

The Analysis of Illocutionary Speech Act in the Album Song Lyrics Being Funny in a Foreign Language

Analisis Tindak Tutur Ilokusi dalam Lirik Lagu album Being Funny in a Foreign Language

Reni Rahmawati¹, Nurhasanah Halim^{2*}

¹²³Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

reni.rahmawatii05@gmail.com, nurhasanah.nhl@bsi.ac.id*

Article Information

Description

Submission: 08
November 2025
Revised: 01
December 2025
Accepted: 26
December 2025
Approved: 01
January 2026

Kata Kunci

Tindak Ilokusi
Tindak Tutur
Lirik Lagu

Keywords

Illocutionary act
Speech act
Song lyric

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types of illocutionary speech acts, determining the most dominant type, and realization lyrics in the album Being Funny in a Foreign Language by The 1975. This study uses a qualitative method with Searle's (1979) theory of speech acts as the main framework. The results showed that four main types of illocutionary acts were found, namely expressive, assertive, commissive, and directive. Expressive acts are the most dominant with around 40,14%, as the lyrics often express sadness, happiness, longing, regret, complaining, anger, and blaming. Then followed by assertive around 38,03%, directive around 13,38%, commissive around 8,45%, and no declaration speech acts are identified in this data analysis. The illocutionary acts are expressed implicitly, using poetic and symbolic language styles. These findings highlight how song lyrics function not only as artistic expression but also as meaningful communication tools within the field of pragmatics.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis tindak tutur ilokusi, menentukan jenis yang paling dominan, dan realisasi lirik dalam album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* oleh *The 1975*. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan teori tindak tutur Searle (1979) sebagai kerangka utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ditemukan empat jenis utama tindak ilokusi, yaitu ekspresif, asertif, komisif, dan direktif. Tindakan ekspresif adalah yang paling dominan dengan sekitar 40,14%, karena liriknya sering mengungkapkan kesedihan, kebahagiaan, kerinduan, penyesalan, keluhan, kemarahan, dan menyalahkan. Kemudian diikuti oleh asertif sekitar 38,03%, direktif sekitar 13,38%, komisif sekitar 8,45%, dan tidak ada tindak tutur deklaratif yang teridentifikasi dalam analisis data ini. Tindakan ilokusioner diungkapkan secara implisit, menggunakan gaya bahasa puitis dan simbolis. Temuan ini menyoroti bagaimana lirik lagu berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai ekspresi artistik tetapi juga sebagai alat komunikasi yang bermakna dalam bidang pragmatik.



Copyright © 2026 Reni Rahmawati, Nurhasanah Halim

1. Introduction

A literary work is an abstract place where humans can express thoughts and emotions through language. The literary works are produced by the human imaginations and experiences, which are then transferred into the form of oral and written literary works (Syarifuddin, 2020). The works reflect human's social

life, culture, and the morals valued. The human emotional feelings are transformed into a distinctive, beautiful, aesthetic and poetic language.

Literary works can be found in songs, lyrics, folklore, poetry, proverbs, novel reviews, short stories, and many more. The songs, for example, are considered a form of written language that combines lyrics with melodies, to create the emotional connection with the listener. Songs can communicate and express one's feelings through song lyrics without the need to tell what they feel.

Songs are a universal form of channeling feelings, and everyone can express their feelings through the songs they listen to. Listening to songs can make everyone's heart better and more energized. In its presentation, the songs have characteristics and functions. Among others, they can entertain and even invite listeners to find out the meaning behind the words. They can also serve as a medium for communication, often used to deliver specific messages through condensed and rhythmic language (A. W. Sari & Emelia, 2022). The song is not only enjoyed by people of all ages but also represents a tangible form of art with numerous benefits that stimulate the formation of human character and morals (Humaniora, J. S. & Sleman, 2024).

The meaning of song lyrics can be done through speech analysis. Each line of song lyrics is considered an utterance because it has a specific purpose that the author wants to convey to the listener. Utterances are our actions performed, which can be as dramatic or unpleasant as when we communicate with people. Sometimes, the people we are communicating with do not understand what we are saying, or they may have multiple meanings for what we are thinking (I. F. Sari, 2020). To understand the meaning in daily communication, utterance is very important because it is not only a series of words but also includes certain intentions, situations, and purpose for communication. In utterance there are speech act such as locution, illocution and perlocution acts, which have different functions in communication according to the speaker's intention.

