

Speech act and experiential analysis of Bali netizen reactions to the pandemic regulation posts

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Abstract

Social media has enabled netizens to publicly express their feelings, opinions, or sentiments about specific issues, including government policies. The accumulation of similar views from social media users can represent how the public perceives certain matters. The research was done by analysing netizen comments on posts regarding the pandemic regulation in Bali from August to November 2021 in a popular Instagram local news account Infodenpasar. The research employs the theory of speech act to describe the illocutionary force of netizen utterances to express particular sentiments and the systemic functional theory about experiential metafunction to explore the construal of participants and actions in the discourse. The finding shows that the most dominant speech act is conflictive, which expresses disbelief, complaint, and skepticism. In addition, the events in the clauses are constructed with various processes and participant types, especially relational process.

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the business sectors, tourism is one of the heaviest impacted sectors during this Covid-19 crisis. As traveling and gathering in most countries are restricted, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other tourism supporting businesses struggle to keep their business running. In Bali, specifically, as an island that depends most of its economy on tourism, the pandemic has created thousands of job losses, financial and business crises (Purwahita, Wardhana, Ardiasa, & Winia, 2021).

The national and local governments have set up several regulations concerning the pandemic, such as the observance of health protocols,

vaccines, quarantine, travel restrictions, and regulations, including providing incentives for business and tourism workers. At the end of 2021, as the number of covid cases decreases steadily in Bali and Indonesia, Bali tourism is reopened. However, the government imposes several regulations, including PCR test and quarantine for international travellers.

All these regulations and policies are informed to the public through various channels, especially social media. The internet and social media have revolutionized how information flow and the way government and citizens communicate. Traditionally, information usually comes from the government to the citizen or from

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the press to the citizen. Now, however, almost everyone can produce, reproduce, modify, and circulate information. Through social media, the general public can evaluate, react, criticize and give their feedback, “bypassing mass media gatekeepers”(Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015). On the other hand, politicians and policymakers can interact directly with their audience to increase their engagement and popularity with their official social media.

With those abilities, it is generally agreed that social media can improve civic involvement and promote government accountability and transparency in the public sphere (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016; Nurmandi, 2014). How the citizen perceive government work and policy can be seen from their public opinion in social media and their comments on related posts.

This study investigates how the posts about government policy in a news account @infodenpasar are commented on and the linguistic realization of those comments. Here, two theories are used. First is the theory of speech act. According to Austin (Austin, 1962), all utterances simultaneously have three aspects: the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary meaning. The locutionary is the actual lexicogrammar realization of language in its literal use. It is simply the act of saying things. The illocutionary, however, refers to the speaker's intention in producing certain utterances that might not correlate directly with the literal meaning and grammatical construction of the utterances. On the other hand, the perlocutionary deals with how the hearer or reader reacts to the utterances. Further, Searle (1969) classifies speech act into five basic categories, which include assertive, directives, commissive, expressive and declarations. Another addition to the theory of speech act is the one from Leech (1996) that proposes four illocutionary functions, which are collaborative, convivial, competitive, and conflictive. As this study will focus on the sentiments of the netizen, Searle's classification will be used.

Secondly is the theory of systemic functional linguistic (SFL) about experiential meaning of

language. Here, clause is seen an event that consist of participants, process and accompanied circumstances.

Several studies have discussed language in social media using speech act theory, for example Andriyani, Santika, & Raharjo (2021) which study about perlocutionary force of Instagram posts about Covid 19. In their study, they see netizen comments as the perlocution of the Instagram posts. Here they found both positive and negative responses. However, in the present study, the netizen comments are seen as a speech act of its own. Ardi, et.al. studied the speech act of flaming (Ardi, Ahmad, Daud, & Ismail, 2021) in Twitter posts. They found that the youngsters' language on Twitter consists of many insulting words that are no longer observe the society's values an ethics.

For the experiential metafunction in language, several studies have shown how the organization of participants, process, and circumstances in clauses can represent specific values and ideology (Isti'anah, 2019; Maledo & Edhere, 2021). Maledo & Edhere (2021) for example, have studied process in poems about oil mining in Nigeria and shows that the proses used indicates environmental degradation. How certain participant are associated with a certain role in the clauses can be used as framing strategy (Asad, Noor, & and Jaes, 2021; Suparto, 2018). In several studies, the pragmatic aspect of clause is approached with SFL's theory of interpersonal metafunction (Ayomi, 2021b, 2021a). However, in this present study, the intentional meaning from the netizen post is analyzed using speech act theory which can cover both mood aspect as well as evaluation aspect (coined as appraisal theory in SFL Martin & White, 2005).

