

Illocutionary Speech Act of Hate Speech in Mobile Legends Game

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ABSTRACT

Hate speech appears as a form of players' emotional response to the tense and competitive game situation. The purpose of this study is to identify the types of speech acts used in hate speech and analyze the form of hate speech in the mobile legend chat and comment. The method used was descriptive qualitative with pragmatics approach regarding Searle illocutionary theory and used documentation techniques on conversation in chat games and player comments. The results showed that expressive speech acts are the most dominant form (53,33%), followed by directive (33.33%), assertive (6.67%), and commissive (6.67%). The forms of hate speech are carried out through calling someone or group of people with animals, part of human body, blasphemy, and also Psychological Abuse. This speech not only reflects emotions, but is also used as a tool to verbally and psychologically attack opponents. The findings prove that in-game hate speech is a meaningful social action that can influence interactions between players. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding pragmatics in unpacking the meaning of hate speech as well as the urgency of creating a healthy play environment free from verbal violence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a means by which individuals shape their perception of the world around them Sapir (1924). Through language, individuals can express intentions, desires, beliefs, and commitments that influence the actions and reactions of others. Shappeck (2004) stated that language is not only understood as a communication tool but also as a reflection of social, cultural, and psychological behavior. Additionally, Chomsky (1965) explained that language is also governed by rules such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, which help speakers structure their messages in a way that the listener can understand.

In the field of pragmatics, language is studied in the context of its usage, considering how the meaning of an utterance can change depending on the social situation and the environment in which it is spoken. According to H. P. Grice (1976), pragmatics deals with the way language is used in context. Understanding the meaning of an utterance is not only enough to pay attention to the words, but also needs to consider the intention, context, and purpose of the speaker. It shows that the sense of an utterance is more complex than simply the information in the words. The theory of speech act, developed by Searle (1969), provided an essential foundation for understanding how a person conveys information and performs actions through language. This utterance includes the

speaker's actions while speaking, such as giving commands, making promises, or even issuing threats.

When it comes to communication, language can be used for various positive and negative purposes (Syahid, et al., 2023). One negative use of language is hate speech, which refers to communication directed at individuals or groups based on race, religion, gender, or other attributes to belittle, insult, or attack them (Gagliardone, 2019; Arofah, 2018; Batubara & Mulyadi, 2023). Hate speech risks creating social tensions in the real world and can disrupt interactions in the digital space, as seen in online gaming communities. This phenomenon has garnered increasing attention, given the rise in hate speech occurring on social media platforms (Syahid, et al., 2021) and in online games (Rina & Tanduk, 2024; Nurdiansyah & Darma, 2024; Putra, et al., 2024; Retno, 2020). Regarding this, pragmatics is crucial in providing a relevant approach for analyzing hate speech by focusing on the speaker's intentions and objectives and the social context in which the speech is delivered.

The theory of Illocutionary developed by Searle (1969) also be used to understand the purpose of utterance involved in this hate speech. This study focused on hate speech in text-based chat and comment interactions between players in Mobile Legends. The main theoretical framework of this study primarily relied on pragmatics, theory of Illocutionary taken from Searle (1969). It explored the purposes behind the use of such language, whether it is to belittle, intimidate, or simply an expression of frustration. Additionally, the data collection for this study was confined to a selected sample of game play sessions within a defined period. These limitations helped the scope of study and focused on analyzing hate speech in a specific context within the game.

Within online games, Mobile Legends stands out as a prominent platform for studying hate speech due to its massive player base and status as one of the top mobile games in Asia, including Indonesia Statista (2024), interactions between players often involve emotionally charged communication and pressure, both within the game and through player-to-player chats. The language used in this game conveys information related to strategies or tactics and includes hate speech expressed during conflicts between players. With the increasing popularity of this game, issues surrounding the use of harmful language, such as insults or personal attacks, have become more prominent. Games like Mobile Legends, which allow players to interact directly through text chat, provide a space for players to express their emotions, which sometimes lead to the misuse of language to attack other players.

