rampant on Facebook social media. There is a community that spreads hate speech known as haters. (Claudia & Wijayanto, 2020). In the following years, the spread of hate speech on social media has increased. (Alsafari et al., 2020). Not only the harsh diction and impoliteness of sarcasm, the speaker's anger and disappointment towards an issue is also shown through figurative words and speech that contains praise but implies sarcasm. (Azmi, 2018; Dezkaesni et al., 2023; Irawati et al., 2023).

News related to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in online media remains interesting and controversial to this day. This news provides a space for the public to respond to the issue in a responsive manner. Users from various countries can easily access YouTube and freely express themselves in various forms of speech. One example is the speech act in an Arabic-language YouTube channel, Sky News Arabiyah, which presents videos related to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Arabiyah, 2022). There is a speech act written by Khelifa Ezzine, a YouTube user from Tunisia. He states that all heinous and criminal acts are characteristic of Nazism. In this sentence, the speaker aims solely to inform. This is followed by the next sentence, which states that, as announced by Putin, Ukraine is ruled by neo-Nazis. The speaker then asserts that war must indeed be waged against Ukraine. With the speaker's intention to convey, justify,

and then convince, this constitutes a representative speech act whose impact can influence other users.

Therefore, based on this phenomenon, it is necessary to examine global activism in news commentary on the Russia-Ukraine conflict posted on the Arabic YouTube channel, Sky News Arabiyah Channel, from April to July 2022. The research was conducted using Searle's illocutionary act concept. Searle's illocutionary acts are relevant to this study because the focus of this framework is to classify the forms of illocutionary acts that will explore the intent of those forms and their ideological or purely informative purposes. The selection of the Arab YouTube channel Sky News Arabiyah as the object of this research is because the news about the conflict that was broadcast was watched by a large number of viewers, for example, on April 7, 2022, it had been viewed 1.5 million times as of May 2025 (Arabiyah, 2022). This undoubtedly has a significant impact on public assumptions, even to this day. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this activism through the various responsive comments found in the comment section. Not only exploring the form of speech acts but also uncovering the intent of the speech within its context, thereby identifying it as digital activism.

In the field of linguistic research, the phenomenon of language use in YouTube accounts has been studied extensively by several researchers. (Faisol & Rahmat, 2021) studied illocutionary acts in news reports on the Palestinian conflict on Al-Jazeera's YouTube channel, which sought to mobilize cyber activism to spark resistance. Meanwhile, Hassan (2019) also studied user speech acts in YouTube comments, finding that users on Arabic-language YouTube channels were more likely to use impolite language. In contrast, Alsafari et al., (2020) observed the prevalence of hate speech on social media and designed a framework for detecting hate speech to address this serious issue. Similarly, Pina & Perrino (2019) found in his research that racist expressions are one of the most common phenomena in YouTube speech columns.

After some digging, there haven't been any previous studies looking at global activism, but cyber activism has been studied in relation to illocutionary speech act analysis in YouTube comments. This is what makes this study new. Moreover, the object of study, which the author will analyze using illocutionary speech acts related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, is relevant and adaptive to social issues. This is because the news of the Russia-Ukraine conflict that occurred in 2022 and is still ongoing today. Linabary et al. (2020; Oosterman (2016); Özkula (2021); Zur & Hatuka (2023); Faisol et al. (2021) shows that activism in the digital space continues to report on it. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this research not only as an academic contribution but also as a guide in the digital space for wisely responding to activism. This aims to prevent the potential for escalating protests and conflicts on a larger scale.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research, because the data is in the form of words and sentences that are interpreted based on the context of their use. This research aims to find out, describe, and understand and analyze the linguistic phenomena regarding speech acts in Arabic Youtube account comments on the Ukraine and Russia conflicts and cyber activism in the comments. Thus, this research design uses a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach in this study relates to the interpretation of the language used in the Arabic Youtube account comments. The descriptive value in this research lies in the description and analysis of objective and actual data.

