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Speech Acts of Characters in *Laut Bercerita*: A Pragmatic Analysis of Contemporary Indonesian Fiction

Muhammad Agus Salim[a*], Masulah[b], R. Panji Hermoyo[c]

[abc] *Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia*
*Corresponding author. *E-mail address: muhammadagussalim1980@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the forms, functions, and meanings of speech acts performed by characters in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita*, which addresses the enforced disappearances of student activists at the end of Indonesia's New Order regime. A qualitative descriptive design was used. Forty dialogue excerpts were purposively selected, and each was analysed across three dimensions of Austin's and Searle's speech act theory, namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Data were collected through close reading and note-taking and analysed with Miles and Huberman's interactive model. In the analysed sample, statement locutions were the most frequent locutionary type. Assertive and directive acts were the most frequent illocutionary types, followed by expressive, commissive, and declarative acts. Motivational and affective effects were the most frequent perlocutionary types. Assertive acts established facts that characters needed in order to act, directive acts took the form of mitigated suggestions and advice, and expressive acts such as apology and affection were linked to affective effects. Perlocutionary effects were inferred from narrative evidence and not observed in real hearers. Because the excerpts were purposively selected, the frequencies describe the sample and not the novel as a whole. The study shows how an integrated analysis of the three dimensions can reveal how characters' language enacts solidarity, grief, and demands for accountability under political repression. It adds a pragmatic perspective to scholarship on Indonesian literature that has so far been largely historical and thematic.

Keywords: Indonesian Literature, *Laut Bercerita*, Perlocutionary Effects, Pragmatics, Speech Acts

INTRODUCTION

Language is a primary means through which people build relationships, assert authority, and act upon the world. Speech act theory captures this idea by treating an utterance as the performance of an action and not merely the transmission of information. The theory originated with Austin and was later systematised by Searle, and it continues to attract careful philosophical scrutiny, particularly regarding the boundary between locutionary and illocutionary acts (Reiland, 2024). Its central premise, that saying something is also doing something, has made it a durable framework for studying how speakers accomplish social purposes through talk.

The same premise has proved productive in the study of fiction. Literary dialogue is a constructed artefact, yet it draws on the communicative conventions of everyday interaction, so readers interpret what characters do with their words much as they interpret real speakers. Recent work on the pragmatics of fiction treats novels, plays, and films as layered acts of communication in which authors, characters, and readers occupy distinct participation roles (Locher et al., 2023). From a philosophical standpoint, Summa (2020) argues that fictional language performs a genuine speech act, because it appeals to readers to imagine, and thereby to share in constructing, the fictional world. Analyses of individual characters have also shown how speech acts reveal social position and authority. Fitriani et al. (2020), for instance, found that directive acts predominated in the utterances of the protagonist of a fantasy film, while declarative acts were absent because the character lacked the institutional status that such acts require.

Leila S. Chudori's *Laut Bercerita* (2017) offers a demanding test case for this approach. The novel is set against the enforced disappearances of pro-democracy student activists in the final years of the New Order regime, and it follows Biru Laut and his fellow activists through clandestine organising, abduction, and torture. The narrative then turns to Laut's younger sister, Asmara Jati, whose perspective traces the family's search for truth and justice in the years after the regime fell. Much of the novel's force is carried by what its characters say to one another. They plan, warn, reassure, apologise, promise, and refuse, and they do so under conditions of surveillance, fear, and loss. Dialogue in this novel therefore does more than advance the plot. It records how people act, and sometimes fail to act, through language when the state threatens the very possibility of speaking.

Scholarly attention to the novel has grown steadily, mostly through sociological, psychoanalytic, and trauma-oriented readings. Fadilah et al. (2025) interpret the novel as a social critique that exposes political oppression, torture, and enforced disappearance, and Sijabat et al. (2024) examine its motifs of social conflict from the perspective of the sociology of literature. Furqan et al. (2023) read the text through the lens of genocide and trauma, while Rosida and Hikam (2025) apply a psychoanalytic approach to trauma and collective memory. Together, these studies establish the historical and psychological weight of the novel. They say little, however, about the linguistic means by which that weight is conveyed in the speech of its characters.