The first study comes from Ilham & Sajarwa (2023) conducted a study analyzing hate speech in Instagram comments directed at Indonesian public figure Rachel Venny, focusing on the use of the word "lu" and its dehumanizing function using corpus linguistics and Searle's theory. Meanwhile, Batubara & Mulyadi (2023) study focused on hate speech in COVID-19-related news on Instagram, identifying expressive illocutionary acts such as blaming and hating. Mahbubah (2023) explored impoliteness strategies in live YouTube comments during Mobile Legends streams, applying Culpeper's theory but not classifying utterances by speech act categories. Based on the previous studies, no study that focus on the use of hate speech in online games such as mobile legends, which studies how hate speech can appear and the purpose of the hate speech using searle's theory of illocution to find out the real purpose of why players use hate speech as a tool to communicate.

This study is very important to analyze because there are no studies that focus on hate speech in online games that provide real time observations and data, from some previous studies that only focus on hate speech in social media platforms such as Instagram, You Tube and Facebook to find out the form of hate speech or impoliteness theory. On the contrary, this study is very important because this study applied Searle theory of illocutionary speech acts to find out the purpose of using hate speech in ongoing games where players often use hate speech but they don't understand the meaning of the words they say. Based on this phenomenon, this study analyzed the

acts of hate speech contained in conversations in the mobile legends game along with forum comments that discuss the game, aiming to analyze more deeply the reasons or purposes why mobile legends players often use hate speech when communicating in the game. The focus of this study is the speech act theory of Searle to help analyze the intent of hate speech in the mobile legends game.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the phenomenon of hate speech in the context of the game Mobile Legends. The study method aimed to provide an in-depth description of the purposes behind players' use of hate speech. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative method is used to explore a deep understanding of a phenomenon, particularly those related to communication patterns, social interactions, and the meanings behind human actions. This approach allows researchers to comprehend the social context and the meaning behind the use of hate speech in the game. The primary data sources in this study are player text chats during Mobile Legends matches and comments in forums or chat rooms relevant to the game. Player text chats provided real-time data on communication patterns and emotions that arise during game play. Meanwhile, in-game comments provide a deeper understanding of the communication dynamics of gameplay patterns, including how players communicate or react to the behavior of other players. Data collection in this study followed the theory of Miles & Huberman (2014), observation and documentation, focusing specifically on analyzing game play in games, observations is conducted to record interactions between players during the matches. The primary focus was on speech containing elements of hate, such as insults, mockery, or threats. In addition, the context of communication such as the relationship between players and the in-game factors that happened is also considered. Documentation was done after observation by taking screenshots of text conversations containing hate speech as well as player comments in forums or chat rooms. This documentation process aimed to obtain authentic data that can be further analyzed, while in the data analysis used analysis techniques from Miles & Huberman (2014) consists of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From a total of 15 hate speech data analyzed, there was found four speech acts in the online game conversation Mobile Legend, namely assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive. The results of analyzing are described below.

Table 1. Illocutionary Speech Acts as a Function of Hatred in The Mobile Legends Game

No	Illocutionary Speech Acts	Frequency	Frequency
1.	Expressive	8	53.33%
2.	Directives	5	33.33%
3.	Assertive	1	6.67%
4.	Commissive	1	6.67%

Based on Table 1, the expressive speech acts are the most dominant form (53.33%), followed by directive (33.33%), assertive (6.67%), and commissive (6.67%). The following is an analysis of the forms of hate speech found in mobile legend chats and comments.