Considering the background explained above, the purpose of this study is to explore how Instagram users especially Bali Netizen linguistically construe meanings to react to government regulation and policy and their implementation regarding the Covid 19 pandemic. By understanding the exact purpose of utterances from the linguistic point of view, a better communication strategy can be formulated between the government and the public. This is

important since an effective policy is the policy that can gather trust and invite more participation from the people. In this light, two research questions can be formulated. Firstly, what kind of speech act and what kind of sentiments are shown in the netizen comments and secondly, how participants and action are constructed to carry those messages

METHODS

The data of this research were taken from the netizen's direct comments (excluding the replies to the comments) on posts about regulation concerning Covid-19 in relation to Bali's tourism from the Instagram account of @infodenpasar from August to November 2021 which consists of 247 data. This publication period was chosen because, at this time, the pandemic situation had started to improve. The government was putting more effort into restoring Bali tourism with various programs while still being aware of the pandemic. @infoinstagram is an Instagram account that mostly posts about recent news and event in the Bali area. It is one of Bali's most followed news Instagram accounts, with 962.000 followers. Each data was first analyzed based on their types and illocutionary forces employing the speech act theory. Secondly, the construal of participants and actions in the data are examined using the systemic functional theory about experiential metafunction.

This research used a mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis. The result section shows the quantitative finding to draw generalizations about the linguistic pattern found in the netizen comments. A qualitative approach is used to comprehensively explain the specific context of individual data (Creswell, 2013; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017) .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result and discussion which is divided into two sections, the speech act function analysis and the construal of events shown by the experiential meaning analysis

Speech Act Analysis

There are 22 posts related to the government regulation posted by @infodenpasar during the period, with 247 direct comments. Regarding to the function of the post, the statistic shows the following result.

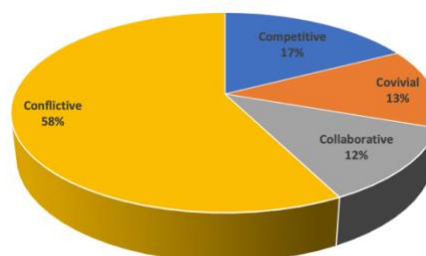


Figure 1. The Proportion of Each Type of Speech Act Function

As seen in the chart above, conflictive illocution is the most dominant speech act function in the comment section. This act goes against politeness because the natural purpose of this illocution is to offend, such as accusing, insulting, reprimanding, criticizing, swearing, or threatening. In this case, most of the comments express disbelief in the post about tourism regulation made by the governments, for example in the utterances below:

1. 🙏 *Sinampure pak, ty sing percaye omongan pake* 😞
'forgive me Sir, I don't believe whatever you are saying'
2. *Selalu bilang tujuan wisata....expetasi wow realita pcr* 😏😏
'they always say every program is for tourism, wow expectation but in reality, they keep asking for pcr '





The two examples of comments above are reacting to a post that mentions that the Bali government is ready to welcome the Indonesian Basket League in Bali, which can boost tourism. Additionally, many conflictive posts also used sarcastic laughing emojis as if they were laughing at the government program, considering it a joke, and adding to the expression of distrust.

The following speech act function is competitive, in which the utterances illocutionary goal may compete with the social harmony and invade other negative faces (Brown & Levinson, 1987), for example, in the case of giving order, command or asking. Some examples taken from the data are:

3. *Tolong diingat juga banyak masyarakat yg masih dirumahkan atau PHK.*
'Please remember there are many people are being laid off or get fired from their job'
4. *Bukak pariwisata e mre ngurus ne len*
'Open Bali tourism before doing other things'
5. *Serius nanya. Disana presiden di karantina gak??*
'I seriously ask, were the presidents got quarantined there'


The act of commanding, ordering, and questioning benefit the speaker and therefore cost the hearer. Further, in the case of the Instagram comments above, the netizen giving demands, orders, and questions that is not related to the events or policy in the post, suggests disagreement with the regulation being talked about.

The other function performed in the comment section is convivial illocution, which aims to achieve social harmony by expressing agreement, praise, and support. There are thirteen percent acts of convivial found in the comment section with the following example:

6.  *mantap*
'great'
7. *wiiwwwwww*    

The convivial act shows support, compliment, and encouragement. In the comment section, this utterance is usually short and employs emojis such as thumbs and love.

