



An Illocutionary Analysis of Public Responses to the Computer-Based Written Examination Cheating in Social Media Discourse X

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a prominent space for public discourse, where users employ language not only to exchange information but also to perform specific communicative actions. The cheating scandal involving the Computer-Based Written Examination, which went viral on platform X in April 2026, generated widespread public responses and provides a relevant context for examining illocutionary acts in digital discourse. This study identifies and analyzes the types of illocutionary speech acts expressed in public comments responding to the scandal, addressing the limited investigation of speech acts in social media discourse. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study collected data from comments on a viral post by @linlinaleister on platform X and analyzed them through identification, classification, and interpretation based on Searle's (1969) theory of illocutionary acts. The findings identified three types of illocutionary acts: assertive (6 instances), expressive (5 instances), and directive (2 instances). Assertive acts predominantly conveyed opinions, expressive acts communicated sympathy, criticism, and curiosity, while directive acts primarily conveyed advice. These findings demonstrate that public responses to sensitive social issues convey communicative intentions beyond information sharing and extend the application of illocutionary act analysis to digital discourse contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication constitutes a fundamental process through which individuals interact and establish relationships within society, with language serving as a primary medium in both spoken and written forms. The role of language becomes particularly significant in social interaction on digital platforms, where users continuously exchange information, opinions, and emotional responses. The rapid development of digital communication has transformed social media from a space for interpersonal interaction into a public arena where individuals can actively participate in discourse regardless of their social or geographical backgrounds (Maghfiro et al., 2024). When responding to particular issues, social media users express diverse reactions, including anger, opinions, suggestions, and other emotional responses. Such responses emerge through social interaction, which contributes to the construction of individual identities and relationships among members of society (Hertati, 2023).

A recent case on platform X (formerly Twitter) attracted considerable public attention after the account @linlinaleister posted information concerning prospective students who allegedly engaged in cheating during the *Ujian Tulis Berbasis Komputer* (UTBK) on April 21, 2026. The post reported an alleged cheating method involving communication devices inserted into participants' ears and included photographic evidence related to the incident (Widyanti & Syari, 2023). The post subsequently generated various responses from netizens, including expressions of anger, criticism, and curiosity. These responses illustrate how users employ social media to communicate not only factual information but also attitudes and emotional reactions toward controversial issues. Social media consequently provides a discursive space in which users articulate, negotiate, and potentially influence public opinions and emotions (Sabillawati & Ardiana, 2022; Widyawanti et al., 2024).

The public responses to the UTBK cheating case provide a relevant context for examining language through a pragmatic perspective. This study draws on Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts and Searle's (1969) subsequent development of illocutionary act theory to investigate the communicative actions embedded in users' comments. Illocutionary acts refer to actions that speakers perform through utterances, including asserting, directing, and

expressing particular intentions. Assertive acts commit speakers to the truth of propositions, directive acts attempt to influence hearers to perform particular actions, and expressive acts communicate speakers' psychological states (Armianti et al., 2026; Zurina et al., 2026). This theoretical framework enables the study to examine how apparently simple online comments perform specific communicative functions within digital public discourse.

The presence of illocutionary acts in comments responding to the UTBK cheating post provides the primary basis for the present investigation. The researchers examine these comments as illocutionary speech acts because each utterance not only communicates information but also represents the user's intention, attitude, or communicative action (Azzaakiyyah, 2023; Rahayu et al., 2025). Previous research on illocutionary acts has predominantly examined face-to-face communication, while investigations of social media discourse, particularly interactions on platform X, remain comparatively limited. This limitation creates a research gap concerning how users perform communicative actions when responding to sensitive public issues within digital environments. The present study addresses this gap by identifying and analyzing how netizens construct meaning, communicate attitudes, and express intentions through illocutionary speech acts within the digitally mediated discourse surrounding the UTBK cheating case.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to examine illocutionary acts in public responses to the UTBK cheating issue. Descriptive qualitative research enables researchers to describe and explain phenomena as they occur, whether they emerge through human actions or natural circumstances. This approach allows researchers to examine how individuals construct meaning through language within particular social and communicative contexts. It also considers meaning not only from the speaker's intended message but also from how audiences interpret linguistic expressions within a given context (Ryser, 2021). The researchers therefore applied this approach to obtain a contextual understanding of the communicative meanings embedded in social media discourse.