Data Analysis

1. Expressive Utterance Using Part of Human Body

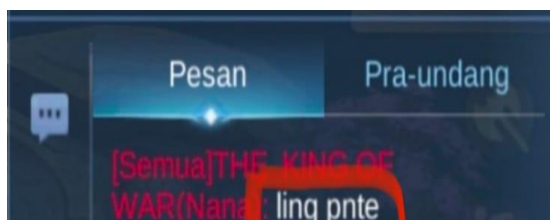


Figure 1. Human Body

In the figure 1 the data was taken from in game chat, inside the game when the player playing a match. The utterance spoke by the speaker with utterance (“*ling pnte*”). The word (*pnte*) stands for the word “*pantek*”, is a word from *Minang* people language, *pantek* itself refers to a part of the human body, especially the man genitals, so this makes the word when spoken to someone is become a hate speech. Referring to the match the speaker played in that match the speaker feels annoyed with the opponent who is the speaker's opponent because the opponent of the speaker is very good so that the speaker becomes annoyed and says his utterance to his opponent. Based on the figure the speaker that paying a hero nana want to blame the player with the initial's ling, it can be seen that the player is frustrated and, in the end, makes his speech by blaming other players by using words that have male gender elements. It can be seen in the figure that the speaker is Javanese so this reinforces that the speaker wants to blame other players for what the speaker has experienced, in the figure it can be seen that the speaker is angry and upset so that the speaker blames other players, in hate speech if someone calls another person a sex word or an object that is dirty or inhumane this can be referred to as an insult to someone or an attack on another person that causes an act of humiliation, even if it uses local language though.

2. Expressive Utterance Using Blasphemy

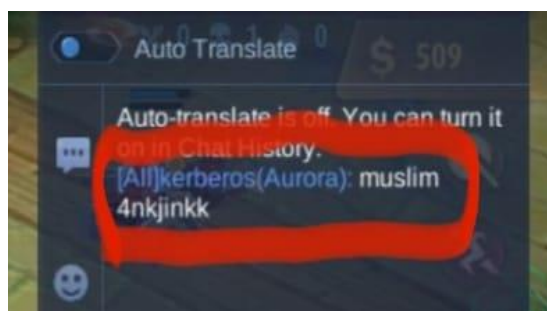


Figure 2. Blasphemy

In data 2 there is a form of utterance that uses animal name and religious elements. The utterance said “*muslim 4nkjinkk*” which shows an insult to the religion of Islam. This utterance is combination of number and words. In KBBI online the word *4nkjinkk* or *anjing* mean animal that often said as a dirty or disgusting animal. In the figure seen that the speaker is expressing anger towards a religious group. The speaker seems angry and blaming a religious group, specifically Islam. In the image the speaker attacks the religious group by calling them dogs. The marker word indicating that the speaker is performing an expressive act is the word 'dog.' This word shows that the speaker is belittling or blaming Muslims by using the term 'dog.' When someone or a group is

referred to or compared to a dog, it is an inappropriate and disrespectful statement. This falls under hate speech, which aims to insult and demean.

3. Expressive Utterance Using Part of Human Body



Figure 3. Human Body

In data 3 the utterance spoken by speaker using words and full sentences the highlight is the utterance “*urend lu memek*” is a word that contains female genitalia while *urend* is another word for *urine*, according to KBBI word *urine* is liquid element that is discharged in the bladder and excreted by the body's organs through the body's channels and becomes urine. while *memek* is part of the female genital word *memek* is one of the forms of cursing in the *Malay* language this word belongs to the category of body parts, especially female genitals. when these words are spoken or shown to someone like in the figure the speaker is trying to express his annoyance at something that happened to him by blaming the target with the word that is not good to use in conversation. The marker found to reinforce that this conversation is included in the expressive is seen in the word (*lu*), that this personal pronoun is usually used to express something or blame someone in the figure above the speaker blames the person who is playing by considering it as a genital organ. Using a part of female genital. in the figure, the speaker tries to insult the target by using the word woman's body parts, stating that the speaker is so upset that he does not only use one part of the woman but uses two words at once.

4. Expressive Utterance Using Part of Human Body

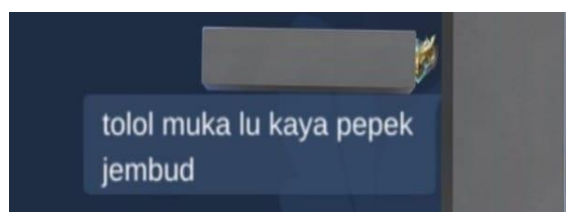


Figure 4. Human Body

In data 4 the utterance shows the utterance that contains the utterance “*tolol muka lu kaya pepek jembud*”. This is a form of expressive speech act, seen in the figure the speaker is expressing his annoyance by saying that the player's face is like “*pepekjembud*”. *Pepek* according to KBBI *pepek* is the female genitalia while *jembud* refers to genital hair these two words are both part of the genitals. If these two words are used to name a person or group this is a form of insult the speaker uses these two words to demean or consider the player lower than human or not equal to humans by attacking or insulting the player's face. The word mark that this is expressive can be seen from the speaker's words that seem to convey his annoyance or anger by linking the word *kaya* which makes this word an expressive utterance because the speaker feels frustrated. Based on the theory by Searle the speaker is trying to express his anger by saying that the player's face looked like a woman's genitals another study related to this is study conducted by Suryani (2021) makes it clear that

the use of female body parts as a form of hate speech is an action that is shown to attack or insult someone.

