

Speech Act in the Song *Fateh* by Vanguard and Doyz as a Medium of Social Criticism

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Abstract: This study analyzes the song *Fateh* by Morgue Vanguard and Doyz as a medium of social criticism using John Searle's speech act theory. The song emerged amidst the Indonesian student protests in 2024, opposing the revision of the Regional Election Law, which was perceived as reinforcing oligarchy. The analysis of *Fateh*'s lyrics identifies 42 lines categorized into five types of speech acts: representative acts (18 lines), directive acts (9 lines), expressive acts (6 lines), commissive acts (5 lines), and declarative acts (4 lines). Representative acts depict social realities of injustice, while directive acts call listeners to engage in collective action. Expressive acts convey emotions of anger and frustration, commissive acts reflect commitment to ongoing resistance, and declarative acts assert the social changes needed. The findings reveal that *Fateh* serves not only as a critique of social inequality but also as a tool for building solidarity and encouraging change through collective action.

Keyword: *Speech Acts; Fateh Song; John Searle; Social Criticism*

INTRODUCTION

As one of art works, song lyrics are written for various purposes and realized by using unique and aesthetic language. Hence, song lyrics implicitly reflect the deeper meaning and value, rather than their literal meanings. Many song lyrics reflect non literal meaning to involve the writers' emotion, feelings, and intention (see Milantina et al, 2025; Azizah & Arifin, 2024; Luthfiana et al, 2020). In other fact, the song lyrics are often used for not only entertaining, but also affecting the listeners, promoting the life values, and even voicing the protest (see Amrullah & Shadiqin, 2024; Astuti & Setyanto, 2023; Fadzillah et al, 2022).

Street (2013) points out that protest music serves not only as the writer's cultural expression, but also as an effective political strategy for promoting societal voice. This cultural symptom has flourished in Indonesia through a number of song lyrics, for instance; *Bongkar* by Iwan Fals, which criticizes the mass of corruption in Indonesian government level; *Di Udara* by Efek Rumah Kaca, which promoting the action against the violations of human rights; and *Busur Hujan* by Navicula, which voicing the issues on environmental exploitation.

In 2024, *Fateh* by Morgue Vanguard and Doyz emerged as one of the critical representations of contemporary protest music. Through powerful and symbolic lyrics, this song critiques the social and political inequalities resulting from oligarchic domination while simultaneously calling for collective action against injustice. The lyrics of *Fateh* are particularly compelling as they not only convey social criticism but also employ complex linguistic strategies. For example, phrases such as "*angkat suara, lawan tirani*" (raise your voice, fight tyranny) does not only describe the conditions of inequality but also urge audiences to take action. In this context, protest music serves as more than entertainment; it becomes a medium for conveying political messages, building solidarity, and mobilizing society. Thus, music creates a space of resistance capable of reaching diverse social layers.

To understand how the lyrics of *Fateh* function as a medium of social criticism, John Searle's (1969) speech act theory offers a relevant framework. This theory explains that language functions not only to convey information but also to perform actions. Representational acts describe social inequalities, directive acts call audiences to action, and expressive acts convey emotions and attitudes toward injustice (Fairclough, 2015). Commissive acts articulate commitments to future actions or ideologies, reflecting a dedication to resistance and societal change. Declarative acts assert transformative statements that symbolically alter social realities or reaffirm collective identity (Searle, 1969). Using this approach, the analysis of *Fateh* can reveal how protest music constructs strong narratives of resistance through linguistic choices and speech act structures.

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of speech act theory in exploring song lyrics, for instance; Milantina et al (2025) investigated song lyrics of *Don't Smile* by Sabrina Carpenter, focusing to uncover the emotional and communicative layers within the lyrics through Searle's speech act. Samsudin et al (2023) examined the Searle's speech acts realized in song lyrics *White Space* by Jeong Dong-Wons. Similarly, Putri & Suryadi (2021) examined Taylor Swift's songs, revealing how assertive and directive acts create a narrative dynamic that engages listeners. In a study by Chen et al. (2022), the authors analyzed K-pop lyrics and found that commissive acts often reflect cultural values and societal commitments.