The data consisted of public responses to the UTBK cheating issue obtained directly from the social media platform X. The researchers focused specifically on users' comments because they contained various linguistic expressions that could be examined according to their illocutionary force. Each relevant comment served as a unit of analysis for identifying the communicative actions performed by social media users. The researchers examined the comments by identifying the types of illocutionary acts they contained and subsequently interpreting the meanings conveyed through those acts. This process enabled the researchers to investigate how users expressed particular intentions, attitudes, and responses within digital discourse.

The researchers collected the data through documentation and library research techniques, which involved systematically gathering and reviewing materials relevant to the research objectives. During the documentation process, the researchers selected and compiled comments that corresponded to the research focus, particularly those containing identifiable illocutionary meanings. The researchers then used these documented comments as the primary data for pragmatic analysis. To strengthen the theoretical foundation of the analysis, they also consulted relevant books, journal articles, and pragmatic theories concerning speech acts and illocutionary meaning. These supporting sources provided an established academic basis for interpreting the linguistic data (Fiantika et al., 2022).

The researchers analyzed the data through identification, classification, and interpretation stages. First, they identified and collected comments relevant to the UTBK cheating issue and subsequently selected and reduced the data according to the research objectives. Next, they classified and organized the selected comments according to their illocutionary characteristics and presented the findings descriptively or in tabular form to facilitate systematic analysis. The researchers then interpreted the classified data using pragmatic theory to determine the communicative meanings conveyed through the comments. Finally, they drew conclusions from the analytical results to develop a comprehensive understanding of the illocutionary acts represented in public responses to the UTBK cheating issue. This systematic analytical procedure enabled the researchers to organize and interpret the data consistently in accordance with the study's objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings present the illocutionary speech acts identified in the comment section of @linlinaleister's post concerning the UTBK cheating issue. The analysis corresponds to the primary research objective of identifying and interpreting the types of illocutionary acts represented in users' comments. The researchers obtained the data through

observation and analyzed each relevant utterance using Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary acts. The analysis identified three major categories: assertive, expressive, and directive acts. The following sections present representative data from each category and explain their communicative functions within the context of the digital discourse.

Assertive Illocutionary Acts

Assertive illocutionary acts commit speakers to the truth of the propositions they express. These acts may take the form of stating, proposing, reporting, suggesting, boasting, complaining, notifying, or expressing opinions and experiences. In the present data, assertive acts primarily appeared when users communicated their opinions, evaluations, or perceptions concerning the UTBK cheating case. Six instances of assertive acts were identified, making this category the most frequently occurring type in the analyzed comments. The following samples illustrate the assertive illocutionary acts identified in the data.



Figure 1. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@treanee_ "every year there's always some kind of UTBK anomaly 🤔🤔"

The utterance represents an assertive illocutionary act through which the user expresses an opinion about the recurring occurrence of anomalies in the *Ujian Tulis Berbasis Komputer* (UTBK). The phrase "every year" frames the cheating phenomenon as a recurring rather than isolated occurrence. Through this statement, the user presents a personal evaluation of irregular behavior associated with the examination. The utterance therefore functions primarily as an assertion concerning the perceived recurrence of problematic practices in the UTBK.



Figure 2. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@kunglajubran "Good thing it got exposed, but how did they even find out? I'm curious"

This utterance contains an assertive element through which the user evaluates the exposure of the alleged cheating positively. The statement "Good thing it got exposed" communicates the speaker's position that uncovering the incident constituted a desirable outcome. The subsequent question also introduces curiosity regarding how the relevant parties discovered the alleged cheating. The comment consequently combines an evaluative assertion with an expression of curiosity about the detection process.



Figure 3. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@capekhayati “if your brain can’t handle a public university, there are still plenty of private ones. if you’ve got money, might as well just study abroad instead of going for a public university.”

This comment primarily contains an assertive illocutionary act because the user expresses an opinion about alternatives to public universities. The speaker presents private universities as available alternatives for individuals who may experience difficulty entering public institutions. The second part of the comment extends this evaluation by mentioning studying abroad as another possible option for individuals with sufficient financial resources. At the same time, the utterance carries an indirect directive force because the speaker suggests alternative educational choices based on an individual’s abilities and circumstances.