5. Expressive Utterance Using Blasphemy

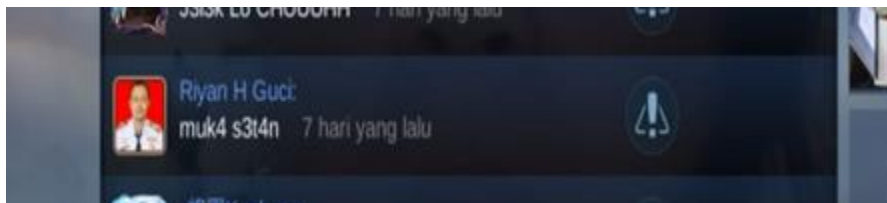


Figure 5. Blasphemy

In data 5 shows the utterance the speaker spoke his utterance with said the part of human body. The utterance “*muk4 s3t4n*” is an utterance that using evil creatures the word “*muk4*” in KBBI muka is the front of the head and “*s3t4n*” is the word *setan* in KBBI evil spirits is the word or thing that always discusses in religion. In the utterance is used to attack the target of speech by equating it with an evil creature, in the figure the word *setan* becomes a marker that the speaker is expressing his annoyance towards his hearer because of something done by the target of speech, the speaker's goal is not only to express his anger but also wants to attack the physical aspects of the target of speech. This utterance is a representation of an expressive speech act, which is a form of speech used to express negative emotions such as anger and hatred towards the hearer.

6. Expressive Utterance using animal



Figure 6. Animal

In the data 6 the speaker spoke the utterance with full sentence. The chat said “*tolol lu goblok anjing ngentod*” the speaker conveys hate speech in a very rude and offensive manner. The markers in this data are the word “*tolol*”, “*goblok*”, “*anjing*”, dan “*ngentod*”. Each of these words has connotations of humiliation and verbal violence. Denotatively, the word “*tolol*” dan “*goblok*” means stupid or unintelligent, while “*anjing*” is an animal name that is often used to dehumanize someone. The word “*ngentod*”, according to the KBBI, means to have sexual intercourse, but in this context, it is vulgar and offensive as a form of cursing. Connotatively, all of these words are used simultaneously to show the speaker's expression and demean the hearer. The use of the word “*lu*” also emphasizes the target of the utterance, which is directly targeting certain individuals with the intention of personally attacking them. It is uttered to vent negative emotions and demean opponents in competitive situations, such as in online games. The speaker wants to express anger and frustration by verbally attacking this make this utterance is the part of expressive speech acts according to Searle's classification, because they show the speaker's emotions explicitly in the form of hatred, annoyance, and contempt.

7. Expressive Utterance Using Animal



Figure 7. Animal

In the data 7 the speaker spoke his utterance in chat game. The utterance said “*tim hama*” *hama* in KBBI is animals that interfere with agricultural production, however with connotatively meaning the word is used in speech contexts as a symbol of something annoying, useless, or destructive. This utterance is a form of negative emotional outburst from the speaker, who shows displeasure or anger towards his team's performance in the game. By referring to his own team as *hama*, the speaker intentionally demeans, insults, and mocks the team members, as if they are the main cause of failure in the game. This is an expressive speech act according to Searle because it is used to express the speaker's negative feelings, in this case in the form of frustration and disappointment. This can also be seen from the emotional context during the match. The speaker does not give orders or state facts, but only expresses his frustration verbally.

