

# Exploring speech acts in Instagram reels: An implication for English language learning

Nur Swarnadani<sup>1\*</sup>, Nina Sofiana<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>English Education Department, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Jepara, Jepara, Indonesia; email: 221320000680@unisnu.ac.id

<sup>2</sup>English Education Department, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Jepara, Jepara, Indonesia; email: ninasofiana@unisnu.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

Social media has increasingly become an informal platform for English learning, with Instagram Reels emerging as an engaging medium for short-form educational content. While previous studies have focused on linguistic outcomes such as vocabulary and speaking skills, the pragmatic dimension of learning through short videos remains underexplored. This study aims to classify the types of speech acts used in educational Instagram Reels created by @englishwithlucy and explain how these acts contribute to English learning in digital contexts. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design, with fifteen Reels uploaded between January and May 2025 selected through purposive sampling. A total of 170 instructional utterances were transcribed and analyzed using [Searle's \(1976\)](#) Speech Act Theory. Data were examined through content-based pragmatic coding and frequency calculation, followed by category validation to ensure coding consistency. The findings show that assertive acts (58.82%) are the most frequently used, followed by directive acts (35.29%), while expressive and commissive acts occur minimally, and declarative acts are absent. These results suggest that the videos emphasize explanation and interactive guidance to support micro-learning and develop communicative competence. The study provides implications for teachers and content creators in designing concise and engaging English learning materials on digital platforms.

Keywords: digital pedagogy; informal learning; Instagram reels; pragmatics; speech acts

## INTRODUCTION

Technology has significantly influenced nearly every aspect of human life, including education. It not only facilitates work and entertainment but also enables people to access, create, and share knowledge more efficiently. In the education sector, technology has become an essential tool for teachers and students, fostering interactive learning beyond classroom boundaries ([Sailer et al., 2021](#); [Haleem et al., 2022](#); [Shen & Ho, 2020](#)). The widespread availability of the internet has further

### \*Corresponding author:

221320000680@unisnu.ac.id

### Article history:

Received: 2 April 2025

Revised: 10 August 2025; 6

November 2025; 13

December 2025

Accepted: 10 January 2026

Published: 28 February 2026

**Citation:** Swarnadani, N. & Sofiana, N. (2026). Exploring speech acts in Instagram reels: An implication for English language learning. *English Learning Innovation*, 7(1), 361-376.  
<https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v7i1.42650>

Copyright © 2026: Swarnadani & Sofiana

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license



P-ISSN 2723-7400

E-ISSN 2723-7419

supported this development by promoting rapid and borderless knowledge dissemination.

One major impact of technological advancement is the rise of social media-based learning. Originally designed for communication and entertainment, social media has evolved into an interactive and creative learning space. Its accessibility, visual appeal, and interactive features make it an attractive option for learners seeking flexible methods outside formal education. This shift has opened opportunities to strengthen informal learning models that rely on social media to enhance language competence and other skills ( Lee, 2023; Ebadi et al., 2024). In line with this, scholars by Guo & Lee (2023) and Lee & Lee (2021) describe this phenomenon Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE). It helps learners grow more independent while building their awareness of language use in real contexts. Collectively, these studies indicate that when social media are used purposefully, it can serve as a meaningful extension of classroom learning. Such platforms allow students to engage with authentic language beyond formal instruction.

Among various platforms, Instagram stands out for its popularity and effectiveness in sharing short and engaging content. Its Reels feature, allowing users to create 90-second videos with music, effects, and visual tools, has the potential to serve as an effective medium for informal language learning. Previous studies confirm its benefits for English learning. For instance, Ristianti et al. (2025) and Chadafi & Khasanah (2024) reported improvements in fluency, confidence, and speaking skills through Instagram Reels. Similarly, Fadhilillah et al. (2024) found increases in vocabulary acquisition and learner motivation, while Lee (2022) highlighted the role of Instagram and TikTok in supporting independent language learning. Supporting those findings, recent studies by Hikmah et al. (2024) and Hartomo et al. (2024) confirmed that Instagram Reels and Tiktok can improve speaking and vocabulary through authentic and visual interaction effectively. Ebadi et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of cognitive engagement in social media-based language learning.

