

HATE SPEECH REGARDING THE PALESTINE AND ISRAEL CONFLICTS ON MIDDLE EAST EYE INSTAGRAM : PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS

Findi Lifianita

(English Education Study Program, Universitas PGRI Delta)
findiilifianita@gmail.com

Abstrak

Media sosial, terutama Instagram, telah menjadi ruang penting dalam pembahasan konflik Israel-Palestina sekaligus memicu penyebaran ujaran kebencian. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis tindak tutur dalam ujaran kebencian di akun Instagram Middle East Eye dan faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap munculnya ujaran kebencian. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, serta dianalisis menggunakan Teori Tindakan Ucapan Searle (1969) dan Teori Identitas Sosial Tajfel & Turner (1979). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ujaran kebencian didominasi oleh tindakan ucapan asertif, diikuti oleh tindakan ucapan ekspresif dan direktif, sementara tindakan ucapan komisi dan deklaratif tidak ditemukan. Pemicu utama ujaran kebencian adalah kebencian terhadap kelompok luar, diikuti oleh ancaman yang dirasakan dan pembenaran moral. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa ujaran kebencian bukan sekadar luapan emosi, tetapi strategi untuk memperkuat identitas kelompok dan mendelegitimasi lawan.

Kata Kunci: *ujaran kebencian, Pragmatik, Konflik palestina dan isarel.*

Abstract

Social media, especially Instagram, has become an important space for discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while also triggering the spread of hate speech. This study aims to identify the types of speech acts in hate speech on the Middle East Eye Instagram account and the factors contributing to the emergence of hate speech. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the data were analyzed using Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and Tajfel & Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979). The results of the study indicate that hate speech is dominated by assertive speech acts, followed by expressive and directive speech acts, Inwhile commissive and declarative speech acts were not found. The primary triggers for hate speech are hatred toward outgroups, followed by perceived threats and moral justification. This study confirms that hate speech is not merely an emotional outburst but a strategy to strengthen group identity and delegitimize opponents.

Keywords: *Hate Speech, Pragmatics, Conflicts Palestine and Israel.*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media has become a dominant space in shaping public opinion and political narratives globally. Instagram, as a visual-based platform, allows users to share images, videos, and narratives that have a wide impact. One account that is active in raising political conflict issues is Middle East Eye, which often uploads content related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These posts often trigger emotional reactions from users, including the emergence of hate speech in the comments section. This phenomenon shows that social media is not only a means of disseminating information, but also a space for conflict and polarization.

Hate speech is generally defined as a form of communication that attacks, degrades, or discriminates against individuals or groups based on certain identities such as religion, race, nationality, or ethnicity (United Nations, 2019). In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, hate speech is often found in the form of insults, threats, dehumanization, and

ideological attacks on social media.

According to Hawdon et al. (2017), such hate speech can worsen intergroup relations and intensify social conflict. Although a number of studies have discussed hate speech on platforms such as Facebook or Twitter, the visual and interactive nature of Instagram has rarely been studied in depth, especially from a pragmatic linguistic perspective. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on comments on Middle East Eye Instagram posts related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Using Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), this study aims to analyze the forms of hate speech pragmatically while identifying the social factors that drive its emergence. Through the classification of speech acts and the analysis of factors that trigger hatred, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of hate speech in social media. The research questions in this study are:

1. What types of speech acts are found in hate speech in Middle East Eye Instagram

comments related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

2. What social factors cause the emergence of hate speech in these comments?

This research has both academic and social urgency. Academically, this study contributes to pragmatic studies in the context of digital communication and conflict. Socially, the results of this study can be used as material for reflection in the formulation of digital policies, media literacy education, and hate speech mitigation strategies. For educators, policymakers, and social media users, understanding the function of language in conflict situations is very important in promoting ethical and inclusive communication. Several previous studies serve as the theoretical foundation for this study. Searle's (1969) speech act theory helps identify the functions of hate speech, such as statements, emotional expressions, and invitations. Meanwhile, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory explains how group affiliation can foster a tendency toward favoritism toward one's own group and hostility toward other groups. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Yasir (2024) and Hoftman et al. (2024), have discussed hate speech on social media, but few have specifically

combined pragmatic and social approaches on the Instagram platform.