8. Expressive Utterance Using Blasphemy

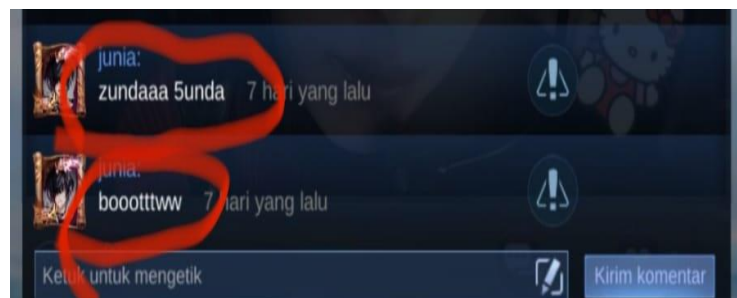


Figure 8. Blasphemy

In the data 8 the speaker spoke the utterance with number as the main word. The utterance “*zundaaa 5unda*” is the original word of *Sunda*, refers to the tribe in Indonesia, the speaker uses this utterance to express his annoyance or anger towards one race in Indonesia, namely Sundanese, this speech contains elements of ethnic insults where the word Sundanese is written with the aim of attacking or harassing the Sundanese. The insertion of the number 5 emphasizes the effort to mock the name of a particular tribe that can offend someone's ethnic identity. Meanwhile the word “*bootttw*” is a word from *bot* is a form of insult to someone's way of playing where the word “bot” in the world of online games can be used to demean players who are considered weak or not proficient in the game.

9. Directives Utterance Psychological Abuse

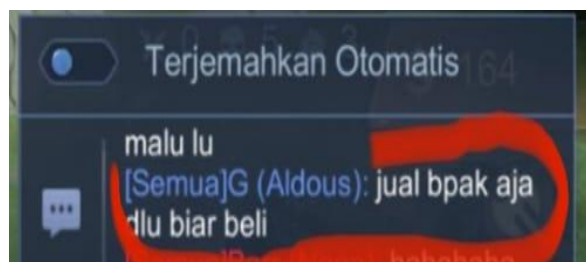


Figure 9. Abuse

In the data 9, there is hate speech in the form of the complete sentence “*jual bapak aja dlu biar beli*”. This speech is a form of insult to parents, especially the player father. The sentence is included in the directive speech act because it aims to influence or tell the target to do something, namely selling his father. In this context, the speaker conveys insults by suggesting inappropriate actions. The word “*jual*” marks that this utterance is a directive speech act because it contains an ordered to do something. Beside from being an insult, the utterance also encourages negative actions towards others. The suggestion to sell someone who is not related to the game shows that the attack is not only aimed at the player, but also targets his family as a deeper form of insult.

10. Directives Utterance Using Part of Human Body

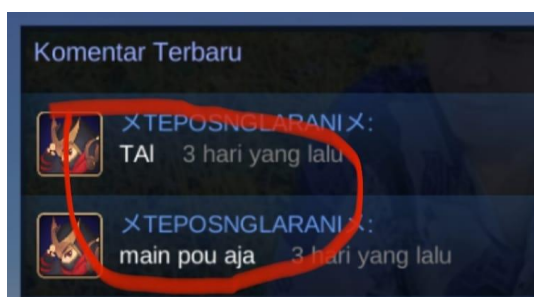


Figure 10 Human Body

In data 10 shows utterances that used by the speaker the utterances “*TAI main pou aja*” containing elements of feces according to KBBI the word *tai* means (deposits or food dregs from the stomach that come out through the rectum or feces) or various impurities that will be disposed of. While the word *pou* itself refers to a game or video game that many people play the word *pou* itself comes from the word poof which means poop, in the *pou* video game the player takes care of an alien named *pou* by feeding, bathing, and playing with him. this game is very popular among children but over time the game is considered disturbing because the players have learned the fact that the game is actually a poop. In the figure above, it can be seen that the player is ordering other players to take an action namely deleting his ml game after the speaker says the word *tai*, then the speaker is seen ordering the player to play another game, namely the *pou* game. This shows that the speaker is ordering the players not to play mobile legends and telling or suggesting the player to play *pou* only. In the figure the verb *aja* indicates that the speaker is ordering the player, in this case the target of his speech, to take an action namely deleting his mobile legends game and playing *pou* only.

