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# **Expressive Illocutionary Acts on Manchester United Instagram Account**

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#### **Abstract**

In this study, we analyzed expressive illocutionary acts in Manchester United Instagram comments, drawing on Searle's framework. Public figures and sports clubs, including Manchester United, leverage Instagram for personal branding and fan interaction. Our research focused on three distinct posts, revealing a spectrum of speech acts. The analysis identified a prevalence of thanking (14%), complaining (26%), complimenting (23%), wishing (20%), and greeting (17%). complaints stood out, indicating follower dissatisfaction with recent club developments. This underscores the significance of social media platforms in fostering user engagement and communication. The study sheds light on how fans express themselves in written form, contributing to the broader understanding of online interactions and the dynamics of fan-club relationships. As Instagram continues to play a pivotal role in communication, our findings offer insights into the diverse ways users engage with a prominent sports brand like Manchester United on this platform.

#### INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in conveying and receiving information. People employ language as a means of communication and interaction in their daily lives. Hill (1958) defines language as the fundamental and most complex type of human symbolic behaviour. It is a natural human sign symbol designed to facilitate expressive capacity (Cruse, 2000). In addition, according to Dardjowidjojo (2010), language is a spoken arbitrary symbol used by individuals to engage and communicate, adapting to specific cultural contexts. Furthermore, Bloomfield & Sapir (1922) stated that communication is part of uttering the speech accepted by the listener. Kaburise (2011) also stated that the notion of language is use to create the meaning between language participants in which as the process of involving some units are context and function of the utterances. Haliday and Hasan (1989) then further mentioned the following contexts related to the communication by the language are participants, action and situation.

As a means of expression through spoken and written forms, individuals utilize language to articulate and clarify their thoughts and ideas by delivering their utterances. An utterance here refers to any statement made by a person, either preceding or following another person's speech (Larry A. Samover, 1985). Such utterances occur

within conversations, where individuals express themselves, taking into account the distinctiveness of human expression. Consequently, effective comprehension of others' statements necessitates an understanding of context and subject matter. This linguistic process is known as pragmatics, aids in interpreting others' words.

Pragmatics involves studying language meaning and context as conveyed by speakers or writers. As Yule (1996) explains, pragmatics delves into comprehending how a speaker's or writer's intended meaning is grasped by listeners or readers. Moreover Leech (1983) adds that pragmatics examines meaning within speech contexts, offering a means to resolve issues from the perspectives of both speakers and hearers. Yule elaborates on utterances and their action-performing nature, commonly referred to as speech acts. They encompass not only understanding language spoken meaning but also discerning the speaker's intended meaning by recognizing the situation, referred to as the speech event. He also categorizes speech acts into three types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act involves speaking with meaning, while the illocutionary act is the purposeful communication of specific information. Illocutionary acts include actions like giving, promising, or explaining. According to Austin (1962: 12), an illocutionary act is an act of doing something that is spoken by the speaker in addition to saying or stating anything based on the speaker's utterance. Perlocutionary acts create the impression that a statement holds significance and purpose. Searle (1979) outlines five types of illocutionary acts: declarative, assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive. Declarative acts change the world through words, like announcing or appointing. Assertive acts state facts, while expressive acts convey the speaker's emotions. Directives prompt actions from others, such as ordering or requesting, it is also in line with the study conducted by Puranjani & Rajeg (2022) and Wisnu Adi Putra & Sedeng (2022) claiming that directive illocutionary act is more about giving direct order and request. The last is commissive acts involve commitments for future actions, like promising or offering.

Speech acts extend beyond direct communication in everyday life and extend to online platforms such as social media, where users share opinions and comments. Nasrullah (2015) highlights how social media fosters virtual social relationships through cooperation, sharing, and communication. Joyce Kasman Valenza (2014) states social media is an internet platform that allows people to instantly share and engage with their community. Instagram, a prominent platform, enables immediate communication through features like posting, sharing, and commenting. According to Bambang (2012:10). Instagram is a smart phone social media program that has virtually the same purpose as Twitter, but the distinction lies in shooting images in a form or location to share information with its followers. Users connect, sharing experiences, ideas, and even business content. This platform also facilitates interaction among fans and followers, with users posting and reacting to content. In the context of Manchester United's *Instagram* account, users' comments reflect various expressive illocutionary acts. Analyzing these expressions offers insights into how written speech functions for Instagram users.