B.REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that studies how meaning is constructed and interpreted in communication by considering the interaction between language and its context. In contrast to semantics, which focuses on the actual meanings of words and sentences, pragmatics studies how the speaker's intent, the listener's interpretation, and the situational and cultural context that supports communication are conveyed. Levinson (1983), defines pragmatics as a study about the use of language that is the relationship between language and context as a basis to explain the language understanding involving the drawing of conclusion to connect what is said with what is meant

Speech Act

A branch of pragmatics called Speech Act Theory examines how utterances not only convey information but also perform actions. The theory was introduced by J.L. Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and states that when people

speak, they are doing something with their words other than just making a statement. For example, people take action to apologize rather than just saying, "I'm sorry." Austin (1962) argues that speech is action, and language should be understood by its actions, not just its words. Therefore, every utterance can be considered a type of action in a communicative and social context. According to the speech act theory developed by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1969), every utterance does something other than convey information. Since hate speech has social and psychological effects, such as insulting, threatening, inciting, or spreading hostility towards certain individuals or groups, this becomes the basis for the analysis of hate speech. Therefore, this study uses the Theory of Speech Acts specifically illocutionary acts to identify and categorize the pragmatic functions of hate speech in social media discourse. Searle (1969) categorizes illocutionary acts into five types: Assertives, Directive, Commissive, Declaratives, and Expressives.

Hate Speech

Hate speech is an adverse attitude toward the actions of a person or group in a particular situation that is intended to attack

that person or group and cause social discord and disharmony that is part of impoliteness. Hate speech is disrespectful to those who hear it or receive it, and those who say it have a specific purpose (Suryani et al., 2022). Communication that is "hateful", controversial, generates intolerance, and/or has other ways of polarizing and degrading is also referred to as hate speech (Vashistha & Zubiaga, 2020). Hate speech is a public statement made with the intention of insulting a particular group of people. According to Permatasari and Subyantoro (2020), there are six types of hate speech: provoking, inciting, insulting, blasphemy, defamation, and spread of hoaxes based on various characteristics, including race, color, complexion, gender, ethnicity, physical disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, among other things. Hate speech not only includes offensive words, but also shows how subtle language can foster hostility and prejudice

Social Factor of Hate speech

Social Media have increased the prevalence of hate speech because they enable anonymity, reach large audiences, and create echo chambers where divisive narratives thrive. Kusumasari and Arifanto (2020) the use of public space in the

presence of speech text hatred that is constructed to attack others with different views and explain the factors that influence the use of hate speech texts. It is very important to know what causes hate speech to appear in order to make a plan to reduce its negative effects. Hate speech in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on social media platforms such as Instagram, is a complex phenomenon that can be analyzed using Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) individuals categorize themselves into social groups and develop a sense of belonging based on group membership. This theory is particularly relevant to hate speech in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as social identity plays an important role in creating in-group favoritism and out-group hostility. Using Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as the main theoretical framework, this analysis will categorize the comments based on in-group favoritism, out-group hostility, perceived threat, and moral justification of hate speech.

C. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the types of hate speech and the factors that influence it in comments on the Middle East Eye

Instagram account related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The data consists of public comments from 2021 to 2025, selected using purposive sampling, namely comments that are relevant, highly interactive, and contain indications of hate speech. Out of 1,000 collected comments, 17 met the criteria for analysis.

The primary instrument was the researcher, assisted by a speech act classification sheet based on Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and a social factor categorization sheet based on Tajfel & Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979).

Data collection was conducted through document analysis of relevant comments, then analyzed in two stages: (1) identifying and classifying types of speech acts; and (2) examining the social factors underlying hate speech. The analysis results are presented descriptively in the form of narrative descriptions supported by tables and data examples

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis from comments on Middle East Eye's Instagram account related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. From a total of 1,000 comments, 17 were identified as containing hate speech and selected for further analysis. The analysis focuses on

identifying the types of speech acts in hate speech and the factors that influence its occurrence. The data is categorized and interpreted based on the relevant theoretical framework to provide a clear and objective picture of the research findings.

1.Types of Speech Act found in Hate speech

No.	Comment	Types Speech Act
1	The slaughter still continues, they just can't help themselves	Assertive
2	Sniper kills intentionally, no stray bullets, killing a child? what moral are you having chosen people?	Assertive + Expressive
4	It's not war, it's one sided genocide, merciless killing of innocent children, burning men, women and babies live	Assertive

5	Israel is a genocidal state. Racist mass murdering maniacs. Free Palestine from occupation. No more apartheid	Assertive
6	Radical Jewish terrorism	Assertive
7	Not a war. Never was just a sick murdering entity funded by my government and allowed by the entire world	Assertive
8	Palestine must be liberated from the barbarian colonial genocidal Israel occupation	Assertive
9	Israhell is terrorist in the world	Assertive
10	Israhell satans dogs on earth	Assertive + Expressive
11	Israel go to hell	Directive
12	Get lost this is not a war. It's Genocide	Directive + Assertive

13	Death Death to the IDF	Directive
14	Damn, terrorist!!! The most documented and most denied genocide, you have a safe place in hell	Directive + Expressive
15	Shame on you mother fuckers	Expressive
16	Wow and they didn't shoot the donkey? Thought they shot everything that moves	Expressive
17	IDF are just evil bastards!	Expressive + Assertive

group Favoritism, Out-group Hostility, Perceived Threat, and Moral Justification.