Despite these promising findings, most studies focus on linguistic proficiency, such as speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, or motivation, while the pragmatic dimension of language learning remains underexplored. Pragmatic competence, which involves understanding meaning, intention, and context in communication is equally essential for effective in face-to-face and digital interactions (Searle, 1976; González-Lloret, 2022). A student with accurate grammar may still fail to communicate appropriately without pragmatic awareness. Speech Act Theory, as systematically formulated by Searle (1976), provides a useful framework for analyzing language as action. Its five categories including assertives (stating facts, explaining meaning, or describing beliefs), directives (requesting, instructing, or encouraging action), commissive (promising, offering, or committing to future actions), expressives (conveying feelings, attitudes, or emotional reactions), and declarations (bringing about institutional change) are widely applied in pragmatic research.

Several scholars have investigated speech acts in social media content. Hermaya & Agung (2023) found representative acts dominating Instagram Reels, while Handayani & Yulina (2024) observed directive and expressive acts in influencer

captions. Similar results were reported by [Ulfah et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Fitria \(2021\)](#), who emphasized directive and representative acts as the most common. Beyond Instagram, studies on TikTok and YouTube also highlighted the frequent use of directive and expressive acts in short video communication ([Andrea & Fatmawati, 2023](#); [Hambali et al., 2024](#)). Likewise, [Jegade \(2024\)](#), [Haryanti et al. \(2024\)](#), and [Kesi \(2025\)](#) noted that directive and assertive speech acts dominate digital discourse, shaping how meaning and intention are delivered across online contexts.

However, despite the growing research on digital learning, very few studies have investigated the role of pragmatic strategies, particularly speech acts, are used in the context of English learning through social media. Although the prevalence of speech acts on social media some studies has been confirmed in some studies, their specific function in Instagram Reels as a media for informal English language learning remains largely unexplored. This gap is crucial, as the strategies used in educational content may differ significantly from casual or entertainment contexts. While the research on language actions in social media continues to grow, no one has specifically examined its pedagogical role in educational Reels as part of Informal Digital English Learning (IDLE). To address this gap, the present study examines the speech acts in educational Reels posted by @englishwithlucy, a popular British educator, with over 1.7 million followers. Her content covering vocabulary, pronunciation, and common expressions offers accessible and engaging material for English learners worldwide.

Lucy Bella Earl, who earned a Bachelor's degree in Marketing Communications from the University of Westminster in 2016, founded English with Lucy in the same year. Since then, she has expanded her network through various social media platforms. Lucy received the British Council's ELTon Award for Innovation in English Language Teaching in 2017 for her creative approach to digital pedagogy. Her short videos are characterized by concise explanations, contextual examples, and visual appeal. This makes them ideal for exploring how pragmatic strategies function in informal language learning. Her platform exemplifies how modern educators integrate language actions to instruct, motivate, and engage audiences in digital learning spaces. This aligns with the principles of Social Constructivism ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)), where learners build knowledge through interaction and contextualized communication.

The significance of this study lies in identifying how different types of speech acts influence the way educational messages are delivered through short videos. Recognizing the dominant speech act categories in Lucy's Reels may help teachers adopt more effective communication techniques in the classroom settings. Furthermore, the findings of this study can encourage students to engage in English learning through informal platforms such as Instagram Reels, which offer easily accessible and engaging exposure to real-world language usage. In addition, these findings might inspire content creators to create educational content combining interaction, clarity, and motivational appeal in digital learning environments.

Therefore, this study aims to classify the types of speech acts found in educational Instagram Reels by @englishwithlucy, determine which types appear most frequently, and explain their contribution to teaching and learning English in digital content.

Ultimately, this study is expected to highlight how pragmatic strategies contribute to the effectiveness of educational short-form videos.

## METHODS

### Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze and interpret pragmatic features, determine which types appear most frequently, and explain their contribution to teaching, and learning English in digital contexts. It particularly examined the types of speech acts found in educational Instagram Reels posted by the *@englishwithlucy* account. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding linguistic phenomena within their natural context without variable manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Moleong, 2017). The study applied Speech Acts Theory by Searle's (1979) framework, which categorizes utterances into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The analysis focused on instructional and informative utterances, excluding illustrative or nonlinguistic examples. Although qualitative in nature, the analysis also incorporated descriptive quantitative support in the form of frequency counts to identify the dominant speech act type. The study was conducted online by accessing *@englishwithlucy*'s Reels uploaded between January and May 2025. The main tool used was a coding sheet based on Searle's categories.