Concerning to the study about expressive illocutionary act, it is important to be comprehended as the role in communication both in written or spoken language. The similar type of topic discussion are previously dealing with the different data source such as movie that conducted by Paramita et al., (2022)entitled The Attitude Expressive Illocutionary Act Uttered by the Characters in Hollidate Movie. This study examined the meaning of attitude expressive illocutionary act in the movie. Different with the current study criticizing, complain and deprecating are the three types of attitude expressive illocutionary act analyzed since the movie was presented the characters act and spoken conversation. The similar type of study about expressive illocutionary act in the movie also conducted by Dewi et al (2022) namely *Analysis of expressive illocutionary acts in the movie entitled The Conjuring 2* that focused on finding the expressive of illocutionary act from the conversation by examined the context and situation. These two studies have reviewed as the related study with the current one that provide more contribution of analysing expressive illocutionary act in different form of communication in written Instagram comments.

The similar study of using Instagram caption then found in another study by Abdullah et al (2023)to find out the function of expressive illocutionary act found in Instagram caption of WHO. The collaborative, competitive, convivial and conflictive are the types of expressive illocutionary found different with the current research that provide the vivid concern about how the users emotion also pours into the written comment such as thanking, complaining, complimenting and wishing. The current study provides more explanation about the types of expression used in comments.

The analysis of expressive illocutionary act found in written communication also conducted by Muliawati et al.,(2020) entitled The Expressive Illocutionary Acts found in Webtoon True Beauty and their translation to Indonesia. Hence, the study was focused on the expressive illocutionary act occurred in two different language between English and Indonesia. The current one has related topic of expressive illocutionary act analysis, however this study is developing the types of expression that concern to how the people interact in social media in written communication.

#### METHOD AND THEORY

The data was collected by visiting the Instagram account and observing the column comment of Manchester United Instagram @manchesterunited. The comment from the followers that identified as an expressive illocutionary act then screenshots and analysed with qualitative method. This method focused on theoretical and descriptive analysis by using the theory of Searle (1979). Searle, (1979: 15) mentioned that expressive illocutionary act is once it uses to express the psychological sate specified in sincerity condition and specified prepositional contents such as when and what content is posted by Manchester United that cause the expressive reaction by the followers. Furthermore, the data then classified based on the types of expressive illocutionary act are thanking, congratulate, welcome, wishing, apologize, condolence and deplore (Searle, 1979: 15). The illocutionary acts by Searle represented the different functions or intentions behind utterances in language. Searle outlined five main types of illocutionary acts are declarative acts, assertive acts, expressive acts, directive acts and commissive acts. The Expressive Acts functions is to express one's feelings, emotions, or attitudes, for example, "I'm so happy for you!" This statement is used to convey the speaker's emotion of happiness and congratulate someone which become the focus of this study. Through the comment on Instagram, the user or the followers of Manchester United then express their feeling and emotion in which classified into expressive illocutionary acts such as thanking, wishing, complimenting, complaining and greeting.

These types of expressive illocutionary acts help us understand the various functions of language beyond the surface level of words and sentences. Searle's theory emphasizes that when we communicate, we not only convey information but also perform these illocutionary acts with specific intentions, and understanding these intentions is essential for interpreting the meaning and context of utterances. Searle's work on illocutionary acts has had a significant influence on the philosophy of language

and communication theory, helping to clarify how language is used to perform various speech acts and how meaning is conveyed through linguistic expressions and their associated intentions.

In this study, the focus is on the expressive illocutionary acts found in public comments on the official Instagram account of Manchester United, which boasts numerous followers and posts that encourage responses and reactions. This platform serves as a means for disseminating the latest news, information, and messages about the football club. The comments posted by users fall under illocutionary acts as they convey attitudes and emotions related to the discussed topics or provide expressive encompassing actions like thanking, greeting, praising, wishing, congratulating, and complaining. These discussions foster interactions among fellow Manchester United fans.