No.	Comment	Factor contributing
1	Israel go to hell	Outgroup Hostility
2	The slaughter still continues, they just can't help themselves	Outgroup Hostility
3	Shame on you mother fuckers	Outgroup Hostility
4	Damn, terrorist!!! the most documented and most denied genocide you have a safe place in hell	Outgroup Hostility + Moral Justification
5	IDF are just evil bastards!	Outgroup Hostility
6	Radical Jewish terrorism	Outgroup Hostility
7	Death Death to the IDF	Outgroup Hostility

2. Social Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Hate Speech

In this section, researchers examine the social factors that contribute to the emergence of hate speech in the analyzed Instagram comments. Social Identity Theory is used in this analysis to explain how intergroup attitudes are influenced by group identity. The four main components mentioned in the commentary are: In-

(nama belakang), (judul (dua kata saja)) ...

8	Israhell is terrorist in the world	Outgroup Hostility		entity funded by my government and allowed by the entire world	Moral Justification
9	Israhell satans dogs on earth	Outgroup Hostility	14	Get lost this is not a war. it's Genocide	Moral Justification
10	Wow and they didn't shoot the donkey? Thought they shot everything that moves.	Perceived Threat	15	It's not war, it's one sided genocide, merciless killing of innocent children, burning men, women and babies live	Moral Justification
11	Sniper kills intentionally, no stray bullets, killing a child? what moral are you having chosen people?	Perceived Threat	16	Israel is a genocidal state. Racist mass murdering maniacs. Free Palestine from occupation. No more apartheid	Moral Justification
12	This is not a movie, this is horror in real, the west has created monsters who are killing children.	Outgroup Hostility + Perceived Threat	17	Palestine must be liberated from the barbarian colonial	Moral Justification
13	Not a war. Never was just a sick murdering	Perceived Threat +			

	genocidal Israel occupation	
--	--------------------------------	--

DISCUSSION

The analysis of hate speech speech acts in this study is based on Speech Act Theory developed by Searle (1969). Searle divides illocutionary speech acts into five main categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Each category has a specific communicative function and reflects the speaker's intention in a particular social context.

The results of the study show that of all the hate speech comments analyzed, only three types of speech acts were found, namely assertives, expressives, and directives. The other two categories, commissives and declaratives, did not appear. These findings are presented as follows:

1. Assertive

Assertive is a type of speech act in which a person states what he believes to be true. In Searle's (1969) speech act theory, assertive is used to convey a statement, opinion, or belief. So, this utterance does not ask others to do something, but rather conveys personal

views as if they were facts. Examples include accusations that Israel is guilty of genocide and racism, generalizations about Jewish religious groups as terrorists, the use of derogatory terms such as "Israhell," and labeling Israel as a global terrorist.

The assertive use of hate speech shows that it is not just an outburst of emotion, but also a discursive strategy to shape public opinion, instill hostility, and construct ideologically-based group identities.

2. Expressive

Expressive speech acts reveal the speaker's feelings or psychological attitude toward a situation. In hate speech, this form usually contains anger, sarcasm, and direct insults. Comments that fall into this category reflect that hate speech is also an emotional performative act. The emotions expressed are not merely a reflection of feelings, but a rhetorical strategy to provoke, humiliate, and stir up group solidarity.

3. Directive

Directive is a speech act that aims to make the listener do something. In hate speech, this form appears as harsh commands, incitement to hatred, or calls to reject and attack certain groups. The directive form in hate speech is not always an explicit, polite invitation, but often

appears as insults, threats, curses, or aggressive calls that can trigger real reactions, especially in contexts of conflict and violence.

4. The Absence of Commissive and Declarative Acts

Two other categories according to Searle (1969), commissive and declarative, were not found in this research data:

Commissive acts usually express a willingness to do something in the future, such as a promise or an oath. This form rarely appears in social media comments, which tend to be spontaneous and reactive.

Declarative acts require official authority to change social or legal status, such as “I declare you fired.” Ordinary social media users do not have this authority, so it is natural that this form does not appear.