Figure 4. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@ddaiifuku “My younger sibling studies till they lose track of time, falls asleep, takes tutoring till they forget to eat, and they have to compete with people cheating at this level?? so ridiculous lol that’s insane man insane, keep the spirit tho.”

The comment contains an assertive illocutionary act in which the user describes the experience of a younger sibling who studies intensively in preparation for the examination. By contrasting this effort with the alleged actions of individuals who cheated, the speaker highlights a perceived inequality in the competitive examination process. The account of intensive studying functions as the experiential basis for the user’s evaluation of the cheating incident. The utterance therefore communicates both an asserted personal experience and a critical perception of the unfairness associated with cheating.



Figure 5. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@blueeulbiru “No matter how dumb i am, i still wouldn’t want to look this dumb.”

The utterance represents an assertive illocutionary act through which the user expresses a strongly negative personal evaluation of cheating. The speaker constructs the statement by contrasting perceived intellectual limitations with an unwillingness to engage in behavior considered more embarrassing or foolish. This formulation communicates the user’s personal position toward the behavior associated with the cheating case. The comment therefore functions as an assertion of attitude and judgment toward the alleged practice.



Figure 6. Assertive (Expressing Opinion)

@jangandilirik “Next year they’ll probably just plant it in the hair roots so it’s safer.”

This comment represents an assertive illocutionary act expressed through sarcasm. The user speculates that future cheating methods might become even more concealed by referring humorously to devices being placed in the roots of the hair. Rather than literally predicting a future method, the speaker uses exaggeration to comment critically on the sophistication of the alleged cheating technique. The sarcastic formulation allows the user to communicate an opinion while simultaneously responding to the incident in a humorous manner.

Expressive Illocutionary Acts

Expressive illocutionary acts communicate a speaker’s psychological state or emotional response to a particular situation. Such acts can include thanking, congratulating, apologizing, criticizing, praising, expressing condolences, sympathizing, or communicating other emotional reactions. In the analyzed comments, expressive acts reflected users’ sympathy, surprise, confusion, criticism, and curiosity concerning the UTBK cheating incident. Five expressive instances were identified, making this category the second most frequently observed type. The following samples demonstrate how users employed expressive acts when responding emotionally to the issue.



Figure 7. Expressive (Sympathizing)

@09aleryn “and that’s for applying to dentistry at ‘yujjem’ and ‘undip’ right... good thing it got exposed... feel bad for the other people who actually studied for real”

The comment contains an expressive illocutionary act of sympathy. The user explicitly communicates concern for other prospective students who prepared seriously for the examination without engaging in dishonest practices. The expression “feel bad for the other people who actually studied for real” foregrounds the speaker’s emotional response to the perceived unfairness experienced by honest participants. The utterance consequently performs an expressive function by communicating sympathy toward those affected by the alleged cheating.

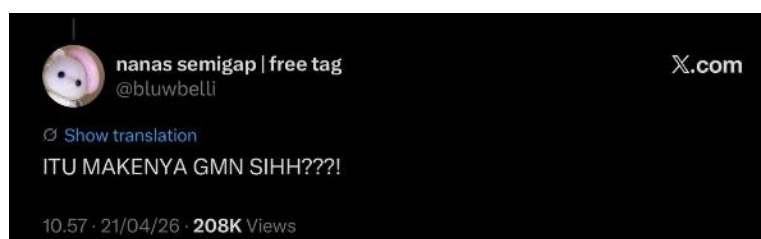


Figure 8. Expressive (Stunned and Confused)

@bluwbelli “HOW DO YOU EVEN USE THAT??!!”

This utterance represents an expressive illocutionary act conveying surprise and confusion. The use of capitalization, multiple question marks, and exclamation marks intensifies the emotional force of the response. Rather than functioning solely as a literal request for technical information, the question reflects the speaker’s astonishment at the alleged cheating method. The utterance therefore communicates an immediate psychological reaction to the unusual nature of the incident.



