

SPEECH ACTS IN CREATIVE ENGLISH COMMUNICATION: PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS OF GENERATION Z's CAPTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: Social media has become an integral part of everyday life for many individuals, especially Generation Z, which is known as a group that grows up and is formed in the era of technology and the internet. This study explores the creative English language skills of Generation Z, focusing on speech acts within social media communication from a pragmatic perspective. This study aimed to identify the types of speech acts and their function of the language in Instagram captions made by Generation Z on Instagram. The data were obtained from Instagram captions written by students of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in Madiun Campus who were in the age of Generation Z, as the participants of this study. The study used a descriptive qualitative research design. The techniques for collecting data used were questionnaires and documentation. There are some types of speech acts found in Instagram captions, namely representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. The speech acts serve diverse functions: 1) to convey information, beliefs, or descriptions, 2) to influence the behavior of the reader, 3) to convey an emotional state, and 4) to indicate the commitment to a future action. This study contributes to the understanding of digital communication practices and the evolving use of language among younger generations.

Keywords: *Generation Z, speech acts, pragmatics, social media communication*

Pragmatics is crucial in understanding meaning beyond just words by considering the context in which they are used. The research discussed employs the Speech act approach to analyze data, which focuses on how utterances not only convey information but also perform actions within communication. Speech acts are not merely words but are utterances with specific intentions by the speaker, enabling actions to be carried out through language. This research examines speech acts in Instagram captions from Generation Z and distinguishes between four main categories: directive, expressive, representational, and commissive.

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how context affects the meaning conveyed in communication. Yule (2014) states that pragmatics is the study of how speakers communicate meaning and how listeners interpret it. This goes beyond the literal meaning of words and phrases, focusing on the intended message within the context. One of the pragmatic theories is speech act. A speech act is a way of understanding how language goes beyond just conveying information. It refers to the action performed by saying something. Sadock (2006) recognizes the relevance of illocutionary force, or the action done by an utterance. Pragmatics helps us understand how we derive meaning not just from the words themselves, but also the context in which they are used. Leech (2016) emphasizes that

meaning in language arises from the interaction between what is said and the context in which it said. He views pragmatics as the study of this dynamic relationship.

Speech Acts

A speech act refers to a form of communicative expression that serves a purpose beyond the mere transmission of information. This notion was initially introduced by philosopher J.L. Austin in his influential publication, "How to Do Things with Words." Austin (1962) posited that language serves not only as a tool for conveying facts but also as a mechanism for enacting actions. Consequently, during interpersonal interactions, individuals frequently participate in activities that have the potential to impact, guide, or modify the conduct of others, rather than solely depicting objective truths.

Austin's early examination of speech acts established a foundation for subsequent advancements in the field of linguistic philosophy, notably by his disciple, John Searle. Searle (1976) elaborated on Austin's concepts and organized speech acts in a more systematic fashion. He underscored the significance of context in comprehending the significance and purpose of verbal expressions, positing that identical terms can convey varying interpretations based on the specific context in which they are employed.

Austin (1962) outlined three key elements of speech acts that aid in comprehending the role of language in communication: 1) Locutionary Act: This component pertains to the literal meaning of an utterance, encompassing its phonetic and syntactic characteristics. For instance, in the statement "The door is open," the locutionary act is simply conveying the status of the door. 2) Illocutionary Act: The illocutionary act signifies the speaker's intention behind the utterance, elucidating the desired outcome of the communication. For example, when someone says, "Can you close the door?" the illocutionary act serves as a request for the listener to take action, highlighting the purpose behind the words spoken. 3) Perlocutionary Act: The perlocutionary act denotes the impact of the utterance on the listener, encompassing their emotional response, actions, or thoughts triggered by the speech act. For instance, if the listener feels prompted to close the door upon hearing the request, this reaction represents the perlocutionary effect.

Speech acts can be categorized based on their functions and intentions, aiding in the comprehension of communication complexities. These categories include: 1) Assertives: Statements that provide information or describe a situation, which can be deemed true or false. For instance, the statement "The sun rises in the east" is an example of an assertive, serving as foundational elements in discourse by offering verifiable or disputable information. 2) Directives: Speech acts designed to prompt the listener to take action, encompassing requests, commands, suggestions, and invitations. An illustration of a directive is "Please close the window," reflecting the speaker's wishes or intentions regarding the listener's behavior in everyday interactions. 3) Commissives: Involving the speaker committing to a specific course of action, commissives include promises, offers, and vows. For instance, "I promise to finish the report by tomorrow" exemplifies a commissive act, crucial for establishing trust and responsibility in communication. 4) Expressives: Conveying the speaker's emotional state or attitude, expressives express feelings like joy, sorrow, gratitude, or apology. For example, "I'm really sorry for your loss" is an expressive speech act, playing a vital role in interpersonal relationships by conveying empathy and emotional support. 5) Declarations: Speech acts that induce a change in the external world solely through verbalization, often necessitating specific authority or context for efficacy. For instance, "I hereby declare this meeting open" is a declaration altering the meeting's status, uniquely capable of actively transforming reality through speech.