Meanwhile, Alam et al (2019) investigated Indonesian pop songs, highlighting the existence of commissives speech acts within the Adele's song. Finally, Dewi & Hartati (2023) identified a blend of speech act types in Adele's lyrics, emphasizing their role in fostering emotional resonance and authenticity. These studies underscore the versatility of speech act theory as a tool for understanding the interplay between language and music.

Another study on protest music in Indonesia, such as Rahman (2020), have detailed focused on explaining the ideological stance and its larger social impacts of music. However, few studies explores the linguistic layers of protest song lyrics, especially in the perspective of Searle's speech act theory. This research gap challenge any scholars and researchers to fill it. Therefore, the present research serves not only to fill that gap, but also contributes more to the development of linguistic and social criticism studies in the current discourse.

Considering the above explanation, this study aims to analyze the lyrics of *Fateh* by using speech act theory to understand how music can be effectively utilized to convey social criticism. The research seeks to provide new insights into the role of music as a medium of resistance in Indonesia while enriching discussions on art and activism in contemporary contexts.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with primary data consisting of the lyrics of the song *Fateh* and secondary data comprising relevant literature on protest music and John Searle's (1969) speech act theory. The analysis focuses on identifying and classifying speech acts (representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative) in the lyrics to reveal the conveyed social and political criticism. Data collection methods include documentation and literature review, with dual-source validation by comparing the lyric analysis with the theoretical framework and its relevance to the sociopolitical phenomena addressed in this study.

The analysis process involves several stages. First, the speech acts in each segment of the lyrics are identified and classified using Searle's theoretical framework. Second, the findings are evaluated by relating them to the sociopolitical issues that form the core of this study to assess the alignment of the messages conveyed. This research aims to uncover the linguistic strategies employed in delivering social criticism through song lyrics and to contribute theoretically to linguistic studies, particularly in understanding the role of speech acts as instruments in the discourse of social resistance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis of the *Fateh* lyrics identified 42 lines containing speech acts categorized into five types based on Searle's framework: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Representative acts, identified in 18 lines, depict socio-political realities and reflect the collective identity of resistance. Directive acts, present in 9 lines, aim to mobilize the audience by encouraging action against oppressive systems. Expressive acts, found in 6 lines, convey emotional responses such as anger and frustration, adding depth to the critique. Commissive acts appear in 5 lines, demonstrating promises or commitments to ongoing resistance. Declarative acts, identified in 4 lines, symbolically perform actions such as declaring rebellion or asserting defiance.

Table 1: Types of speech acts in *Fateh* song lyric

No.	Speech Act Type	Number of Lines
1	representative	18
2	directive	9
3	expressive	6
4	commissive	5
5	declarative	4
	Total	42

Representative acts dominate the speech acts in the lyrics, comprising 18 out of 42 lines. This prevalence underscores their role in depicting socio-political conditions and establishing the identity of resistance, while the other acts serve to mobilize, express emotions, and reinforce commitments.

Discussion

The song *Fateh*, an artistic work laden with the atmosphere of social protest, offers a form of expression that extends beyond mere musicality. It encapsulates the socio-political injustices long embedded in the lives of Indonesian society, while also voicing a resistance to various forms of inequality and oligarchic domination. By employing various types of speech acts, the song conveys messages that not only stir emotions but also invite listeners to reflect on the ongoing socio-political conditions. Furthermore, the song provides insights into how Indonesian society confronts deep-rooted socio-political injustices entrenched in the governance and economic systems for years (Firdaus, 2021).

The lyrics of *Fateh* function as an open form of social criticism against the injustice that has been an integral part of Indonesia's socio-political dynamics. Inequality, exploitation, oligarchy, and polarization in society are the primary issues raised in this song. Utilizing a range of speech acts, *Fateh* does not simply criticize such oppression but also encourages the audience to participate in the struggle for social change. Below is an analysis of the speech acts found in *Fateh*, which reflect the social critique directed at the existing structure.