### Objects of the study

The objects of this study were Instagram Reels videos posted by *@englishwithlucy*, managed by British educator Lucy Bella Earl. The account primarily provides short videos (under 90 seconds) focusing on vocabulary, pronunciation, and daily expressions. A total of 15 videos were selected through purposive sampling Sugiyono (2017), based on criteria: (1) educational content related to English learning, (2) duration  $\leq 90$  seconds, (3) containing verbal communication suitable for speech act analysis. This number was considered sufficient to capture linguistic variation while allowing detailed examination.

### Data and source of data

The data consisted of language data, specifically verbal utterances contained in the selected Reels videos. Supporting information such as upload date and video context served as additional data. Only utterances relevant to the instructional content were transcribed and analyzed, while illustrative examples were excluded.

### Data collection and data analysis technique

Data were collected using documentation techniques as described by Sugiyono (2017). All Reels uploaded from January to May 2025 were listed. Fifteen videos meeting the inclusion criteria were selected. Each video was watched multiple times to ensure accurate transcription. Only utterances relevant to the instructional content were included in the dataset to maintain analytical consistency. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. In the data reduction stage, relevant utterances were selected and coded based on Searle's speech act categories. Content-based pragmatic coding was applied to classify each utterance,

followed by frequency calculation to determine the dominant speech act types. The data display stage organized the classified utterances into tables to visualize patterns and frequencies of each category. An example of data display format is presented below:

Table 1. Example of data display

Utterances	Type of Speech Acts	Communicative Function
"Can you pronounce both correctly?"	Directive	Encouraging practice
"First we have wind... or wind..."	Assertive	Explaining homographs

Finally, in the conclusion/verification stage, the communicative functions of the dominant speech act types were interpreted to explain their role in supporting micro-learning and learner engagement on Instagram Reels. To ensure validity and reliability, a double-coding technique was conducted in which the researcher coded the utterances twice at different times. Additionally, expert judgment was employed to confirm category consistency and resolve coding discrepancies, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings (Miles et al., 2014).

## RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of 15 educational Instagram Reels. Each video was transcribed and categorized according to Searle's (1979) Speech Act Theory. A total of 170 utterances uploaded by @englishwithlucy account between January and May 2025 were examined. These utterances were classified into five categories: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Following classification, it was discovered that these utterances show an informative and interactive communication pattern between the audience and the content creator. The frequency and percentage of each type are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Speech Acts in @englishwithlucy's Reels

No.	Speech Act Type	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Assertive	100	58.82%
2.	Directive	60	35.29%
3.	Expressive	7	4.12%
4.	Commissive	3	1.76%
5.	Declarative	0	0.00%

As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, assertive speech acts dominate the data with 100 occurrences (58.82%), representing more than half of all utterances. Directive acts follow with 60 cases (35.29%), while expressive and commissive acts appear only

occasionally. Declarative acts are completely absent from the dataset. This distribution reflects the predominance of informative and instructional communication over ceremonial or institutional forms of expression.