Manchester United, a renowned English football club, competes frequently in the Premier League and boasts a staggering 62.5 million followers. The study utilizes data from three posts consisting of twenty thousand more comments but only 35 comments were taken as research sampling. The three posts choose since those pictures represent the three portraits of Manchester United members. The first post, on 5 July 2023, features a picture of Garnacho, the youngest player in the Manchester United Club, highlighting his outstanding performance during a match. The second post, on 8 July 2023, bids farewell to a former goalkeeper who left the club due to contractual issues, honouring his loyalty and informing fans. Lastly, the third post, also on 5 July 2023, introduces a new club member, displaying their picture to inform fans of the club's latest addition. The posting tend to create the personal branding for each members and attract the reaction of the football fans. Manchester United is well known as the great football club consisted by the professional member and legend player. Hence, through Instagram account the football fans will get update of the members and the comment column will enable the people to react their post or the comment from other Instagram users around the world. These posts were chosen due to their relevance to the topic of identifying types of expressive illocutionary acts, as they pertain to farewells, welcoming new members, and showcasing a star player's activity.

Data collection involved visiting and observing the comment section of Manchester United's Instagram account, @manchesterunited. Comments exhibiting expressive illocutionary acts were identified, and screenshots were taken for qualitative analysis. The method employed combines theoretical and descriptive analysis, drawing upon Searle's (1979) framework. According to Searle, an expressive illocutionary act occurs when it is used to express a specific psychological state as stipulated by sincerity conditions and specified propositional content. This content pertains to when and what content Manchester United posts, eliciting expressive reactions from followers. The collected data was then categorized based on the types of expressive illocutionary acts, including thanking, congratulating, welcoming, wishing, apologizing, offering condolences, and expressing distress (Searle, 1979).

In analyzing the data, qualitative methods are particularly appropriate to apply in this study when the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of human behavior, attitudes, and the meanings individuals attribute to their actions. Expressive illocutionary acts often involve multiple dimensions—emotional, cultural, social, and linguistic. Qualitative methods allow for a holistic examination of these dimensions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The present study delved into the realm of expressive illocutionary acts, seeking to understand the intricate ways in which individuals convey their emotions, attitudes, and intentions through language. Expressive illocutionary acts hold a crucial place in communication as they offer a means to express feelings, convey sentiments, and establish connections. In this pursuit, the study focused on the public comments found on the official *Instagram* account of Manchester United, a football club renowned for its extensive fan base and active online engagement. The result then displayed in table and descriptive paragraph described in the following details.

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Types of Expressive Illocutionary Act	<b>Number of Data</b>
Thanking	5
Complaining	9
Complimenting	8
Wishing	7
Greeting	6
Total	35

Table 1 Type of Expressive Illocutionary Act

As presented in Table 1, an analysis of 35 data entries reveals the presence of five distinct types of expressive illocutionary acts. Specifically, there were 5 instances of "thanking," 9 instances of "complaining," 8 instances of "complimenting," 7 instances of "wishing," and 6 instances of "greeting." Notably, the "complaining" category emerged prominently in the comments, signifying the disappointment expressed by Manchester United followers or fans. This sentiment was largely triggered by the club's decision to allocate a significant jersey number to a different player, a move that drew intense reactions from supporters. As a result, expressions of complaint directed toward the player who was expected to receive that jersey number were particularly prevalent. Consequently, the "complaining" and "complimenting" categories predominated in the data. To gain a deeper understanding of these patterns, a detailed analysis of these two prevalent types is provided in the ensuing discussion below.

#### **Thanking**

@stereosingasinga: Thanks for your remarkable service David. We'll never forget.

The comment originates from an *Instagram* user who is a dedicated follower of Manchester United. The user's comment embodies a sense of gratitude toward a former player. This expression falls within the realm of "thanking," a type of expressive illocutionary act that denotes the act of showing appreciation for someone's actions or contributions.

The comment, left on Manchester United's post dated 8 July 2023, features an image of David De Gea, the former goalkeeper of the club. De Gea's departure from the team resulted from a failure to reach an agreement on a new contract. The image was posted as a farewell tribute, acknowledging and commemorating his efforts and performances during his tenure as a member of the Manchester United club.

According to Searle (1979), the act of "thanking" involves expressing gratitude, often symbolized by the phrase "thank you." In this context, De Gea's significant

contributions and exceptional performance prompted a sense of gratitude among fans. The comment reflects this sentiment, serving as both a token of appreciation and a farewell gesture. De Gea's positive impact is encapsulated in this expression of gratitude, as the club bids him farewell while commemorating his legendary status within Manchester United.