Representative

Representative speech acts function to convey social realities or facts believed to be true by the speaker. Searle (1969) explains that such speech acts are used to describe social conditions perceived as reality. *Fateh* employs representative speech acts to voice the social injustice occurring within Indonesian society and the resistance against power imbalances. The song not only criticizes inequality but also urges listeners to engage in a more substantial social transformation.

Datum 1: “*Kami datang dengan kelebat serupa parang terayun.*”

This lyric employs the metaphor “*kelebat serupa parang terayun*” to describe the sharp and determined force of resistance, likening it to a machete that cuts through obstacles. The machete, within the tradition of Indonesian struggle, is often associated with the people's resistance against colonialism and injustice. Budi (2018) notes that the machete is a symbol deeply rooted in Indonesia's history of struggle, especially against colonial oppression. In *Fateh*, this metaphor depicts a resistance that is not merely symbolic but a movement with the potential to dismantle the oppressive social structure.

Searle (1969) posits that representative speech acts serve to describe social realities. This lyric paints a picture of social injustice that can only be rectified through organized resistance. The song urges the audience to recognize the importance of collective struggle to overhaul the deeply entrenched social structure.

Datum 2: “*Kami adalah sisa waras yang meregang dikooptasi papan iklan.*”

This lyric illustrates how capitalism and mass media play a role in controlling and exploiting public consciousness. The phrase “*sisa waras*” refers to individuals who are still capable of clear thinking amidst the dominance of capitalist ideology that controls society, while “*papan iklan*” depicts the media as a tool for spreading ideologies that serve certain interests. Wijana (2021) explains that representative speech acts are used to show how certain ideologies dominate society, as seen in the portrayal of media's power to exploit public consciousness.

The dominance of media in shaping public opinion has long been a part of Indonesian political life, especially in the context of elections. Political advertisements play a significant role in shaping the image of political elites, while the voice of the people is often sidelined (Praditya et al, 2014). *Fateh* critiques the capitalist system that uses media to control the narratives accepted by society and how this system exploits individuals by creating false consciousness through propaganda.

Fairclough (2015) argues that mass media functions not only as a means of communication but also as an arena for ideological dominance that shapes social structures. This song emphasizes criticism against how capitalism manipulates the media to control public thought and spread ideologies that reinforce social inequality. The representatives in this song voice a rejection of the considerable influence media and capitalism have in shaping societal mindsets.

Directive

Directives play a crucial role in the process of social change as they serve to guide the audience toward taking specific actions or movements. According to Searle (1969), directives convey intentions aimed at real action rather than mere requests or invitations. *Fateh* utilizes directives to build a collective spirit that encourages the audience to act together in confronting the structured injustices within socio-political life. In other words, this song is not just about expressing dissatisfaction; it seeks to mobilize the public to engage in a larger social transformation.

Datum 3: “*Kami arak kehitaman kibaran panji.*”

The lyric serves as an instruction to build solidarity and mobilize the audience into collective action. The word “*arak*” here signifies a collective movement, inviting the audience not to stand alone but to unite in confronting the existing injustice. The phrases “*kehitaman*” and “*kibaran panji*” symbolize the burning spirit of struggle, indicating a resistance that is not just reactive but active and organized.

This metaphor is more than just a symbol of the fighting spirit; it also recalls Indonesia’s social history, where symbols such as flags and mass marches have often represented popular movements. Throughout Indonesian history, uprisings against colonialism or injustice have been fueled by calls to mobilize the masses using powerful and meaningful symbols, such as during the Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*) or the 1998 reform movement (Rahman, 2020). This demonstrates how *Fateh* adopts social mobilization patterns that have been part of Indonesia’s historical tradition, using these elements to inspire collective action in the present.

Sen et al (2004) asserts that music has the power to strengthen collective solidarity within social movements, as it unites feelings and intentions into a common goal. Through this directive speech act, *Fateh* not only invites listeners to reflect but also to participate in concrete change, with the understanding that solidarity is key to fighting injustice. Here, the lyrics function as a trigger for broader collective action, reminding us that the strength of resistance lies in the ability to move together.