Therefore, every meaningful utterance is a speech act. Speech act theory is frequently used in theories of speech regulation in order to construct and comprehend a variety of speech phenomena (Weston, 2024). Speech acts show how language is used to perform actions and convey information via utterances. This part of the pragmatic branch has a very important role in knowing the relationship between the utterance and the action presented by the speaker. In speech acts, speakers have a desire to be achieved through their utterances. Speech act not only to convey information, but also function to perform an action. In this study, the writers focuses on the research of illocutionary acts use theory by Searle, that have five kinds namely: assertive, directives, commissive, expressive, and declaration. The selection of illocutionary acts as the focus of analysis in The 1975's songs is based on their ability to convey the songwriters meaning and purposed being the song lyrics not just as literal meaning. Through illocutionary acts, can gain a better understanding of the human experience express in music as a tool to express feelings and build connections with the listeners. The illocutionary act focuses

on what the speaker is trying to accomplish with their utterances rather than the literal meaning of the words they use (Made & Mahaswari, 2024). Analyzing the illocutionary acts in song lyrics can help reveal the meaning of language from an utterance so that there no misunderstanding.

Several studies have been conducted on illocutionary acts in song lyrics. (Nasim R, 2024) conducted research entitled "An Analysis of Illocutionary Act on Song Lyrics by Sia Furler in The Album, This is Acting." The study used the theory by Searle (1979) and Yule's framework to categorize illocutionary acts into several categories and found that directive acts were the most frequently used types. Another journal by (Nurfaizi & Aji, 2022), "An Analysis on Illocutionary Act in Song "1x1" By Bring Me the Horizon," found the most dominant type of illocutionary act was representative or assertive. Based on this, as a reference in the research conducted leads to the previous journals that have been mentioned. With the hope that this research can contribute to pragmatic studies, especially analyzing the types of illocutionary speech acts in more detail in song lyrics.

The aims of this research, the writers want to explore how language in a song lyric can show a complex communication function as a pragmatic study, to find types of illocutionary acts used in the album and reveal their communicative functions in social and emotional context. In this context, the writers analyze using illocutionary speech acts to gain an understanding and convey the intentions of the songwriters through the words and sentence structure in the lyrics.

2. Methods

This research uses qualitative methods to collect data taken from song lyrics. According to (Lim, 2024), the hallmark of qualitative research is its capacity to offer a profound comprehension of intricate phenomena, which is primarily enabled by careful data analysis. Using this design, the research will concentrate on a thorough analysis of the lyrics, enabling a comprehensive comprehension of their underlying meanings. The aim of this research is to find a deep understanding of the meaning and the meaning of communication contained in song lyrics that are not bound by numbers.

This research focuses on identifying and analyzing the types of illocutionary acts found in the 1975 song lyrics in the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* based on Searle's theory. This research method uses data in the form of words, sentences, and text contained in song lyrics. The method used to analyze and collect data was based on the interactive model developed by (Miles, M . B; Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). This model consists of three main elements, namely;

- a. Data Condensation: The researcher collects and summarizes the data and eliminates irrelevant things. The researcher focuses on data that is considered more important, namely by identifying song lyrics excerpts from the album *Being Funny In A Foreign Language* by The 1975 that contain illocutionary acts and filtering relevant data from each lyric analyzed.

- b. Data Display: The researcher describe based on the type of illocutionary speech acts contained in the song lyrics to be organized. The data that has been collected is presented in table form to make it easier to understand the content and analyze the use of the song lyrics.
- c. Conclusions Drawing and Verifying: Drawing and validating conclusions based on patterns in analyzing data with the completion of the first and second stages. In this research, the data was obtained by identifying through selection in the song lyrics and categorizing the lyrics based on the type of illocutionary speech acts.