Studies that do take a linguistic perspective on the novel remain limited in number and narrow in scope. Hidayah et al. (2024) analysed expressive speech acts, which shows how characters voice feelings and evaluations but leaves other illocutionary categories unexamined. A focus on a single category, whatever its merits, cannot show how different kinds of illocutionary force operate together within the same scene. Nor can it show how the force of an utterance relates to what that utterance actually brings about in the hearer.

This leaves a clear gap. To the best of our knowledge, no published study of *Laut Bercerita* has examined locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts together in a single analysis. The perlocutionary dimension is especially neglected, even though it addresses the question that matters most in a novel about silenced voices, namely what characters' words do to those who hear them. This dimension is admittedly difficult to study in fiction, because perlocutionary effects must be inferred from narrative evidence and cannot be observed in real interlocutors. The present study confronts that difficulty directly by inferring each effect from the responses, reactions, and developments that follow an utterance in the narrative.

Accordingly, this study describes the forms of speech acts performed by characters in *Laut Bercerita*, explains their functions, and interprets their meanings within the narrative and

its socio-political setting, with attention to the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels. The analysis draws on forty dialogue excerpts that were purposively selected and examined qualitatively across all three levels. Because the sample is purposive, the frequencies reported in this article describe the analysed excerpts and are not estimates of how often the novel as a whole uses each type of act.

The study contributes in two ways. Empirically, it offers a pragmatic account of how the language of characters in a major Indonesian novel enacts resistance, solidarity, grief, and demands for accountability, and so complements the sociological, psychoanalytic, and trauma-focused readings discussed above. Conceptually, it demonstrates how an integrated analysis of the three speech act dimensions can be applied to literary dialogue while remaining cautious about the interpretive limits of inferring effects from a text. The remainder of the article reviews the relevant literature and theoretical framework, describes the method, presents the findings, and discusses their implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SPEECH ACT THEORY AND ITS CONTESTED BOUNDARIES

Speech act theory rests on Austin's distinction between three levels at which an utterance can be analysed. The locutionary act is the production of a meaningful utterance, which comprises the phonetic act of making sounds, the phatic act of arranging words according to grammatical rules, and the rhetic act of using those words with a particular sense and reference. The illocutionary act is what speakers do in speaking, such as stating, requesting, promising, or apologising. The perlocutionary act is the effect that the utterance has on the hearer, such as informing, persuading, or consoling them. Searle later organised illocutionary acts into five families. Assertives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition, directives try to get the hearer to act, commissives commit the speaker to future action, expressives convey a psychological state, and declarations change institutional reality through the speaker's authority. This study applies that taxonomy to the illocutionary level and uses the grammatical categories of statement, question, and command at the locutionary level. It adopts four working categories of perlocutionary effect, namely informative, persuasive, motivational, and affective.

Contemporary philosophical work shows that the boundaries between these levels are not settled. McDonald (2020) asks whether the speaker alone fixes illocutionary force or whether the hearer's uptake also has a part, using a well-known criminal case in which the shouted words "Let him have it" were disputed as either incitement to murder or an order to surrender a weapon. In later work, McDonald (2021) proposes that force is fixed by an agreement that speaker and hearer reach through exchange, and she contrasts this collaborative account with ratification and constitution theories. Shields (2020) widens the field by treating stipulation as a non-assertoric speech act that creates shared inferential entitlements between speaker and audience, and by offering a way of assessing how speech act performances may succeed or fail, including through uptake. Afzaal et al. (2024) show how broad the field has become. Their bibliometric analysis of speech act research in international journals between 2013 and 2023 finds that dominant themes differ across countries and disciplines, including linguistics and literature, and that older concerns with language and philosophy now meet computational approaches.

These debates matter for literary analysis in a specific way. Characters cannot be asked what they intended, and readers cannot observe real uptake. What a narrative provides instead

is a record of how other characters respond. If force emerges through exchange, as the collaborative account suggests, then the replies, silences, and actions that follow an utterance in the text are legitimate evidence of what the utterance did. The present study draws on this reasoning when it classifies illocutionary force and infers perlocutionary effects. It also recognises that such inferences remain interpretations of a textual record and not observations of real hearers.