The last function is collaborative. In this function, the utterances intend to give information and contribute to the conversation and therefore cannot be seen as polite and impolite. Some of the examples that can be seen from the data are as follow:

8. *Perlu sih buat rute2 singaraja-dps, atau dps gilimanuk, rute2 yg jauh biar ada pilihan. Cuma ngebayangin aja jalan di bali kan kecil mau ditambah rel apa ga tambah sempit* 
'It's necessary for the route like singaraja-dps, atau dps gilimanuk, the longest route so that you can have more options....'

In datum 8, for example, the speaker only adds her opinion of whether the development of a railway in Bali is necessary for commenting about the Bali government plan to build a railway system in Bali in collaboration with South Korea.

The Construal of Event

According to SFL, language constructs the experience of the world through the configuration of participants, processes, and circumstances in clauses. There are six types of process, which can be classified as material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential process. The type of process will determine the types of participants involved in the process. In the comment section, all types of processes are used to reveal different netizens' perspectives toward government policies.

Relational Process

The most dominant type of process that occurs in the comments is the relational process. This process is employed to describe, attach specific attributes, or give definitions to things and phenomena. Here, netizens try to define the phenomena and the reality they must face despite the government's programs broadcasted in @infodenpasar posts. This can be exemplified in the following data:

9. *Bisnis pcr [Token] prioritas [Value], dapur masyarakat [Token] nomer sekian [Value]*
'The priority is PCR business, how people can eat is the next'
10. *Sama aja boong [Attribute] klo mau berlibur pakai ribet*
'It's just a lie, if it is still too difficult for people to travel'

In datum 9, for example, the writer claimed that from the government perspective, the PCR business, which is the Token, is defined as a priority (an adjective) and compared it to the status of people's daily needs. Another netizen attributes the government program to promote Bali tourism, which is implied in the clause, as a lie.

In English, this type of process is usually signified by the use of be auxiliary verbs. However, in the Indonesian language, it is often elliptic, creating the construction in datum 9. In formal Indonesian language, however, this type of process is marked by the verb such as *adalah* or *merupakan* (Ayomi, 2018). In the case of electronic messaging or social media language, the participant, what is being talked about, is even omitted, such as in datum 6,7, or 10. This is because the reader can easily retrieve them from the context. In this case, what are being given definition and characteristic are the statement, situation or policy described in the post they commented.

Material Process

Material process is indicated by the verbs of action and doing. The highly occurring verbs in the data are the verbs *restrict* or *tighten* and *come* or *visit*. This is usually found in the comments related to posts talking about the government's enforcement of social restrictions and traveling regulation. The first type of verb is used when talking about the government policy, with the government being made as elliptic Actors by employing passive construction, such as in examples 11 and 12.

11. *Mendingan tidur aja..apax [Goal] yg mau diketatin [Process] ? Org gk gk ada tamu [Actor] dtang [Process].*
'better go to bed..what is need to be tighten?
No visitor will come anyway'
12. *Kalau dibali ini sana-sini [Circumstances] diperketat [Process] ..Apalagi daya tarik wisatawan mau masuk ke Bali? (lokal skalipun)...Lalu klu ndak ada org [Goal] masuk [Process], mau makan apalagi kita dibali ini?*
'If everywhere in Bali is restricted ..What will draw tourists to visit (even local

tourists..).. then if no one visits, what will people in Bali eat?'

Mental Process

The other process is mental process that is related to thinking and feeling. Here, the process mainly expresses the feeling and emotion of the netizen to the post, in which the writer becomes the Senser in the clause such as in datum 11, 12, and 13.

13. *Heran nya [Process] diri iniiii [Senser]... penuh drama*
'I'm so amazed..full of drama'
14. *Pengen [Process] pindah warga Negara [Phenomena]*
'I want to change my citizenship'
15. *Semoga [Process] semua kembali pulih seperti harapan kita semua [Phenomena] .amiin♡*
'hoping everything can return to what we all wish'

Another mental process used several times is the verb *remember* that is used in a directive clause with the government becoming the Senser. Here, netizens asked the government to remember to take care of more critical issues, as in datum 3.