The data in the study in the form of youtube account user comments related to the video *فيديو إعدام جنود روس بالرصاص يثير ضجة عالمية | #منصات*. The news video was uploaded on April 7, 2022 with 1,447,376 views, 13 thousand likes and 1299 comments to date which is likely to increase every day. News related to the Ukraine-Russia conflict can be accessed at the link <https://youtu.be/nkMlxVmmUqY>. Data collection in this study was carried out using the free listening technique. The following are the steps that researchers will take in collecting research data.

- 1) Downloaded data using the Comments Downloader application (<https://youtubecommentsdownloader.com/>) accessed online and printed all data onto paper.
- 2) Furthermore, the free listening technique was used to read the data carefully. Then mark the data that contains illocutionary speech acts. This stage was repeated several times to ensure that all data were observed properly.
- 3) The marked data will be inventoried and tabulated. The data is grouped in data cards that have been classified based on the form of illocutionary speech acts as well as the function of each of these speech acts.

Based on the type of research, the method used in analyzing this data is the commensurate method. The use of this commensurate method is based on the assumption that the language under study already has a relationship with things outside the language concerned. At this stage, the researcher involves the context outside the language in describing illocutionary speech acts. In analyzing the data as a whole, the researcher refers to the stages of qualitative analysis proposed by Searle's Speech Act Theory and Miles and Huberman (data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing).

RESULTS

The utterances of the commentators are very diverse according to the purpose and context intended by the speakers. Through these utterances along with the functions and objectives that speakers want to convey, it can implement the form and function of utterances in responding to the news of the Ukraine and Russia conflict. Thus, the results of this study will reveal speaker activism in a global scope through the form and function of the utterances conveyed by the speakers in commenting on the news of the Ukrainian and Russian conflicts.

Forms Of Illocutionary Speech Acts in News Comments on the Ukrainian and Russian Conflicts on the Sky News Arabiyah Youtube Channel

Based on the results of data analysis, the author found 86 forms of illocutionary speech acts in news comments on the Ukraine and Russia conflict. Referring to Searle's theory of speech acts, four types of illocutionary speech acts were found, namely 32 representative speech acts, 30 directive speech acts, 15 expressive speech acts, and 9 commissive speech acts.

Representative Speech Acts

Representative speech acts are speech acts that bind the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Representative speech can be assessed on the dimension of judgment which includes true and false, because it refers to the facts that actually occur or happen in the field. In this case, the representative speech acts found in the data

sources are facts or information stated by commentators related to the news video or responses to other comments related to the Ukraine and Russia conflict. In the news video on the Sky News Arabia youtube channel, it contains representative speech acts that can be observed in the following data.

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|--|--|
| <p>Data A1.32.KV Representative speech acts</p> | <p>هذه الأعمال الشنيعة والجرامية هي من سمات النازية. وفي كلمة واحدة وكما أعلن عن ذلك الرئيس الروسي فالديمير بوتين وهو محق في ذلك أن أوكرانيا يحكمها نازيون جدد ومجرمون متوحشون. لذا وجب شن حرب ضدهم ومحققهم على آخرهم بشتى الطرق ومن ثمة تخليص الشعب الأوكراني من هؤلاء الخونة والوحوش الضارية.</p> <p><i>These heinous and criminal acts are the hallmark of Nazism. In one word, as Russian President Vladimir Putin announced, and he is right in that, Ukraine is ruled by neo-Nazis and barbaric criminals. Therefore, war must be waged against them and exterminate them all to the end by various means, and then rid the Ukrainian people of these traitors and beasts.</i></p> |
|--|--|

Speech A1.32.KV is written by a youtube account named Khelifa Ezzine. The speaker states that all heinous and criminal acts are characteristic of Nazism. In that one sentence, the speaker only aims to convey and inform. The meaning of the speech is that all those who commit heinous and criminal acts are characteristic of Nazis. Then, followed by the next sentence, the speaker wants to justify what he said before, that as announced by Putin, the President of Russia, that Ukraine is ruled by neo-Nazis. Through a causal relationship, the speaker convinces that war must indeed be waged against Ukraine. With the intention of the speaker who conveys, justifies, then convinces, the speech act according to Searle's concept is a representative speech act. Based on the context, this speech act is addressed to pro-Russian groups so that the speaker uses representative sentences for a specific purpose. From the three utterances, each utterance has the function of stating, justifying and convincing according to the facts mentioned by the speaker.

Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are speech acts that ask the interlocutor to act or do something in accordance with the wishes of the speaker. The news video of the Ukraine and Russia conflict on the Sky News Arabia youtube channel contains directive speech acts which can be observed in the following data.

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| <p>Data 4 A2.6.KK Directive speech acts</p> | <p>اين مجلس الأمن الحقير من إعدام الأسرى أنه يكيل بمكيالين كما انجاز المريكا في حرب العراق سابقا وغض النظر عن جرائم الحرب في العراق</p> <p><i>Where is the abominable Security Council from executing prisoners? It is applying double standards, just as America previously sided with the Iraq war and turned a blind eye to war crimes in Iraq.</i></p> |
|--|--|

The A2.6.KK statement was written by a YouTube account named Ali Ali. The speaker begins *اين مجلس الأمن الحقير من إعدام الأسرى* which is an interrogative sentence

with his comment "Where is the cruel Security Council from executing prisoners?". This is marked by the beginning of the sentence preceded by the word " أين " which is one of the letters of istifham. In this case, the speaker does not just ask and wants an answer to the question asked. Based on the context, the speaker is insinuating the Security Council indirectly by using the word مجلس الأمن الحقيق in this case referring to the Ukrainian Security Council as the content of the news is the execution of Russian soldiers.

The utterance is reinforced by the next sentence, as the speaker equates the Security Council with America which sided with Iraq during the war but ignored the crimes committed there. Similarly, the Ukrainian Security Council sided with Ukraine and ignored the crimes committed including the shooting of Russian soldiers. Referring to Searle's concept of illocutionary speech acts, the utterance is included in directive speech acts. In this case, it is a form of directive speech act of criticism that has the function of insinuating because the speaker wants the actions of the interlocutor, namely the Security Council, to be in accordance with the speaker's wishes.

Commissive Speech Acts

Commissive speech acts are utterances to express the speaker's commitment to do something in the future. This utterance functions to bind the interlocutor to do something that the speaker says, it can be a promise, oath, bargain, threat, payment, agreement and prayer. In the video of the news about the conflict between Ukraine and Russia on the Sky News Arabia YouTube channel, there are commissive speech acts that can be observed in the following data.

Data 4 A4.9.KV

Commissive speech acts

هذا وهلا هو البلاء

This, by Allah, is a disaster.

The A4.9.KV utterance was written by a YouTube account named Majed Majed. The speaker swears using the letter qasam "واو" (oath) namely with the word وهلا. Based on the context, the speaker responds to Ali Ali's comments that satirize the Ukrainian Security Council's cruelty to prisoners of war. Therefore, the speaker conveys that this is a disaster. In accordance with the lingual characteristics used by the speaker, referring to Searle's concept of speech acts, this utterance is included in the commissive speech act of swearing which is marked by the use of the letter qasam, swearing in the name of Allah, this indicates that the war and the form of crime committed are a disaster or calamity, the speaker strengthens what is conveyed with the aim of binding the interlocutor to do something that the speaker says.

Expressive Speech Acts

Expressive speech acts are speech acts that aim to express the speaker's psychological state or assess a situation or object contained in the utterance. The expressive verb paradigm is in the form of apologizing, thanking, congratulating, and condolences. The expressive speech acts are shown in the following data:

Data 4 A3.2.KK

Expressive speech

تبا للنازيين القومييين اتباع الناتو. ماهم مجرد حثالة من العصابات.

Damn nazi nationalists who follow NATO. They are just gangster scum.