In the context of hate speech, if the speaker says something like this, it can be considered that the speaker is asking the player not to play mobile legends but asking the player to play *tai*, this shows that the word in the figure is an insult to the player because the speaker asks the player

to play a game that is categorized as dirt, this makes the word spoken by the speaker want to insult the player by suggesting the player to play dirt, showing that the player is dirt. This word implies that the speaker thinks that the player is the same as a piece of shit. Based on the theory by Searle the speaker is trying to insult the player to perform an action where the action is to ask the player to delete his mobile legends game and play the poof game, the speaker used directive speech act to insult the player by ordering or telling him to perform an action that the speaker considers as a reasonable action.

11. Directives Utterance Using Part of Human Body

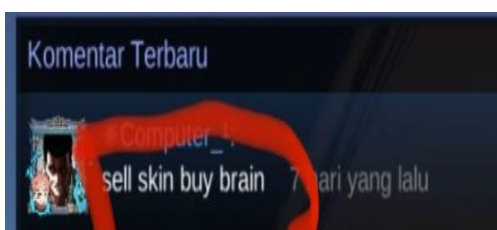


Figure 11 Human Body

In the data 11 the speaker speak the utterance “*sell skin buy brain*” in the utterance, it contains the word part of human body parts. contains the word “brain” according to KBBI online the word brain is part of the human body which is the human thinking tool itself, in the utterance the speaker is performing an act that is demeaning to someone in the figure the speaker is seen suggesting other players to sell their skins, skins in MOBA games are virtual goods in the game, in MOBA games players who have a lot of skins are usually considered rich people, but in MOBA games if a player does not have knowledge in the game having a lot of skins does not mean anything.

12. Directives Utterance Using Animal



Figure 12 Animal

In the data 12 the speaker spoked the utterance of full sentence. The utterance “*hapus aja ml lu ayam*” is the utterance where the speaker used the word *ayam*, *ayam* according to KBBI is a poultry animal that generally cannot fly, can be tamed and maintained, cocked, the males crow, while the females squawk. But the word chicken has become a word that has a deeper meaning, in today's era the word chicken has become a slang word, chicken is often associated with a nature that tends to weak or not brave. In the gaming community, especially MOBA games, chickens are also more often used as a symbol that symbolizes someone is weak or even cowardly. In the figure, it can be seen that the speaker is telling his speech by suggesting or asking the player to delete the mobile legends game and then the speaker also uses the word chicken which characterizes or marks that the player is cowardly or weak, the speaker suggests or tells the player to no longer play MLBB. However, the speaker also entered the name of the animal, namely chicken, into his speech because the speaker considered that the player was cowardly and weak in the MLBB game by using the word chicken into his speech consider the player weak and timid. The figure shows that

the speaker is attacking or insulting the player by naming him with the word chicken, this can be included in the act of insulting because the player tries to use the name of an animal to mention or name someone in this case the player.

13. Directives Utterance Using Part of Human Body

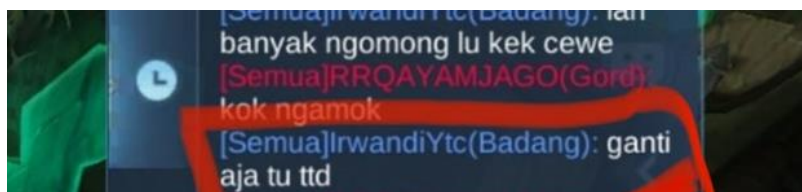


Figure 13 Human Body

In the data 13 the speaker spoke the utterance that include part of human body. The utterance “*Ganti aja tu ttd*” in the figure the speaker advised the player to change his *ttd*, *ttd* is the full word of *titit*, *titit* in KBBI is man’s privates in the figure the speaker is telling his speech to a man in the figure the speaker wants the male player to do something, namely changing his genitals. the purpose of the speaker doing this speech is to insult the male player by suggesting to change his genitals. The word *Ganti* functions as an order for someone to do what he ordered in the figure asking to order to change something this shows an attempt to influence someone.