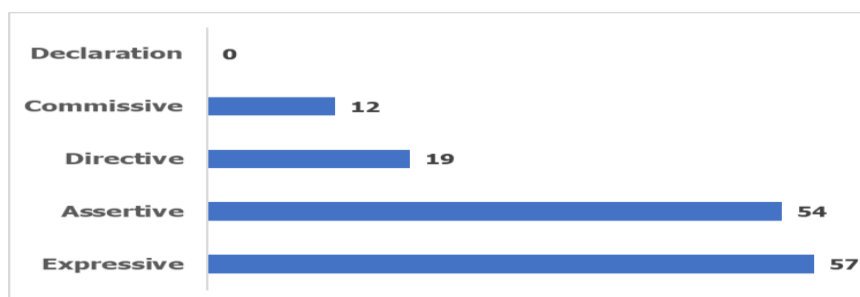
3. Results and Discussions

After collecting and studying the lyrics of the Being Funny in a Foreign Language album by The 1975, the writer identify the types of illocutionary acts in each of the eleven songs contained in the album. Thus, the writer found and present the results of identifying the types of illocutionary acts along with examples of lyrics and their meanings found in each lyric from the Being Funny in a Foreign Language album.

The Most Frequently Types of Illocutionary Act

The most frequently type of illocutionary act in this album is the acts of expressive (see Graph 1). There are fifty seven times the acts of expressive were found. This equals with a percentage of 40,14%. The next frequent type is the acts of assertive which were found fifty four times. This equals 38,03%. Meanwhile, the acts of directive were found nineteen times. Following is the acts of commissive with twelve times. Both are 13,38% and 8,45% respectively. No acts of commissive speech was identified in the data analysis.

Graph 1
The Frequencies of Illocutionary Acts Found in "Being Funny in a Foreign Language" Song Lyrics



The Realization of Illocutionary Acts in the Album of Being Funny in a Foreign Language by The 1975

The acts in the album were realized in four types which generally depicted the vulnerability of a human child in the beginning of adulthood. The use of these acts were to express a lot of inner conflicts and feelings emerged in his transition. The most frequent vulnerability is caused by the singer

emotional overflow toward the new stage of his life (expressive). Another vulnerability is caused by the necessity to accept social commentary as truth (assertive). The next vulnerability is achieved by fulfilling the demand for intimacy, which is seen as a bridge to (directives). And finally, there are actions resulting from promises spiced up to create a bond of love (commissive).

Here are several acts identified in the album and displayed in Table 1:

Table 1
The Realization of Illocutionary Acts
in the Album of Being Funny in a Foreign Language by The 1975

| No. | Type of Act | Song Title | Lyric Examples | The Communicative Functions in Social and Emotional Context |
|-----|-------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 1. | Expressive | Part of the Band | "Am I ironically woke? The butt of my joke?" | The lyric externalizes self-directed irony and insecurity: a metapragmatic confession where the singer exposes the emotional cost of self-awareness. |
| | | Happiness | "You see the stage lights, but never see the tears." | A classic backstage/ frontstage dichotomy: the singer reveals concealed emotional labor, turning hidden pain into a performative emotional disclosure. |
| | | Human Too | "I'm only human, I'm trying my best." | A vulnerability statement functioning as self-legitimation: the singer mitigates perceived flaws through a candid emotional admission. |
| | | About You | "Do you think I have forgotten about you?" | This lyric shows the feeling of nostalgic represented in a form of question: an emotional resurfacing of unresolved attachment that foregrounds longing. |
| | | When We Are Together | It's okay, I'm just a little drunk and I wanna come home." | A disarmed confession that blends embarrassment with desire for safety: emotional intimacy delivered through lowered defences. |
| 2. | Assertive | The 1975 | "I'm sorry if you're livin' and you're seventeen." | A sociocultural truth packaged as an apology: this simultaneously describes and evaluates of generational insecurity. |
| | | Looking for Somebody | "You were looking for | A factual assertion about a psychological state, grounding |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|--|--|
| | (To Love) | somebody to love." | in the observable emotional behavior | |
| | About You | "You always ask about you." | Behavioral-based generalization: the speaker elevates personal observations to affirmed interpersonal truths. | |
| | Human Too | "People are only people when they're talking." | A philosophical generalization framed as universal truth: the lyric performs social commentary disguised as everyday wisdom. | |
| | When We Are Together | "The only time I feel alive is when I'm with you." | A subjective truth claim that functions as emotional anchoring: the singer asserts the relational dependence in his love live. | |
| 3. | Directives | All I Need to Hear | "Just tell me you love me." | Imperative of emotional validation: a high-impact directive where the desired action is explicitly verbal and affective. |
| | | Looking for Somebody (To Love) | "Get out of your head." | A cognitive command urging psychological repositioning: the singer attempts to influence the listener's internal state |
| | | When We Are Together | "Come on, baby, don't you say you love me." | The singer describes a reverse directive (prohibition). This is to represent the prevention of an unwanted declaration. |
| | | Happiness | "Stop making a fool of yourself." | A corrective imperative: the singer tries to regulate the listener's negative behavior |
| | | About You | "Tell me you remember." | A prompt for memory sharing: it is directive to re-establish interpersonal and reaffirm past relational bonds. |
| 4. | Commissive | Oh Caroline | "Baby, I'll do anything that you wanna." | The lyric shows a hyperbolic commitment. It is a pledge of unconditional compliance that reveals emotional dependence |
| | | Happiness | "I'll give you something to do." | This is a promise for the future: the singer commits to action in the future, signaling intention in the dynamics of the relationship. |
| | | When We Are | "I'll be yours." | A classic romantic vow: the lyric transforms identity into a |