SPEECH ACTS IN INDONESIAN FICTION

Research on speech acts in Indonesian fiction has often concentrated on one category of act at a time. Rejeki and Manaf (2025), for example, analysed directive speech acts in three contemporary Indonesian novels about urban adolescent life. They found that direct, unmitigated strategies were the most common, that relational closeness and social hierarchy shaped the choice of strategy, and that these strategies helped the narrative by strengthening bonds between characters, building tension, or adding humour. The study is valuable because it links dialogue to social relationships and to narrative function. Its concern, however, is the strategy through which directives are performed and not the effects those directives have on hearers. Its novels also depict everyday adolescent life, so it offers little guidance on how speech acts operate in fiction written about political repression. To our knowledge, studies of this kind are still scarce for Indonesian novels that confront state violence.

PRIOR STUDIES OF LAUT BERCERITA

Existing scholarship on *Laut Bercerita* approaches the novel mainly through history, politics, and discourse. Widyaiswara et al. (2022) applied Foucault's discourse analysis with an archaeological reading to *Pulang* and *Laut Bercerita*. They concluded that the patterns of resistance in both novels cannot be separated from the New Order regime, whose power the discursive formations portray as very strong. Hartati et al. (2024) used sociology of literature and New Historicism to examine political conflict between the student movement and the military-dominated regime, and they argued that the novel blends fiction with historical reality so that literature serves as social critique and historical remembrance. Apriyani et al. (2025) examined human rights abuses in three of Chudori's novels through New Historicism and found that the texts depict political imprisonment, enforced disappearance, censorship, and state violence.

These studies agree on the novel's value as remembrance and critique, and they provide the historical grounding on which a pragmatic reading can build. Their units of analysis, however, are themes, events, and discursive formations at the level of the whole text. They explain what the novel represents but not how individual utterances perform acts among characters. The one linguistic study in this group, by Putri and Nur (2024), takes a cognitive semantic perspective. It identifies three spatial image schemas in the novel's metaphorical expressions, namely top-bottom, near-far, and center-surround, and concludes that the data are orientational metaphors. That work shows the text rewards close linguistic attention, but it focuses on figurative language and not on communicative action between characters.

POSITIONING OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Three points emerge from this review. First, theoretical work shows that illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect are partly negotiated between speaker and hearer, which makes the narrative response a necessary source of evidence in literary analysis. Second, speech act

research on Indonesian fiction has tended to examine single categories in everyday settings. Third, scholarship on *Laut Bercerita* has been historical, discursive, and semantic and has not examined what characters do with their words. What remains missing is an integrated analysis of the acts that characters perform, and of what those acts bring about, in a novel set under political repression. The present study addresses this by analysing forty purposively selected dialogue excerpts at the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels, by relating each inferred effect to evidence in the surrounding narrative, and by treating the reported frequencies as descriptions of the analysed excerpts and not of the novel as a whole.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive design, which suits the analysis of linguistic phenomena that involve meaning, function, and context and cannot be adequately captured through numerical data. The design allowed the layers of meaning in literary dialogue to be examined with attention to both the linguistic features of each utterance and the narrative and socio-political context in which it occurred. The study was also library research (*kepustakaan*), since all data came from a written text, the novel *Laut Bercerita* (Chudori, 2017). Utterances were identified in the text and classified according to the categories of the theoretical framework, and the interpretive nature of literary analysis was acknowledged throughout. Because the study analysed a published literary text and involved no human participants, formal ethical approval was not required.