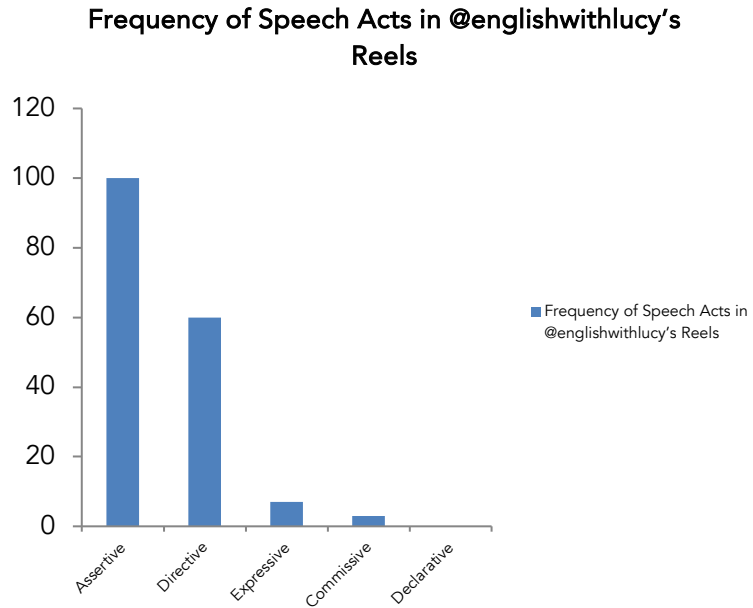


Figure 1. Frequency of Speech Acts in @englishwithlucy's Reels

### Percentage Distribution of Speech Acts

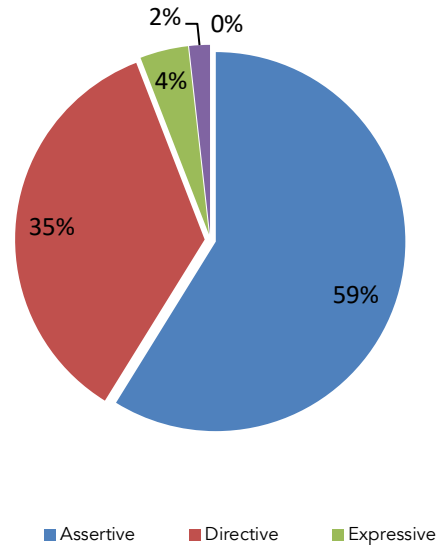


Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Speech Acts

A closer examination of the assertive category shows that these behaviors are primarily found in explanatory contexts, especially when Lucy explains word meanings or illustrates differences in pronunciation. Her preference for brief, simple, and understandable explanations is demonstrated by statements like "Wind, as in air that

*moves*" and *"Bass, as in bass guitar."* These assertive utterances serve as a framework for her teaching style, demonstrating how knowledge is arranged and presented clearly in short-video formats.

On the other hand, directive acts facilitate communication and direct students' reflection. Utterances such as *"Let me know in the comments"* and *"Can you pronounce both correctly?"* serve as prompts that transform one-way explanations into interactive experiences. These instructions urge viewers to repeat the language lessons, check their comprehension, or reply. In this sense, directive acts along with assertives maintain a balance between the dissemination of information and participation in short-video lessons.

Despite their infrequent appearances, expressive and commissive acts provide the videos with a supportive and personal sense. While the statement like *"I'll explain that in another video"* demonstrates continuity in teaching, utterances like *"I love this one"* or *"Let me help you"* convey a friendly attitude. Despite being less common, these utterances add to Lucy's content's overall tone, which makes the learning process seem more approachable and interesting.

To provide clearer insight, Table 3 presents selected examples of speech acts from the dataset, including their communicative functions and pragmatics explanations.

Table 3. Example of Speech Acts in @englishwithlucy's Instagram Reels

No	Type of Speech Acts	Utterances	Communicative Function	Explanation
1.	Assertive	"Wind, as in air that moves."	Explaining pronunciation difference	Lucy provides an example to clarify homograph usage.
2.		"Brake is to stop."	Defining word meaning	She states a factual definition about a word, showing informative intent.
3.		"This means, it's raining very heavily."	Clarifying meaning	She explains the meaning of a phrase to ensure comprehension.
4.	Directive	"Can you pronounce both correctly?"	Requesting action	Lucy encourages learners to practice pronunciation, inviting interaction.
5.		"Let me know in the comments."	Prompting engagement	A polite command for learners to share their responses.

No	Type of Speech Acts	Utterances	Communicative Function	Explanation
6.		"Homework. Choose one of the examples and make your own sentence using it."	Giving instruction	Functions as mild imperative encouraging viewers to do a learning task.
7.	Expressive	"I love this one."	Expressing enjoyment	Lucy shares her personal liking for a word or expression.
8.		"This one always makes me laugh."	Expressing amusement	She shares her emotional reaction to the content, creating a light and relatable tone for the audience.
9		"This really confuses my students."	Expressing empathy/concern	Reflects an emotional response about a common learner difficulty.
10.		"Very fancy. Chandelier."	Showing admiration	Expresses a spontaneous positive reaction.
11.	Commissive	"I'm going to give you some words."	Making promise	a Indicates intention to perform a teaching act in the near future.
12.		"Let me help you."	Offering assistance	Shows willingness to support learners.
13.		"I'll explain that in another video."	Committing to a future explanation	Expresses commitment to provide further content later.