14. Assertive Utterance Using Blasphemy

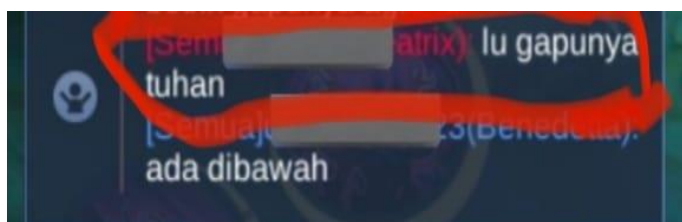


Figure 14 Blasphemy

In the data 14 the speaker spoke the utterance contains religious elements. The utterance said “*lu ga punya tuhan*” is the utterance is clearly a speech that leads directly to someone's religious beliefs, seen in the figure the speaker is trying to making fake news that someone does not have a god, reflecting on the language and the way speakers communicate including into Indonesian, Indonesia is a country that adheres to various religions so this makes the words of the speaker is a news that is not true in the figure the speaker just states something without knowing the real thing. The marker that this sentence is assertive is the use of the word “*lu*” to strengthen the aggressive tone which is personal, aimed directly at the hearer. The speaker verbally conveys assumptions or conjectures that are not necessarily true, which can be classified as a form of slander or false accusations. It can be understood in the figure that this utterance is conveyed by the speaker with the intention to demean, insult, or suppress the hearer through attacks on aspects of his beliefs, so the utterance in the figure above can be categorized as an assertive speech act, because the speaker is trying to state something that he believes to be true, even though it does not have valid evidence. This utterance is a form of speech act that states or claims, but with negative content that is intended to intentionally hurt the hearer verbally.

15. Commissive Utterance Psychological Abuse

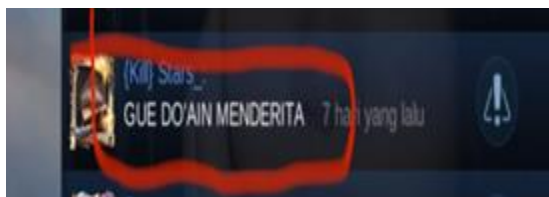


Figure 15 Abuse

In the data 15 the speaker spoke the utterance in comment game. The comment said “**GUE DO’AIN MENDERITA**”, in the figure the speaker expresses a very negative form of desire for the hearer, namely praying for the hearer to experience suffering. The marker that explains this is included in praying is “*do’ainmenderita*”, which denotatively means praying for someone to experience pain or unhappiness. But connotatively, this phrase carries verbal hatred and resentment towards the other. The rhetorical meaning of this utterance is further reinforced by the use of the slang “*gue*” which shows personal intentions and informality in the context of online communication, as well as the emphasis on “*menderita*” which reflects verbal malicious intent. This utterance is not a form of emotional expression, but rather a commitment to expect others' suffering as a form of punishment or retribution. In the figure, it can be seen that the speaker seems to convey the utterance to express commitment to the action of making a promise, which is indirectly threatening. Thus, this utterance is a commissive speech act, because the speaker expresses a commitment to a future action, namely to wish suffering to the hearer. This shows a deliberate and conscious intention of hateful content, as a form of verbal abuse aimed at hurting the other party psychologically.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of 15 data of hate speech in the Mobile Legends game taken from conversations between players and comments, it is found that hate speech appears in various forms of illocutionary speech acts, namely expressive (53.33%), directive (33.33%), assertive (6.67%), and commissive (6.67%), with no declarative speech acts found. This finding shows that expressive speech acts are the most dominant form in hate speech, where players express negative emotions such as anger, insults, ridicule, and hatred by using vulgar language or containing bodily elements to demean the opponent. Directive speech acts are also quite prominent, characterized by offensive invitations or orders, such as telling other players to delete the game or insulting their family members. Meanwhile, assertive and commissive speech acts, although few in number, indicate the delivery of information in the form of false accusations or verbal threats to other players.

The use of hate speech is usually triggered by an emotional reaction to defeat or pressure in a game, which then leads to an aggressive way of communicating. In addition, the use of local languages, religious insults, and comparisons with animals reflect the social and cultural elements in the speech.

The findings confirm that the pragmatics approach, particularly Searle's speech act theory, is an effective analytical tool to uncover the intent and purpose of hate speech in online gaming interactions. This study not only contributes to the understanding of toxic behavior in digital communication, but also emphasizes the importance of building polite interactions and awareness of the dangers of harmful language use in online communities such as Mobile Legends.

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