The primary data were dialogue excerpts from the novel, comprising words, phrases, sentences, and conversational exchanges in which characters performed speech acts in varied communicative situations. Forty excerpts were purposively selected for their representativeness of different speech act categories and their relevance to the research aims. Three criteria guided the selection. The excerpt had to be a character's speech within dialogue, it had to display the features of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts clearly, and it had to be embedded in a context that allowed meaningful pragmatic interpretation. The excerpts were coded sequentially from Data 01 to Data 40 to support systematic reference. The secondary data comprised books, journal articles, and earlier studies on speech act theory, pragmatics, and *Laut Bercerita*, which strengthened the theoretical grounding and supported the interpretation of the primary data. Because the selection was purposive, the frequencies reported in the Results describe the analysed excerpts and do not represent the novel as a whole.

Data were collected through close reading and note-taking. The novel was read several times to build a thorough understanding of the story, its events, and the relationships between its characters, which is a prerequisite for accurate pragmatic analysis. Passages containing dialogue were marked, and the utterances that corresponded to the speech act categories under investigation were selected. Each selected excerpt was recorded in a data inventory together with its speaker, addressee, situation, and surrounding narrative. Each entry also noted the utterance, the context of the speech event, the locutionary meaning, the illocutionary force, and the perlocutionary effect.

The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which has three linked stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In data reduction, each excerpt was examined and its speech act components were identified. It was then classified as a statement, question, or command at the locutionary level, as one of Searle's five illocutionary types, and as one of four perlocutionary effects, namely informative, persuasive, motivational, or affective. Data that did not meet the criteria for speech act analysis

were excluded to maintain analytical focus. In data display, the reduced data were arranged in tables and descriptive summaries, with the tables presenting the classifications and the narrative descriptions supplying context and interpretive commentary. In conclusion drawing and verification, patterns across the excerpts were identified, and the conclusions were checked against the original data and related to the theoretical framework and earlier research. As an illustration, Data 01 is Sunu's remark to Laut and his friends that a door is made of teak while they inspect a house. This excerpt was reduced to a statement locution, displayed as an assertive act, and interpreted as informative because it adds to the hearers' knowledge of the building. Perlocutionary effects were inferred from the narrative evidence that followed each utterance and were not observed in real hearers.

Three strategies supported the trustworthiness of the findings. The text was read repeatedly to develop prolonged familiarity with its content and context. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing interpretations across different excerpts and by consulting secondary sources for theoretical validation. A reflexive stance was maintained by acknowledging the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis and by grounding every interpretation in textual evidence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

Analysis of the forty dialogue excerpts showed a varied repertoire of speech acts performed by characters in situations ranging from planning and inspecting a house to meetings of victims' families and the Commission for the Disappeared. Table 1 summarises the findings. Each excerpt was classified at all three levels, so the same excerpt may appear in more than one block of the table. The percentages refer to the forty analysed excerpts and not to the novel as a whole.

Table 1. Summary of Speech Act Findings in *Laut Bercerita*

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Representative examples
Locutionary acts	Statement locutions	20	50%	"Pintu ini terbuat dari kayu jati" [This door is made of teak wood] (Data 01) "Kita belum tahu apa yang terjadi dengan mereka" [We do not yet know what has happened to them] (Data 21)
	Question locutions	10	25%	"Apa julukan rumah ini, Dan?" [What is the nickname of this house, Dan?] (Data 06) "Coba gambarkan peta bagaimana seseorang bisa mencapai rumah ini?" [Try to draw a map of how someone can reach this house?] (Data 10)
	Command locutions	10	25%	"Datanglah" [Come] "Ayo, selesaikan makan siangmu" [Come on, finish your lunch]
Illocutionary acts	Assertive	14	35%	"Rumah Hantu" [The Ghost House] (Data 07) "Tim investigasi terdiri dari Asmara, Coki, dan Alex" [The investigation team consists of Asmara, Coki, and Alex] (Data 26)
	Directive	12	30%	"Pasang tikar saja" [Just lay out the mats] (Data 02)