As illustrated in Table 3, each type of speech acts serves a different communicative function. Specifically, directive acts encourage learner interaction and engagement, while assertive acts offer definitions and factual explanations that help input

comprehension. In addition, though they are less common, expressive and commissive acts provide pedagogical continuity and emotional warmth, fostering an approachable atmosphere that inspires students. Moreover, the lack of declarative acts highlights Instagram Reels' informal and non-institutional nature as a digital teaching tool.

The results show that assertive and directive acts dominate the dataset. It indicates that the @englishwithlucy account is mainly designed to share informative and interactive elements to engage viewers actively. In many cases, assertive utterances are used to explain vocabulary or pronunciation in a simple and clear way, often supported with short examples that make the explanation easier to grasp. Meanwhile, directive acts work to guide learners through instructions or short prompts that encourage them to respond, repeat, or try using the expressions themselves. On the other hand, expressive and commissive acts only appear occasionally, along with the absence of declarative acts. In summary, these patterns show that Lucy's Reels tend to adopt a friendly and relaxed teaching style, which feels more interactive and approachable than formal or institutional.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal the dominance of assertive speech acts in the educational Reels content by @englishwithlucy. This result supports the initial assumption that pragmatic strategies play a vital role in delivering effective short-form English lessons. Lucy's intention to share knowledge effectively and concisely is reflected through the preponderance of assertives, which focus on explanations, vocabulary clarification, and pronunciation. For instance, utterance such as *"Wind, as in air that moves"* shows her emphasis on factual accuracy and conceptual clarity. This supports the Input Hypothesis, which holds that understandable input improves student comprehension. As [Sukmawati et al. \(2024\)](#) highlight, brief, structured, and accessible information is particularly effective in short-video formats. Combined with visuals and captions, these assertives help learners process and retain linguistic content without feeling overwhelmed. In addition to delivering information, these acts support the idea that learners should use language correctly in real-world situations, which strengthens Instagram Reels' function as a platform for organized micro learning with interesting and clear language input.

These findings correspond with Table 3, indicating Lucy's informative teaching style that is represented through assertive statements like *"Brake is to stop"* and *"This means it's raining very heavily."* These illustrations demonstrate that assertive acts not only explain language forms, but also help learners connect language to their everyday usage by contextualizing meaning.

While assertives serve as the core, directive speech acts play a complementary role by encouraging active audience interaction and engagement. Questions such as *"Can you pronounce both correctly?"* and prompts like *"Let me know in the comments"* encourage audiences to think, respond, and participate on their understanding. [Wu \(2018\)](#) emphasizes that open-ended questioning in digital learning environments stimulates metacognitive reflection and deeper learner participation. In this study,

directives function not only as instructions but also as invitations to metacognitive reflection, encouraging learners to actively evaluate their own knowledge and performance. One example of how Lucy turns a conventional classroom assignment into a digital micro-activity is the utterance, "Homework: choose one of the examples and make your own sentence using it." This illustrates how directives can combine instruction and autonomy.

Furthermore, this method bridges one-way instruction and dialogic learning which is turning passively observing into meaningful participation. This also aligns with [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#) social constructivist principles of learning, where knowledge develops through meaningful interaction and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It places more emphasis on learner participation and meaning negotiation than on rote memorization. As a result, not only providing guidance, directive acts also promote a more reflective and cooperative learning environment that supports deeper language engagement.

Through expressive and commissive acts, Lucy's content also illustrates the affective layer of communication besides to the cognitive and interactive aspects. Although expressive and commissive acts occur less frequently, they still play an important role in fostering social and emotional connections between Lucy and her viewers. Through utterances such as "*I love this one*" or "*Let me help you*", Lucy builds warmth, encouragement, and supportive presence with her viewers. As [Saleem et al. \(2021\)](#) argue, emotional resonance and social presence enhance learner motivation and trust, even in informal digital environments. This friendly and supportive tone distinguishes Lucy's digital teaching style from traditional classroom instruction. This shows that engagement is not limited on understanding or cognitive context but is also supported by affective interaction.

Likewise, examples of expressive acts such as, "*Very fancy. Chandelier.*" and "*This one always makes me laugh.*" strengthen Lucy's positive personality and establish an emotional connection with the viewer. In line with digital teaching models that place a premium on reliability and authenticity, such positive emotional displays maintain viewer interest and enhance para social connections. Moreover, Lucy's commitment to continuity and learner care is demonstrated by her commissive acts, such as "*I'll explain that in another video.*" This is in line with [Dörnyei's \(2020\)](#) theory of motivational support, which holds that learners' confidence is maintained by teachers' constant assurance. Therefore, even though these behaviors are uncommon, they have a significant impact on learners' emotional engagement and retention during extended digital learning.