The A3.2.KV utterance was written by a YouTube account named vive Russia z. The speaker begins his utterance with an angry curse using the word *تبأ* which means 'asshole/damn'. The curse is directed at the Nazi nationalists who follow NATO who are referred to as *العصابات من حثالة* 'gangster trash'. The utterance is a lingual characteristic of the speaker's curse to the interlocutor. Based on Searle's theory of illocutionary speech acts, the A3.2.KV utterance is included in the expressive speech act. The speaker expresses his psychological condition through a curse, in this case the substance of his anger is directed at the Nazi nationalists who follow NATO.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, four types of speech acts were found. These include representative, directive, commissive, and expressive speech acts. Among these speech acts, directive and representative speech acts were the most dominant. In this case, the function of these two speech acts is to influence, state, and justify something. It can be interpreted that the speech acts found in this study tend to aim to mobilize ideological activism, so that it is hoped that a movement will be generated. Through representative speech acts, the speaker tries to convince someone's ideology to claim that Ukraine is inhumane and criminal for executing Russian soldiers. Then, through directive speech acts, they tend to state Ukraine's cruelty by questioning its humanity. In this case, the aim is for the targeted actors to be ideologically influenced and psychologically intimidated, so that they can take actions in accordance with the speaker's wishes.

The tendency of speakers to express negative views about Ukraine may be influenced by several factors. Among these are audio-visual factors that show the execution of Russian soldiers. This event highlights Ukraine as the perpetrator and Russia as the victim. Therefore, sentimental speech as a form of activism calls for action to stop this sensitive situation. Claims of identity, such as Nazism and Nazi ideology, are one strategy to convey the desired message. This stems from the social fact that Ukraine and Nazism are terms often paired in Russian media coverage, rooted in the historical context of Nazism and the genocide in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century (Fortuin, 2022; Umland & Yurchuk, 2021; Kumankov, 2023; Rossoliński-Liebe & Willems, 2022). Russia's defeat by the Nazis 80 years ago serves as the ideological basis for the term "Ukraine" being associated with it. Of course, this can become a narrative of global activism because such claims have become part of public history (Dragaš, 2021; Edele, 2017; Etkind, 2023; Natkhov & Vasilenok, 2021). As a result, terms associated with the Nazis, such as genocide, racist, criminal, and heinous, have also been attached to Ukraine.

In addition to the tendency to claim Ukraine with Nazi ideology, influential discourse also emerged through narratives about the Ukrainian Security Council. In this case, they even equated the actions of the United States in defending Iraq, but forgot about their own country. With this, the speakers use historical reasons (Bakar, 2022; Nugraheni, 2021), so that the stimulation of their discourse has a more responsive illocutionary effect. With a high response, activism becomes more massive and widespread. As a result, the comments reach thousands in this research data. Furthermore, this discourse is reinforced by the narrative that the Ukrainian Security Council shares the same ideology as the Nazis. In this context, it elicits an active response that shapes activism related to the role of the United Nations Security Council.

Research (Aisyah & Permanasari, 2022; Gultom et al., 2024; Syuryansyah & Berthanila, 2022; Murithi, 2022) shows that in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the UN Security Council has not been able to bring about peace between the two sides due to structural obstacles and inconsistencies among non-member state supporters. However, research (Mbara & Graham, 2023; Isanga, 2025; Suardi et al., 2024) indicates that this is due to non-compliance with resolutions and Russia's political abuse of its veto power. Therefore, these political objectives are actually expressed by the speakers to form a humanist activism movement. They do not have a formal group label, but through ideological unity and mutual influence, YouTube users can form a large wave of activism in voicing implicit issues that contain inequality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and description of the research data, there are four forms of speech acts. Of the four forms of illocutionary speech acts, representative and directive speech acts are more commonly found. This shows that the dominant speaker expresses his opinion in response to the conflict that occurs. In addition, directive speech also dominates both. In this case, in addition to making statements, the speaker demands that the interlocutor act. This humanitarian conflict has received a lot of responses and criticism from people around the world. However, in videos that tend to represent the execution of the Russian side, Ukraine becomes the target of negative speech activism. The author recommends the importance of examining the digital activism of social media users, especially YouTube, in a more strategic linguistic aspect with other critical methods. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the field of linguistics, particularly in speech act theory. Additionally, it can serve as a practical reference in addressing various forms of activism by examining their tendencies. Therefore, it is suggested that future research develop studies on global activism in Indonesia.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to this research initiative. The first author contributed to data collection, data analysis, and article writing. The second, third and fourth authors provided theoretical guidance, criticism, feedback and suggestions for the improvement of this article.

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