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Representative examples
				"…jadilah pendengar yang baik dan bersabarlah" […be a good listener and be patient] (Data 35)
	Expressive	8	20%	"Maafkan jika di masa lalu aku selalu bertingkah seperti abang yang menjengkelkan" [Forgive me if in the past I always acted like an annoying older brother] (Data 31)
				"Bapak dan aku menyayangimu" [Father and I love you] (Data 32)
	Commissive	5	12.5%	"Aku ada ide lain" [I have another idea] (Data 09)
				"Suatu hari, niscaya dia akan mendengar suara hatinya sendiri" [One day, surely he will hear the voice of his own heart] (Data 36)
	Declarative	1	2.5%	"Saya memutuskan membentuk tim investigasi" [I decide to form an investigation team] (Data 25)
Perlocutionary acts	Informative	10	25%	"Pintu ini terbuat dari kayu jati" (Data 01)
				"Dimulai dari laporan adanya temuan tulang-tulang di beberapa pulau" [It began with reports of bone findings on several islands] (Data 24)
	Persuasive	8	20%	"Aku rasa kita ambil saja, Laut" [I think we should just take it, Laut] (Data 04)
	Motivational	12	30%	"Semangat Julius, semangat Laut, semangat Gala, Sunu, Narendra, Dana, dan Kinan itu harus tetap menjadi ruh kita" [The spirit of Julius, the spirit of Laut, the spirit of Gala, Sunu, Narendra, Dana, and Kinan must remain our soul] (Data 22)
	Affective	10	25%	"Bapak dan aku menyayangimu" (Data 32)
				"Maafkan jika di masa lalu aku selalu bertingkah seperti abang yang menjengkelkan" (Data 31)

LOCUTIONARY ACTS

Statement locutions were the most frequent type in the analysed sample (50%), followed by question and command locutions (25% each). Because the excerpts were purposively selected, this distribution describes the sample. It shows that the selected excerpts are oriented mainly toward conveying information, describing situations, and reporting events, and it does not by itself describe the dialogue of the novel as a whole.

Statement locutions establish a factual footing. In Data 01, Sunu tells Laut and his friends that a door is made of teak while they inspect the house that will become the organisation's secretariat. At the locutionary level the utterance states a fact about the building without any implied request. Data 21 shows a statement locution that expresses uncertainty, as Asmara and the families of disappeared activists discuss the fate of the missing. The utterance communicates a lack of knowledge about their whereabouts and states the novel's central mystery. Question locutions seek information or clarification. In Data 06, Laut asks Daniel for the nickname of the house, and in Data 10, Kinan asks for a map of the route to it, which

supplies spatial information that the activists needed for their security. Command locutions are imperative in form and directed the addressee to act, as in "Datanglah" and "Ayo, selesaikan makan siangmu".

ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

All five of Searle's categories appeared. Assertive and directive acts together accounted for 65% of the analysed excerpts.

Assertive acts commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. Data 07 is Daniel's answer to Laut's question in Data 06, so the two utterances form a question-and-answer pair. The reply "Rumah Hantu" does more than name the house. It asserts a reputation, the house's haunted status, which carries practical and symbolic meaning for a group that was about to make the house its base. Data 26 asserts the composition of the investigation team at a meeting of the Commission for the Disappeared and, in doing so, establishes a formal arrangement that shapes what the team could do next.

Directive acts try to influence what the hearer does. Data 02 consists of two sentences that carry different force. In "Ruang besar ini bisa kita gunakan sebagai tempat discussion", Laut states a possibility, which is assertive in force. The directive force lies in the second sentence, "Pasang tikar saja", which is an imperative softened by the particle *saja* and prepared by the inclusive *kita*. Together the two sentences form a suggestion about how to use the space. Data 35 is advice about a personal relationship. It is mitigated by the opening word "Saranku" (my advice), which lessens the imposition while still seeking to guide the addressee's behaviour.

Expressive acts convey the speaker's psychological state. Data 31 is an apology. The speaker describes himself as an older brother (*abang*), which places the apology in a sibling relationship where the elder owns his past behaviour and seeks reconciliation. Data 32 expresses love and support to Asmara in the face of loss. Data 33 expresses praise for Asmara's maturity, steadfastness, and intelligence, which affirms her qualities and strengthens her sense of worth.