Figure 9. Expressive (Criticizing)

@stala9mites “why is it that cases like this are mostly in medicine 🙄🙄🙄 if you can’t study on your own, don’t do stuff like this... you’ll be a doctor, you will save someone’s life.”

The comment represents an expressive illocutionary act that conveys criticism and concern regarding dishonest practices associated with admission to medical education. The user criticizes individuals who allegedly rely on cheating despite the significant professional responsibilities associated with becoming a doctor. The reference to saving human lives strengthens the speaker’s concern by connecting academic integrity with future professional responsibility. The utterance therefore expresses disapproval of cheating while emphasizing the perceived seriousness of dishonesty among prospective medical students.

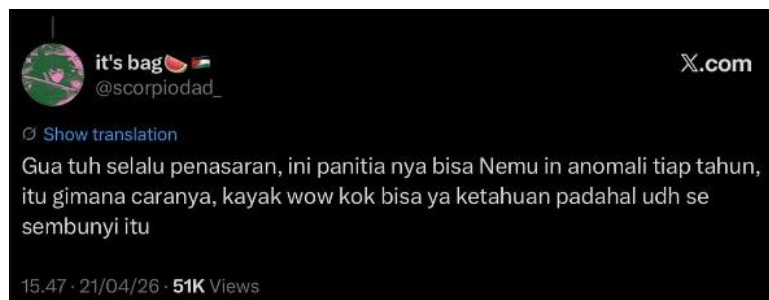


Figure 10. Expressive (Curiosity)

@scorpiodad_ “I’m always curious, like how do the committee manage to find these anomalies every year? like wow how do they even catch it when it’s already that well-hidden.”

The utterance contains an expressive illocutionary act that communicates curiosity. The speaker explicitly states being “always curious” about how examination authorities identify irregularities despite increasingly concealed cheating methods. The repeated interrogative expressions reinforce the speaker’s interest and astonishment regarding the detection process. The comment consequently communicates a psychological state of curiosity rather than merely requesting factual information.



Figure 11. Expressive (Stunned)

@ddoriseyo “People really put in so much effort just to cheat or do stuff like that???? Why not just use it to study instead?????”

The comment represents an expressive illocutionary act that conveys astonishment at the amount of effort allegedly invested in cheating. The repeated question marks emphasize the speaker’s strong emotional reaction to the

incident. The speaker contrasts the effort required to cheat with the possibility of directing the same effort toward studying. The utterance consequently expresses disbelief and criticism toward individuals who devote considerable effort to dishonest practices rather than academic preparation.

Directive Illocutionary Acts

Directive illocutionary acts represent speakers' attempts to influence others to perform particular actions. These acts may include ordering, requesting, demanding, recommending, or advising. The present study identified directive acts primarily in comments that proposed alternative actions to cheating. Two instances of directive illocutionary acts appeared in the analyzed data, and both functioned as advice. The following samples illustrate the directive functions identified in users' responses.



Figure 12. Directive (Advising)

@skyneoraieys "Better to just guess everything than do this it's troublesome and not even blessed, damn."

The utterance contains a directive illocutionary act in the form of advice. The user suggests that test takers would be better off guessing their answers than using concealed communication devices to cheat during the examination. By presenting an alternative course of action, the speaker attempts to discourage the behavior associated with the cheating incident. The reference to the action as troublesome and "not even blessed" also conveys a negative moral evaluation of the practice. The directive force therefore operates through advice intended to encourage an alternative to dishonest behavior.

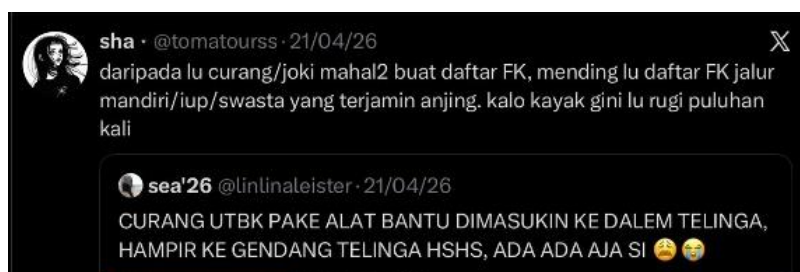


Figure 13. Directive (Advising)

@tomatourss "instead of cheating/hiring an expensive 'joki' to apply for med school, you'd be better off applying through independent/IUP/private paths that are legit, bitch. doing this just makes you lose way more."