Datum 4: “*Kami tidak akan berhenti meski lapar mengetam.*”

This lyric illustrates unwavering determination in resistance, a commitment to continue fighting despite significant challenges. “*Kami tidak akan berhenti*” is a declaration of tireless

resistance, while “*lapar mengetam*” adds an element of physical suffering that evokes empathy. The directive speech act here serves not only to motivate the audience to act but also to remind them that this struggle requires sacrifice.

Social mobilization theory provides an additional perspective on analyzing this lyric. Feelings of anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction often fuel larger social movements (Sanjaya, 2013). This lyric calls the audience to transform these collective emotions into organized action. Musicians and artists often play a role in shaping these collective feelings through mediums that reach broader audiences, as seen in protest music phenomena worldwide. In the context of Indonesia, music has been used at various points in history to voice social-political injustices, as exemplified by protest songs during the New Order era (Tajam A, 2018).

The combination of instructions to endure and the sacrifices required creates a powerful narrative, linking concrete action with a broader social struggle. This phrase functions not just to rouse the audience but to provide them with an understanding that this struggle demands long-term commitment. It can be seen as a mental and emotional preparation conveyed through the song, indicating that this resistance is not a fleeting movement, but a sustained commitment to change.

Expressive

Expressive speech acts function to convey feelings or attitudes toward a particular event or state. According to Searle (1976), expressive speech acts include utterances that express personal feelings, where the intention is not to alter the external world but to depict the speaker’s inner condition. *Fateh* uses expressives to channel the collective emotions—anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction—toward social injustice. This function not only strengthens the emotional bond between the speaker and the audience but also motivates them by evoking similar feelings.

Datum 5: “*Kami adalah darah yang tumpah di hitungan puputan.*”

The lyric “*kami adalah darah yang tumpah*” refers to the great sacrifices required in the struggle for justice. The use of the blood symbol here refers not just to physical suffering, but also to the resolve in fighting for a common cause. This phrase establishes a profound emotional connection between the speaker and the audience, who may feel the same anguish over the injustice faced. Wijana (2017) argue that expressives in this song play a significant role in reinforcing solidarity by conveying deep feelings of sacrifice and struggle that must be endured by social fighters.

The blood symbol, while related to physical suffering, further invites the audience to feel the collective struggle necessary to confront injustice. In this sense, expressives serve to create an understanding that the fight for social change often requires significant sacrifices, both physically and emotionally.

Datum 6: “*Tentang geram yang kami pelihara.*”

This lyric describes anger that has been nurtured and is ready to erupt as a form of resistance. The use of “*geram*” indicates that the accumulated emotion is not just anger, but a reaction to long-standing oppression. The pent-up frustration becomes a driving force that can no longer be contained, leading to social action. Praditya et al. (2014) assert that expressives are used to

ignite collective feelings that strengthen solidarity in social movements. This lyric reveals that resistance is not only driven by rationality but also by suppressed emotions that awaken collective awareness of the injustice at hand.

This pent-up emotion serves as the primary driver for social mobilization. Frustration often triggers more massive social movements. In this case, “*geram*” becomes a symbol of resilience in confronting the injustice and dissatisfaction that have long been harbored. In using this emotional appeal, *Fateh* seeks to create a sense of unity in the audience, conveying that their shared frustration is not something to be ashamed of, but rather something to be channeled into collective resistance.

Commissive

A commissive speech act serves to express a commitment or promise to do something in the future. In the framework of the pragmatic theory developed by Searle (1976), commissives encompass speech acts that function to declare the speaker's intention to be carried out at a later time, with emphasis on commitment and seriousness in executing that action. *Fateh* utilizes commissive speech acts to convey the strong resolve of the younger generation to continue fighting against existing social and political injustices, and to ignite a spirit of change that will not be extinguished despite facing various challenges.

Datum 7: “*Kami berjanji pada bendera yang terbakar.*”

The lyric illustrates the unconditional commitment of the younger generation to continue their struggle, even though it is fraught with sacrifice. The burning flag becomes a symbol of a struggle that will not be extinguished, even when confronted with hardships and resistance. This lyric reminds us of the pledge made by the generation, committing to continue fighting despite inevitable obstacles. The burning flag signifies that even though their struggle faces many hurdles, the flame of that struggle will never fade.