In essence, the comment captures the essence of "thanking," underscoring the importance of recognizing and appreciating the contributions of players like De Gea, who leave an indelible mark on the club's history. Through this expressive illocutionary act, fans not only express their gratitude but also pay tribute to a player who has left a lasting legacy.

#### Complaining

@theo.fedele\_: I can't believe we actually signed mount and gave him the 7

The comment provided, authored by the *Instagram* user @theo.fedele\_, can be aptly categorized as a "complaint." This categorization stems from the expression of regret conveyed within the comment, which pertains to a specific post featuring the latest addition to the team—Mason Mount. On 5 July 2023, Manchester United's Instagram account unveiled an image of their recently acquired player, Mason Mount. The transfer of Mason Mount, who hails from another football club, marked a notable addition to the team. What compounds the situation is the allocation of the revered jersey number 7, previously donned by soccer legend Cristiano Ronaldo, to Mason Mount.

This strategic decision led to a sense of disappointment and discontent among Manchester United fans. Many believed that the coveted jersey number should have been bestowed upon Garnacho, a young and exceptionally talented player whose performance arguably aligned more fittingly with the historical significance of the number 7.

The user's comment encapsulates a sentiment of regret and complaint, reflecting dissatisfaction with the club's choice to assign the jersey number to Mason Mount instead of Garnacho. Searle (1979) provides valuable insight into such expressions, defining "complaint" as an expressive illocutionary act in which the speaker or writer conveys displeasure toward a specific object, situation, or decision. In this context, the comment showcases a reaction of annoyance, arising from the Manchester United club's decision.

Interestingly, the image that prompted this reaction was intended to introduce the team's latest member, Mason Mount. However, the response from fans indicated that the decision did not align with their expectations, leading to the expression of dissatisfaction. Thus, this data is appropriately classified as an expressive illocutionary act of "complaint." It underscores the inherent power of comments in reflecting fan sentiments and opinions, shedding light on the dynamic interaction between social media platforms and passionate fan communities.

#### Complimenting

@dkeesler423: Garnacho is so much better than Antony or Sancho

The comment featured in this datum can unequivocally be categorized as a "compliment" or expression of praise. Authored by a follower of Manchester United, the comment serves as a tribute to the club's youngest member, Garnacho. The image of Garnacho was posted on 5 July 2023, following Manchester United's triumphant match against RC Lens at Old Trafford Stadium. With a resounding victory of 3-0, the match's outcome was largely attributed to Garnacho's exceptional performance—an achievement that resonated with fans and followers. The post stood as a reminder of this notable match, capturing the moment when Garnachoskillfully handled the ball within the stadium, thereby being hailed as the standout player of the match.

Among the multitude of Manchester United followers and fans, the comment left by user @dkeesler423 stands out for its expression of admiration and endorsement for Garnacho's exceptional display on the field. This commendatory comment showcases the user's approval and appreciation for Garnacho's contribution to the team's victory.

In accordance with Searle's (1979) framework, a "compliment" is a distinct form of speech act employed to convey admiration or approval for another person's talents, abilities, or possessions. In the context of this situation, Garnacho's prowess and matchwinning performance serve as his "possession," and his fans and followers manifest their praise through comments such as the one left by user @dkeesler423. This comment highlights Garnacho's exceptional skills and accomplishments, which have in turn elicited positive sentiments from the fan base.

In essence, the comment in Data 3 exemplifies the notion of "compliment" within the spectrum of expressive illocutionary acts. It underscores the power of social media platforms like *Instagram* to not only document significant moments in a club's history but also to amplify the voices of its passionate supporters. The comment thus becomes a means through which fans acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of their favorite players, contributing to the rich discourse within the Manchester United community.

#### **Wishing**

@adilartstudio: Garnacho is the best. The pace and the control. Hope this season will be good for him

The expression of wish, tendered by *Instagram* user @adilarstudio, pertains to one of Manchester United's esteemed members, Garnacho, as encapsulated in this datum. The comment finds its place within the realm of "expressed wishes" or desires—a form of speech act whereby hopes for positive outcomes are articulated, particularly for someone held in high regard.