Most of the mental processes used by the netizen are used to express their dislike, frustration and sometimes hopelessness in reacting to the Instagram posts about the government policy that they thought had no result and did not improve Bali economy which directly influence their income. As can be seen in datum 13 and 14 in which the commentator used the mental process *heran* 'astounded' to react to the constantly changing travel requirement which they call as "drama", or the verb *pengen* 'want' to change their citizenship that the use to express their frustration

This sentiment, however, is different from the posts about President Jokowi's visit and comment about Bali tourism. Instead, netizens show a more positive mental attitude, as seen in datum 15. Here they agree that the condition is terrible, but they hope for betterment. The positive attitude is even emphasized with the use of heart emoji.

Verbal Process

Verbal process is the process of saying, which is indicated using the verb *say*, *mention* or *tell*. Here, only two verbal processes were found, which is the passive verb *disebutin* and *bilang*. One of it can be seen in the example below:

16. *Kok ga disebutin [Process] ajah mau gandeng salah satu platform taxi online terbesar di indonesia? [Verbiage] Apa karena takut bentrok dengan transportasi lokal yg ada di bali lagi? 🙄*
 ‘Why don’t you just mention that you are going to collaborate with one of the biggest online taxi platforms in Indonesia? Are you afraid that you are going to fight against Bali local transport again?’

The comment above is reacting to the post about the Ministry of Tourism that will cooperate with Ride Hailing to support Bali tourism. In datum 16, the writer alludes to the past conflict between Bali local transport and online transport provider in Bali. The phrase “Why don’t you just mention..” certainly implies cynicism and distrust to what is stated in the post by recounting a past event.

Behavioral Process

Some of the behavioral processes are found in the data. This process is in the area between the mental and material processes. For example, the process discovered are the verbs *laugh* and *cry*.

17. *Orang asing [Behaver] ngakak [Process] baca ini dan mrka bilang " bodo amat gua bisa ke thailand / maldives " dah bebas . Lol*
 ‘Those foreigners are laughing reading this and they will say “whatever, I can go to Thailand/Maldives” it’s free. Lol
18. *Lulut dan tokir [Behaver] menangis [Process] lihat ini*
 ‘Lulut and tokir crying watching this’

The two verbs above are classified as the behavioural process as they represent internal mental activities that are later materialized physically. Datum 17 shows the Instagram user's disagreement with the regulation about quarantine by taking foreigners' perspectives and constructing them as Behaver, who are laughing at Indonesian policy. Datum 18 is a reaction to the post about the increase in arrivals in Ngurah Rai International Airport. The verb crying is attached to the Behaver Lulut and Tokir, which most likely refer to the Coordinating Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan and the Minister of State Owned Enterprises Erich Thohir who are accused by the netizen as the person behind the PCR and quarantine policy.

Existential Process

Existential process states the existence of something which is signified by the construction with *there* or *ada* in Indonesian and used to express the absence and presence of visitors to Bali. This is proven in the following datum:

19. *Sudah ada [Process] direct flight dari mancanegara ke Bali [Existent] nih? 😏😏😏 #menolakhalu*
 Has there been any direct international flight to Bali already? #refusehallucinantion
20. *Ada [Process] yg dateng emang mancanegara [Existent] ?*
 Has any international visitors come?

The two data above are considered as sarcasm as they can not be seen as sincere questions. Instead, the two utterances question the policy itself and have conflictive locution. This can be interpreted as “if there are no foreign visitors, there is no use of tightening or restricting anything”. The sarcasm is enhanced using laughing emoji and the hashtag “refuse hallucination”.

CONCLUSION

The reading of the netizen comments on the policy regarding Covid-19 and tourism reveals the lack of netizen trust in any policy that

has been done as none are seen as successful in repairing Bali tourism conditions. This is proven by the dominant use of conflictive illocution utterances, which communicate dislikes and disagreement through various strategies, primarily through sarcastic questions and remarks. The use of the relational verb to define the situation and mental verb to describe feelings also dominantly carries negative sentiments toward government policy. Interestingly in a post about President Jokowi, many netizens still show their appreciation by showing convivial illocution. This indicates that the Bali people still have trust and hope in the president.

Although social media sometimes consist of hoaxes and misinformation, however, it is media where the policymaker can also hear the voice of the people directly. Voices in social media can also reflect people's sentiments and perceptions. For any policy to be successful, public trust and participation must be gained. Government must be a better listener and communicator to be able to make a good policy as well as communicate everything effectively to their stakeholders.

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