Comprehending speech acts carries significant implications for communication and social interactions: 1) Contextual Analysis: The interpretation of a speech act is significantly shaped by its context. Elements such as the speaker's intention, the relationship dynamics between the speaker and the listener, and the situational backdrop all contribute to the understanding

of an utterance. For instance, the statement "Can you pass the salt?" can be perceived as a courteous request in one setting and as a sarcastic comment in another. 2) Etiquette and Social Conventions: Social norms and conventions often govern speech acts. The manner in which directives are articulated can reflect the speaker's politeness or authority. For example, phrasing a request as "Would you mind closing the door?" is considered more polite than a straightforward command like "Close the door." Grasping these subtleties is crucial for effective communication, particularly in diverse cultural environments. 3) Negotiation and Persuasion: Speech acts play a pivotal role in negotiation and persuasion. Through the utilization of various speech act types, speakers can sway the attitudes and actions of others. For instance, the use of expressives can foster rapport, while assertives can furnish evidence to bolster a persuasive case. 4) Conflict Resolution: Identifying the nature of the speech act being employed can facilitate conflict resolution. By discerning whether a statement constitutes an assertion, directive, or expressive utterance, individuals can more effectively address misunderstandings and discover common ground.

The theory of speech acts holds practical implications across various domains, including: 1) Linguistics and Language Education: Proficiency in speech acts is fundamental for language learners, aiding in their comprehension of communication subtleties within diverse settings. Language instruction can integrate speech act theory to enhance students' pragmatic skills. 2) Interpersonal Communication: Awareness of speech acts can enhance communication efficacy in personal and professional interactions. Individuals can develop clarity in expressing intentions and improve their interpretation of others' statements. 3) Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing: Speech act theory guides the advancement of conversational agents and chatbots. By discerning various speech act categories, these systems can appropriately respond to user inquiries and requests. 4) Law and Legal Communication: Within legal contexts, speech acts hold significant importance in the interpretation of contracts, testimonies, and legal statements. Understanding the illocutionary force of expressions can influence legal verdicts.

RESEARCH METHOD

A purposive sampling technique is utilized to choose Instagram captions authored by Generation Z individuals, to ensure a varied representation of content and contexts. The captions are gathered and subjected to qualitative content analysis, with a specific focus on identifying speech acts and their corresponding categories. The data were obtained from Instagram captions written by students of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in Madiun Campus who were in the age of Generation Z, as the participants of this study. The study used a descriptive qualitative research design. The techniques for collecting data used were questionnaires and documentation. These speech acts are classified according to their communicative purposes, which include directives for issuing commands or requests, expressives for expressing emotions or attitudes, representational for conveying information, and commissive for making commitments or promises.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are some types of speech acts found in Instagram captions, namely representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. The speech acts serve diverse functions: 1) to convey information, beliefs, or descriptions, 2) to influence the behavior of the reader, 3) to convey emotional state, 4) to indicate the commitment to a future action

An example of data taken from Instagram captions of Gen Z: "Enjoy the beauty of nature with an empty mind" The caption is an expressive speech act. The caption is an expressive speech act for a couple of reasons: 1) Focuses on feelings: This sentence does not directly tell someone to do something (like an imperative speech act - "Go for a walk"). Instead, it expresses a desired emotional state - enjoyment - and suggests a way to achieve it (having an

empty mind). 2) Conveyance of mental state: Expressive speech acts aim to reveal the speaker's internal world. Here, the speaker conveys their belief that an empty mind allows for a deeper appreciation of nature's beauty.

"Believe or not, you'll never be alone when you have your friends by your side" is an expressive speech act. This caption is an expressive speech act for several reasons: 1) Focus on emotions: The sentence prioritizes expressing an emotion rather than giving instructions or reporting information. This highlights the speaker's own belief in the power of friendship to combat loneliness. 2) Evoking response: The core aim is to influence the listener's emotional state. The speaker wants to reassure or comfort the listener by expressing the idea that friends will always be there for them.

Captions in expressive speech acts enable readers to experience and comprehend something more than merely describing objects or providing directions. These captions give social media conversations more purpose by expressing personal opinions and inspiring others to feel the same way. This investigation demonstrates how expressive language may effectively and simply convey complicated ideas while also forging powerful emotional connections.

"God has created this beauty for us" is a representative speech act. Because it expresses a belief or a statement about the world. In this case, it asserts a belief in the existence of God and attributes the creation of a beautiful mountain to divine agency. Representative speech acts are those that convey information or make assertions about reality, and in this sentence, the speaker is presenting their view about the origin of the mountain's beauty.

As representative speech acts provide facts or situations, this speech act is commonly used in Instagram captions. These captions help share information clearly and honestly, making it easier for readers to understand and relate to the content. These captions foster connection and trust with the viewer by sharing authentic experiences or statements. This investigation demonstrates how representative language may be used on social media to meaningfully engage users and successfully convey information.

The caption of "What's your evening workout routine?" is a directive speech act. Because it is seeking information or asking for an action to be performed. Specifically, it is asking the listener to provide details about their workout routine. Directive speech acts are used to request, command, or ask for information, and in this case, the speaker is asking for the listener's specific work out details.

Directive speech acts in Instagram captions provide readers with guidelines or recommendations. These captions either instruct or motivate users to take action. They increase the interaction's purpose and engagement by clearly directing or inspiring the audience. This investigation demonstrates how providing explicit instructions can improve the effectiveness and interactivity of social media posts.

CONCLUSION

The research paper explores speech acts in Generation Z's Instagram captions, identifying four primary types: representative, commissive, expressive, and directive. Representative speech acts were common, reflecting the sharing of personal experiences and opinions, while commissive acts indicated future planning. Expressive acts were prevalent, showcasing emotional engagement, and directive acts aimed at prompting action or interaction. Notably, declarative acts were absent, suggesting that Generation Z does not typically use Instagram captions for immediate declarations. These findings offer insights into Generation Z's communicative behaviors on social media, emphasizing their focus on sharing experiences, expressing emotions, and engaging with their audience through various speech acts.

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