According to Kamariah (2017), a commissive not only refers to an intention or hope, but also to a concrete promise to act in the future. In this case, the lyric shows that the younger generation is committed to continuing the fight against social and political injustices. This promise represents a moral and emotional commitment that goes beyond words and is expected to be followed by concrete actions in resistance to injustice.

Datum 8: “*Kami adalah generasi yang kan merobek langit.*”

The lyric describes a promise and determination to bring about significant change. “*Merobek langit*” here is not merely a symbol of strength, but also represents the resolve to utterly dismantle injustice and bring about a fundamental change in the social order. This lyric conveys the belief that great change will materialize, with the younger generation serving as the primary agents of this change.

This lyric reflects the commissive principle as described by Searle (1976), where a commissive speech act not only refers to a hope but also to a tangible commitment to act. In other words, tearing the sky is not just a symbol of high hopes but a bold declaration that this generation will overcome all obstacles and achieve the desired change. The determination and belief expressed in this lyric show that the commitment is grounded in a strong sense of self-confidence and an understanding that change will not come without a significant struggle.

Declarative

A declarative speech act, as explained by Searle (1976), can change social reality simply by being uttered. In *Fateh*, the declarative speech acts are used to announce transformations in the social structure, challenge existing norms, and formulate a new reality in social struggle. The song does not merely express protest; it functions as an agent of change, inviting the audience to join in dismantling the systemic injustices.

Datum 9: “*Kami tak akan menyebrang ke dalam barisan menyanyikan lagu kebangsaan para bangsa.*”

The lyric serves as a firm rejection of symbols and rituals that are considered to reinforce the dominant authoritarian power. Here, singing the national anthem is not merely a symbol of patriotism, but also a sign of compliance with the status quo that is harmful. By rejecting it, the song explicitly creates a new reality: the resistance against oppressive authority has begun. As Syah (2017) explains, a declarative speech act reveals deeper change by uttering decisions that lead to systemic resistance against oppression.

This lyric clearly signifies a shift in social reality. By asserting that they "will not cross over" into the existing ranks, this lyric invites the audience to collectively decide to sever their ties with the oppressive system. Searle (1969) emphasizes that declarative speech acts have the power to change reality, and in this case, the song directs the audience toward the realization that they must reject an authority that does not serve the people.

Datum 10: “*Kami adalah generasi terakhir yang dapat dikooptasi Nike*”

The lyric conveys a declaration of rejection against global capitalism and its exploitation, particularly by major companies such as Nike. This phrase is not just a statement but a courageous declaration to dismantle the structures that bind this generation. Boldly, the song asserts that this generation will not be part of a system that exploits injustice and oppression.

Basra & Thoyyibah (2017) explain that a declarative speech act is not merely an assertion but also a step to create a new reality. This lyric reveals a commitment to sever ties with capitalist forces that oppress and harm society. Therefore, the song aims to cultivate collective awareness about the importance of rejecting the capitalist system, which benefits a few while the majority remains marginalized.

CONCLUSION

The song *Fateh* by Morgue Vanguard and Doyz employs various types of speech acts to critique the prevailing social and political injustices in Indonesia. An analysis of 42 lines of lyrics reveals that representative speech acts (18 lines) dominate, reflecting social inequalities and reinforcing the identity of resistance. Directive speech acts (9 lines) aim to mobilize the audience into action, while expressive speech acts (6 lines) convey feelings of anger and frustration towards the injustices. Commissive speech acts (5 lines) demonstrate a commitment to continue the struggle, while declarative speech acts (4 lines) serve to redefine social reality by challenging existing power structures.

This study underscores the critical role of *Fateh* in utilizing language as a tool to raise political and social awareness. Through the pragmatic speech act analysis approach, this

research illustrates how the song functions not only as a form of protest but also as a medium to mobilize the audience, encourage collective action, and reinforce the identity of resistance against injustice. The implications of these findings extend our understanding of the role of language in social movements, particularly in using music as a form of protest. Further research could expand on this analysis by exploring other media that have the potential to drive social change, as well as examining the interaction between language, activism, and social transformation in a broader context.

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