This specific comment is associated with a post featuring Mason Mount, an acquisition who transitioned from another football club to Manchester United. On 5 July 2023, Mason Mount's image was featured, signifying his induction into the team. A significant aspect of his inclusion was his acquisition of the illustrious jersey number 7, previously adorned by the iconic Ronaldo. This allocation signifies the association of this revered jersey with an esteemed player.

However, the comment in question subtly invokes a comparison between Mason Mount and the young talent Garnacho. Within this comparison lies a wish—for a promising season and favorable outcomes—for Garnacho. This desire stems from the commenter's belief that the coveted jersey number should rightfully belong to Garnacho.

Drawing from Searle's (1979) insights, the "expression of wishes" serves as a speech act employed to communicate inspirational hopes and expectations. The

comment encapsulates precisely this sentiment—expressing a wish for the best for Garnacho, accompanied by a sense of optimism and anticipation for a positive outcome.

In essence, the comment exemplifies how social media platforms provide a conduit for fans to convey their aspirations and desires for their favourite players. This comment, through its expression of hope and support, reinforces the role of passionate supporters in the narratives that unfold within the realm of football. It also underscores how these platforms foster a sense of shared experiences and mutual aspirations among fans that are invested in the success and well-being of the players they admire.

#### Greeting

@kevinmattlt: Welcome to united fam, absolutely buzzing to see you in red shirt

The comment above emanates from a devoted Manchester United follower who lends unequivocal support to the latest developments and news disseminated through Instagram. Posted on 5 July 2023, the image captures the arrival of Mason Mount—an addition to the Manchester United roster who previously donned a different club's colors. Given the discourse surrounding Mount's transfer, encompassing both endorsements and reservations, this comment serves as a beacon of positivity and welcomes Mason Mount to the Manchester United fold.

The act of commenting can be aptly classified as a "greeting." Within this context, the user is driven by the intention to express not just support but also delight for Mason Mount's incorporation into the esteemed club. As outlined by Searle (1979), the speech act of "greeting" serves to convey joy upon encountering or acknowledging others.

Moreover, the user goes a step further in enhancing the greeting's impact. The compliment extended in the comment accentuates Mason Mount's seamless integration with Manchester United, noting how he appears resplendent in the iconic red jersey. This attire, with its distinctive red hue, stands as an emblematic hallmark of the Manchester United brand.

By considering the principles set forth by Searle, this comment seamlessly aligns with the expressive illocutionary act of "greeting." It signifies not only a warm welcome for Mason Mount but also a testament to the collective enthusiasm and anticipation among Manchester United fans. In a broader sense, this comment underscores the influence of social media platforms in fostering a sense of community and shared excitement among supporters.

#### CONCLUSION

Social media serves as a powerful tool, enabling individuals to establish connections and relationships by linking their accounts. On platforms like *Instagram*, hot news and the latest posts from various public figures often elicit a diverse array of comments from followers—ranging from opinions to ratings—within the comments section. This emphasizes the prevalence of various speech acts within everyday conversations, underscoring the significance of analyzing comments left on platforms such as Instagram.

In this research endeavour, the framework provided by Searle (1979) was employed to examine the types of expressive illocutionary acts evident in the comments posted on Manchester United's Instagram account. The findings derived from this investigation unveiled a predominant trend: expressions of complaint or dissatisfaction. This type of comment garnered the most attention, constituting 26% or 9 instances of the collected data.

The implications of these results are noteworthy. They underscore the extent to which comments play a pivotal role in influencing public figures, particularly prominent entities such as Manchester United football club. The data serves as a valuable reference point, illuminating the significant reactions elicited from fans. Moreover, these findings can be utilized to inform strategies to sustain the club's success on social media platforms, encompassing brand management, business engagement, and fan satisfaction.

In essence, this study accentuates the potency of comments in shaping interactions and reactions on social media. Through the lens of Searle's theory, it provides insights into the expressive illocutionary acts that manifest within these digital spaces. By recognizing the prevalence of complaint-related comments, this research not only informs the actions of Manchester United but also contributes to the broader understanding of how language is wielded to convey emotions, opinions, and affiliations within the realm of online engagement. Furthermore, exploration of the use of visual elements, such as images, videos, emojis, and graphics, in conveying expressive illocutionary acts can be possibly conducted to be further research investigation and also analyzing how visual content complements or enhances the emotional message of the posts.

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