5. The Dominance of Assertive Speech Acts

From the analysis of 17 hate speech comments, assertive speech acts were the most dominant form. This form often appeared as statements, accusations, or ideological claims that were presented as if they were objective truths. These findings confirm that hate speech on social media is often used to delegitimize opposing groups

through opinions that are constructed as facts.

Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Hate Speech

Analysis of social factors influencing the emergence of hate speech using the Social Identity Theory framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory explains that individuals tend to divide the social world into in-groups and out-groups. This division often gives rise to prejudice, stereotypes, and antipathy towards other groups. The results of the analysis show four main factors:

1. Out-group Hostility

This is a direct expression of hatred, anger, and contempt toward a group that is considered an enemy. This form is seen through the use of harsh words, insults, and negative labels such as “devil dog.” These statements not only antagonize but also dehumanize the opponent, reinforcing the boundary between ‘us’ and “them” and exacerbating social polarization.

2. Perceived Threat

This arises when the opposing group is perceived as physically, ideologically, or morally dangerous. Comments often express concern for the safety of children or civilians, using terms like “monster” or

“killing children.” This reinforces fear and hatred stemming from the perceived threat.

3. Moral Justification

Occurs when hatred is considered a legitimate reaction to injustice or moral violations. Strong moral narratives make hate speech seem reasonable, even necessary, as a form of resistance against crimes such as genocide.

4. Absence of In-group Favoritism

There were no comments that explicitly praised or defended their own group. Instead, most comments focused on attacking out-groups such as Israel, the IDF, or the Jewish community. This shows the reactive and confrontational nature of hate speech, triggered by the characteristics of social media, which tends to encourage emotional and provocative expressions.

5. The Most Prominent Factor: Out-group Hostility

The most dominant factor that triggers hate speech is out-group hostility. This form reflects a confrontational and exclusive social identity construction. It not only shows emotional hatred, but also demonstrates an effort to build group identity by rejecting and attacking the opposing party.

E.CONCLUSSION

This study aims to analyze hate speech in Instagram users' comments on the Middle East Eye account related to the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. The study is conducted through a pragmatic approach by using Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory to identify the types of speech acts used, as well as Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory to explain the social factors that influence the emergence of hate speech. The analysis shows that the most dominant type of speech act in hate speech is assertive. This speech act is used to state personal beliefs as truth, often delivered in a way that denigrates or demonizes other groups (out-group). In addition, expressive is also widely found, especially in the form of emotional comments that show anger, sarcasm, or disappointment towards the opposing party. Some comments also contain directives, which are orders or invitations that are rejecting or attacking. However, commissive and declarative were not found, which is in line with the reactive and spontaneous nature of social media comments rather than formal and institutional.

)

In terms of social factors, analysis based on Social Identity Theory shows that out-group hostility is the most dominant factor in driving the emergence of hate speech. It is followed by perceived threat, and moral justification. Hate speech in these comments tends to be built on the basis of group identity conflict, where other groups are perceived as threats or immoral enemies. Interestingly, in-group favoritism was not found explicitly, which suggests that hate speech is more focused on attacking the opponent than praising one's own group. Overall, this study shows that hate speech on social media is the result of a combination of linguistic strategies and social dynamics. Language is used not only to convey personal opinions, but also to reinforce group identity in the context of intense political conflict.

REFERENCES

- Anjani, R., Sulistyaningsih, S., & Putranto, H. R. (2021). Analysis on Illocutionary Acts of Donald Trump Speech Text.
- Benesch, S. (2012). Dangerous speech: A proposal to prevent group violence.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2020). Critical race theory: An introduction
- Fuchs, C. (2021). Social media: A critical introduction.
- Gillespie, T. (2020). Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media.
- Griffiths, P. (2006). An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics.
- Hawdon, J., Oksanen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2017). Exposure to online hate in four nations: A cross-national consideration., 38(3), 254–266.
- Kusumasari, B., & Arifanto, D. (2020). Hate speech and public space: Analysis of online behavior on social media platforms., 12(2), 123–135.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). Pragmatics.
- Lomborg, S. (2012). Researching communicative practice: Web archiving and social media. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 30(3–4), 219–231.
- Permatasari, A., & Subyantoro, S. (2020). An analysis of hate speech in Indonesian social media. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*, 20(1), 101–112.
- Schreier, M. (2012). Qualitative content analysis in practice.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of illocutionary logic*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sukmawati, A. (2022). Pragmatics in English language learning: An overview. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 11(2), 34–40.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict.

United Nations. (2019). United Nations strategy and plan of action on hate speech.

Widianto, E. (2020). Pragmatics: Theory and application. *Language and Literature Review*, 14(2), 25–32.