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Together | | future-oriented commitment rooted in stable relations |
| Part of the Band | I'll try to keep it light." | A self-regulation promise: the singer commits to control his emotions and implicitly acknowledges past tensions. |
| <i>About You</i> | "I'll wait here for you." | This is a commitment to be patience: a promise to signal loyalty and emotional stability. |

The analysis of illocutionary acts in the album of *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* offers several meaningful implications for the field of pragmatics. The above identified acts have revealed how today's songs reflect the process of shaping emotion, truth-claims, requests and commitments among teens and young adult were shaped.

There are three implications made to reflect how the results reflect present discourse settings have complicated and enriched the illocutionary complexity. First, this album shows that today's teenagers or young adults (so-called Gen Z) are very transparent in showing their vulnerability and emotions. They assert their identities and comment on social realities through truth-claims. There is a radical openness in their utterances.

Second, it appears that Gen Z might only comply to affective imperatives driven by their vulnerable and emotional personalities. They only take suggestions, emotional invitations, a promise for reassurance and a softly framed request. There is a clear boundary made by them to function in human relations.

Third, the uncertainty influences their commitment and promise. Because affective imperatives are preferred, Gen Z struggles to distinguish between obligation as a promise that must be kept and obligation as an act of obeying orders or rules. Even the use of "will" seem a force to their future action.

4. Conclusion

There are four main types of illocutionary acts identified on the album *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* by The 1975. They are namely expressive, assertive, directive and commissive. There is no illocutionary type of declaration found on this album. Each type is used to convey different meanings depending on the context of the song lyrics.

Findings represent the songs consistently focuses on the display of emotion as a communication strategy. The patterns of self-directed irony, hidden emotional labor, and vulnerability were revealed demonstrating how the songs are used as confession and the means of meaning-making. Nostalgia and unresolved futures emerge as recurring emotional threads, often expressed through questions that subtly evoke past feelings. Moments of shame and longing for security, creating intimacy through weakened defenses are

highlighted. There are honesty, self-awareness, and deliberate emotional truth infused in the songs.

The findings also suggest that truth statements function as the blending of personal experiences and broader social insights. In addition, the use of apology to deliver sociocultural critiques, highlighting generational insecurities while softening them are shaped in empathetic lyrics. Getting delve into their psychological or behavioral states, it is asserted that their actions are observable facts, leading to the transformation of personal observations into interpersonal truths. The use of philosophical generalizations demonstrates a tendency to embed social commentary within seemingly mundane reflections. Overall, the album captures a modern pragmatic landscape where artistic discourse mirrors the multimodal, affective, and socially conscious communication norms of Gen Z.