Commissive acts commit the speaker to a future course. The two examples discussed here are borderline cases. Data 36 and Data 38 do not contain an explicit promise. They express confidence about what will happen, namely that a person will eventually hear his own conscience and that the addressee will tell the speaker's story to the world. They were coded as commissive because the speakers place their trust in a future outcome and thereby set an expectation that the story and the struggle will be carried forward. The boundary with assertive acts, which also concern the truth of a future proposition, is acknowledged here as a point of interpretation.

The single declarative act, Data 25, occurred at a meeting of the Commission for the Disappeared. In "Saya memutuskan membentuk tim investigasi" the speaker creates the investigation team as a formal entity through the exercise of authority, and once the utterance is made the team exists.

PERLOCUTIONARY ACTS

Perlocutionary effects were inferred from the narrative context and from the content of each utterance. They were not observed in real hearers and therefore represent interpretations of the text. Four types were identified, and motivational and affective effects together accounted for 55% of the analysed excerpts.

Informative effects add to what the hearer knows. In Data 01 the hearers learn about the quality of the building, which may inform decisions about its use. Data 24 opens a presentation of investigation findings with reports of bone discoveries on several islands, which lets the hearers understand the basis for the investigation. Persuasive effects change attitudes or decisions. In Data 04, Kinan gives her opinion about the house. As an illocutionary act the utterance is a directive in the form of a suggestion, and its effect is persuasive, since Laut becomes more confident about renting the house.

Motivational effects inspire action or perseverance. In Data 22, spoken at a meeting of victims' families and activists, the invocation of the names of the disappeared and the call to keep their spirit alive were interpreted as energising participants to continue the fight for justice. This effect is inferred from the setting and from what the utterance asks of its hearers, and it should be read as an interpretation and not as a recorded reaction. Data 23, a call for continuously demanding that the government provide clarity, was interpreted as encouraging the hearers to continue advocacy. Affective effects elicit an emotional response. Data 31 was interpreted as moving the hearer and opening space for reconciliation, and Data 32 as leaving Asmara feeling cared for and loved.

DISCUSSION

ILLOCUTIONARY PATTERNS AND THEIR SETTINGS

In the analysed sample, assertive and directive acts were the most frequent illocutionary types. Given the purposive selection, this pattern cannot be taken as a measure of the novel's dialogue as a whole, but it is informative about the kinds of speech that the selected scenes contain. Assertive acts in the sample mostly establish facts that a group needs in order to act, such as the identity of a house (Data 07), the composition of a team (Data 26), and the origin of an investigation (Data 24). Several of these occur in the Commission for the Disappeared, and they are consistent with the role that Hartati et al. (2024) attribute to the novel as historical remembrance, since the characters document what is known and what is not. Widyaiswara et al. (2022) describe the New Order as a power that the novel's discursive formations show to be very strong. The assertive acts in this sample suggest that, at the level of individual utterances, the characters respond to such power by establishing and sharing facts among themselves.

The directive acts in the sample were suggestions and advice, and they were softened in the ways noted in the Results through an inclusive pronoun, a particle, and the framing word "Saranku". This differs from Rejeki and Manaf (2025), who found that direct, unmitigated strategies were the most common in three contemporary Indonesian novels about urban adolescent life. The comparison should be made with care, since their corpus is a different kind of fiction and the present sample is small. It does suggest that the mitigation of directives in *Laut Bercerita* may relate to the relational settings of organising and personal counsel, which agrees with their finding that closeness and social hierarchy shape the strategies characters choose.

Expressive acts in the sample were an apology, an affirmation of love, and praise (Data 31 to 33). Hidayah et al. (2024) examined expressive acts in the novel on their own. Placing expressives beside the other categories shows something that a single-category study cannot show, namely that in these excerpts expressive acts were the ones that produced affective effects. The apology in Data 31 does more than convey regret. It performs a relational repair and is read as opening space for reconciliation. Set against the state violence that the novel

depicts (Apriyani et al., 2025), such acts give the characters' private language a moral weight that the political narrative alone does not carry.