The comment contains a directive illocutionary act in which the user recommends legitimate alternatives to cheating or hiring a *joki* for admission to medical school. The speaker specifically proposes independent, IUP, or private admission pathways as more appropriate alternatives. This recommendation demonstrates an attempt to influence prospective applicants to pursue legitimate admission procedures rather than dishonest practices. The final statement reinforces the advice by emphasizing the potential disadvantages associated with cheating. The utterance therefore performs a directive function by recommending alternative actions and discouraging the behavior criticized in the discourse.

Distribution and Interpretation of Illocutionary Acts

The findings demonstrate that assertive illocutionary acts occurred most frequently in the comment section of @linlinaleister's post, with six instances, all of which predominantly involved expressions of opinion. This pattern is consistent with Maulidiya et al. (2021), who identified nine assertive expressions and similarly found assertive acts to

be more frequent than other categories in their analyzed data. The predominance of assertive acts indicates that users primarily employed the comment section to articulate evaluations, observations, and opinions concerning the cheating incident. This tendency corresponds with Asharudin et al. (2023), who argue that social media has expanded opportunities for members of the public to express their opinions. The findings consequently illustrate how platform X functions as a discursive space in which users publicly construct and communicate evaluations of controversial events.

Expressive illocutionary acts constituted the second most frequently identified category and appeared in five instances involving criticism, sympathy, surprise, confusion, and curiosity. These expressions demonstrate that users did not respond to the cheating incident solely by communicating propositions but also by articulating their psychological and emotional reactions. Expressive illocutionary acts inherently communicate speakers' feelings or psychological states toward particular circumstances, and the analyzed comments reflected various forms of concern about the cheating phenomenon (Heriyati et al., 2023). The expressions of sympathy toward honest participants and criticism of alleged cheaters further demonstrate how users positioned themselves emotionally and evaluatively within the discourse. These findings show that emotional responses constitute an important, pragmatic dimension of public engagement with sensitive issues on social media.

Directive illocutionary acts occurred least frequently, with two instances identified as advice or suggestions concerning alternative actions. These comments demonstrate that public responses to controversial events can extend beyond expressing opinions and emotions to proposing courses of action for other individuals. Through directive acts, users recommended legitimate alternatives to cheating and implicitly encouraged others to reconsider dishonest practices. Social media can consequently facilitate the exchange of perspectives in which users ask questions, offer explanations, and share knowledge derived from academic understanding or lived experience (Aquarini et al., 2025; Azzahra et al., 2026). Taken together, the assertive, expressive, and directive acts demonstrate that public comments on social media perform multiple communicative functions and convey intentions that extend beyond the simple transmission of information.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that public responses to the alleged *Ujian Tulis Berbasis Komputer* (UTBK) cheating case in the comment section of @linlinaleister's post on platform X contained three types of illocutionary acts: assertive, expressive, and directive. The analysis identified six assertive acts, five expressive acts, and two directive acts, demonstrating that assertive acts constituted the most frequently occurring category in the analyzed comments. These illocutionary acts primarily served three communicative purposes: expressing opinions, criticizing, and advising, while several comments also conveyed emotional responses such as sympathy, surprise, and curiosity. The findings demonstrate that social media comments function not merely as vehicles for information exchange but also as linguistic actions through which users communicate intentions, attitudes, evaluations, and psychological responses to sensitive public issues.

The findings provide theoretical insights for pragmatics and speech act studies and practical implications for language learners, educators, social media users, platform moderators, and policymakers seeking to understand the communicative intentions embedded in online public responses. The scope of the study remains limited because the analysis examined only comments associated with a single post on platform X concerning one specific issue and identified three categories of illocutionary acts, which restricts the transferability of the findings to broader forms of digital discourse. The qualitative interpretation of illocutionary force also depends on the linguistic and contextual information available in individual comments, while the study did not investigate users' actual intentions beyond their textual expressions. Future researchers should therefore analyze larger and more diverse datasets, examine additional categories and functions of speech acts, and compare public responses across different issues and social media platforms.

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