References

- Alam, S. N., Charisma, D., & Winarto, E. (2020). The commissive speech act in Adele songs. *Concept: Community Concern for English Pedagogy and Teaching*, 5(1), 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.32534/jconcept.v5i1.2385>
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press.
- Bafadal, M. F. (2019). Speech Acts Analysis in College Discourse At the English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Mataram in Academic Year 2016/2017. *Linguistics and Elt Journal*, 10(2), 1. <https://doi.org/10.31764/leltj.v10i2.789>
- Febrimadani, R., Arifin, M. B., & Setyowati, R. (2023). Illocutionary Act In Finding Dory Film. *Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Budaya*, 7(4), 1275. <https://doi.org/10.30872/jbssb.v7i4.8555>
- Humaniora, J. S., D., & Sleman, K. (2024). *Illocutionary Speech Acts In Song Lyrics: A Pragmatics Study On Illocutionary Speech Acts In Song Lyrics: A Pragmatics Study On " Kupu-Kupu " By Tiara Andini*. August. <https://doi.org/10.36232/jurnalbahasaindonesia.v5i2.6804>
- Izar, J., Nasution, M. M., Virginia, O., & Harianto, N. (2022). The Analysis Of Locutionary , Illocutionary , and Perlocutionary Of Seech Acts In The Short Story " Rembulan Dalam Cappucino " By Seno Gumira Ajidarma. *Journal of English Teaching and Linguistics*, 28–35.
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Made, N., & Mahaswari, A. (2024). *Illocutionary Acts Found in Dinosaur Prison Movie*. 2(1), 20–27.
- Miles, M . B; Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. Third Edition*. SAGE Publications.
- Nasim R, M. A. (2024). An Analysis of Illocutionary Act on Song Lyrics by Sia Furler in The Album This is Acting. *INATESOL JOURNAL*, 15–22. <https://doi.org/10.30587/inatesol.v1i1.7363>
- Nurfaizi, M. A., & Aji, A. S. (2022). An Analysis on Illocutionary Act in Song "

- 1x1 " By Bring Me the Horizon. *English Teaching, Literature, and Linguistics (ETERNAL) Conference*, 2(1), 285.
- Rismayanti, H., & Anggraeni, D. (2021). The Analysis of Locutionary Act , Illocutionary Act , and Perlocutionary act in Five Feet Apart Movie Herland Franley Manalu. *MEDIOVA: Journal of Islamic Media Studies*, 1(2), 138–149.
- Safitri, H., Perlina, M., & Romano, D. (2022). Utterances in the Woman in the Window Movie: an Analysis of Illocutionary Act Article Info. *Getsempena English Education Journal*, 9(2), 149–159. <https://ejournal.bbg.ac.id/geej>
- Sari, A. W., & Emelia, T. W. (2022). an Analysis of Illocutionary Act on Song Lyrics of Bruno Mars'S Doo-Woops & Hooligans Album. *Jurnal Guru Kita PGSD*, 7(1), 166. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jgk.v7i1.41892>
- Sari, I. F. (2020). The Speech Act of Cartoon Movie: Spongebob Squarepants' The Movie. *Linguists: Journal Of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 6(1), 126. <https://doi.org/10.29300/ling.v6i1.2854>
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sefriana, M. (2020). *An Analysis Of Illocutionry Acts And Perlocutionary Acts In Movie "Monte Carlo" By Thomas Bezucha*.
- Stevani Margaret;, Erikson;, T. K., Hassan;, S. M., & A, G. F. Y. (2023). A Case Study of Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Speech Acts in English Learning Interactions in Junior High School. *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices*, January. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jweep>
- Syarifuddin, S. I. (2020). Semantic Analysis in English High School Handbooks Salmia Syarifuddin 1 Irmawaty Hasyim 2. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Inggris*, 9(1), 1–12.
- Tri, A., Wijaya, A., Sabardila, A., & Budi, A. (2022). *Perlocutionary Speech Acts in Seringai Album Song Lyrics and Their Relevance to Critical Character Education*. 662(Icolae 2021), 609–617.
- Weston, D. (2024). Genocidal Speech and Speech Act Theory. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, 38(1), 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-024-10209-0>