The single declarative act and the few commissive acts mark moments of institutional and personal commitment. Fitriani et al. (2020) explained the absence of declaratives in a character's speech by that character's lack of institutional status. The sample here supports the same reading from the opposite direction. The only declarative (Data 25) was uttered in a formal body, the Commission for the Disappeared, by a speaker with authority to form a team. This is consistent with the view that declarative acts depend on institutional standing and not on the speaker's wishes alone. The commissive acts, by contrast, were borderline cases, which shows that the line between a pledge and a confident prediction is not always sharp in emotionally charged speech about the future.

PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECTS AND THEIR LIMITS

Motivational and affective effects were the most frequent in the sample. In these excerpts, utterances that invoke the dead, call for sustained advocacy, or express love and apology were interpreted as sustaining collective resolve and emotional bonds among the characters. A recurring alignment also appeared between the levels of analysis. Assertive acts tended to have informative effects (Data 01 and 24), expressive acts tended to have affective effects (Data 31 and 32), and a directive suggestion had a persuasive effect (Data 04). Such alignments are visible only when the three levels are analysed together on the same excerpts.

These findings need to be read with the limits of the method in mind. Perlocutionary effects in fiction are not observed. They are inferred from how the narrative presents the response of the hearers. This limitation fits recent philosophical work in which the hearer's response has a part in settling what an utterance does. McDonald (2020) asks whether the speaker alone fixes illocutionary force or whether uptake also matters, and McDonald (2021) argues that force is settled through agreement reached in exchange. If that view is accepted, the narrative responses that follow an utterance are legitimate evidence about what it did, and this is the evidence on which the present study relied. The effects reported here, however, remain effects within the fictional world. Whether the novel's dialogue moves actual readers in similar ways was not examined, and answering that question would require empirical work with readers.

Locher et al. (2023) describe fiction as layered communication in which characters speak to one another within an act of communication between author and reader, and Summa (2020) argues that fictional language performs a genuine speech act. The present analysis operates at the level of characters, and it suggests that the layers can be read together. In this novel, the characters' speech acts supply the interpersonal detail through which the broader themes identified by other scholars take shape, including social critique and remembrance (Fadilah et al., 2025). The study adds to this body of work in two ways. It examines locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts together on the same excerpts, and it shows how effects can be read from narrative evidence while stating the limits of doing so. Future studies could test whether the patterns observed here hold in larger or randomly drawn samples, analyse the speech acts of narrators as well as characters, and investigate actual reader responses.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the forms, functions, and meanings of speech acts in forty dialogue excerpts from Leila S. Chudori's *Laut Bercerita*, using Austin's and Searle's speech act theory

within a qualitative descriptive design. In the analysed sample, statement locutions were the most frequent locutionary type, assertive and directive acts were the most frequent illocutionary types, and motivational and affective effects were the most frequent perlocutionary types. Assertive acts established the facts that characters needed in order to act, and directive acts took the form of mitigated suggestions and advice. Expressive acts such as apology and affection were linked to affective effects, and the single declarative act depended on the speaker's institutional standing. These patterns describe the selected excerpts and should not be read as the distribution of speech acts in the novel as a whole.

The study contributes by analysing the three levels together on the same excerpts, which revealed alignments between types of act and types of effect that single-category studies cannot show, and by stating how perlocutionary effects can be inferred from narrative evidence in fiction. The findings indicate that the characters' speech does more than carry the plot, since it shows how people act through language under conditions of fear, loss, and demands for accountability. The findings also have practical value. The mitigated directives could be used in pragmatics teaching to show how speakers soften requests and advice, and the apologies and expressions of care could support human rights education by presenting victims and their families as people with relationships and emotions and not only as symbols of political violence.

The study has limitations. The forty excerpts were purposively selected from a single novel, so the frequencies cannot be generalised, and the analysis concentrated on character dialogue. The perlocutionary effects are inferences from the text and not observations of real hearers, and some classifications, particularly the commissive acts, lie at the boundary between categories. Future research could use larger or randomly drawn samples, include the speech acts of narrators and paratexts, investigate actual reader responses empirically, and extend the analysis to other contemporary Indonesian novels that deal with political violence.

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