Interestingly, declarative acts were absent in the dataset. This absence aligns with the informal nature of Instagram Reels, which are not designed for institutional validation or formal authority, unlike legal or ceremonial contexts. Consistent with [Wu \(2018\)](#), who notes that digital teaching build credibility that often comes through social connection and clarity rather than formality. The lack of declaratives further supports the idea that relational and educational purposes take priority over performativity authority in Reels content. In another way, Lucy prioritizes accessibility over hierarchy in her teaching, which is a crucial component of pedagogical democratization in digital learning. The informal character of Reels allows learners to perceive teachers as approachable figures, fostering a sense of equality, comfort and authenticity in the

learning process. Therefore, the dominance of assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive acts in Table 3 is complemented by the lack of declaratives. In addition, all of these categories show how Lucy's practical teaching methods are purposefully modified for an informal classroom setting where student participation and understanding are valued more highly than formal authority.

The findings also highlight the emergence of pragmatic pedagogy in digital learning spaces. Lucy's Reels videos demonstrate how online educators serve as language models and digital literacy mediators. By incorporating speech acts in her videos, she indirectly teaches students to identify tone, intention, and social cues; several essential skills for effective communication in multimodal contexts. By exposing students to real-world, multimodal input that mimics real-world interactions, technology-enhanced learning promotes pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2024). Similarly, López-Serrano (2025) also points out that web-based learning can increase pragmatic awareness by allowing learners to observe and consider meaning across social contexts. In this regard, Lucy's material helps students navigate meaning and respect in modern online discourse by enhancing their language proficiency as well as their digital communicative competence.

A closer look also shows that the use of speech acts varies across content focus. Assertive acts dominate in conceptual or vocabulary-based videos, while directives are more prevalent in interactive or quiz-based segments. This finding supports Navarrete (2024), who emphasizes that aligning language strategies with pedagogical goals is crucial in designing effective digital learning outcomes. Thus, Lucy's ability to balance informative delivery (assertives) with interactive prompts (directives) demonstrates an intentional pedagogical approach to maximize both knowledge transfer and learner participation. Beyond their linguistic classification, the specific examples in Table 3 collectively show that each type of speech act corresponds to a distinct pedagogical function: assertives inform, directives engage, expressives humanize, and commissives reassure. This alignment between pragmatic function and teaching purpose is an example of how short-form videos can operationalize speech acts as micro-teaching tools.

From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings show that short-form digital content can actually develop pragmatic awareness. The intentional use of speech acts reflects the core concept of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes meaningful and authentic communication over detailed retention. As noted by Taguchi (2023), digital media assists in closing the gap between formal and informal learning. Lucy demonstrates communicative patterns that students can use in real-life scenarios by combining directive and assertive acts. In practical terms, this strategy can also be adopted in classroom settings. The combination of assertive and directive acts mirrors the flipped classroom approach models (El Miedany, 2018), where learners first receive input and then engage in active reflective or interactive activities. In classroom environments, teachers can adopt similar strategies. For instance, after presenting a vocabulary item, teachers might prompt students to apply it through examples or comments. The teacher might ask *"How would you use this in your own sentence?"* as a strategy that combines explanation with critical thinking, thereby promoting active engagement and meaningful language use.

In addition, each category of speech act provides to a different learning layer: directives encourage active participation, expressives and commissives foster emotional engagement, and assertives provide structured input. They work together to create an integrated pedagogical model that connects social media platforms for informal, interactive learning with formal instruction. In a broader sense, these patterns highlight the growing popularity of digital pragmatic pedagogy, a framework that deliberately employs speech acts to teach language and communication skills. Teachers can design short-form videos that combine interaction, affective connection, interaction, and clarity to create meaningful and human-centered learning. Through this approach, they can bridge the gap between formal and informal learning, increasing the interest of students and connecting language instruction to their actual communication needs.

Nevertheless, the study remains has several limitations. The brevity of Reels restricts the depth of pragmatics exploration, and the algorithm-driven environment may expose learners to unrelated content, potentially reducing focus. Future research could examine a wider range of content creators or compare speech acts across platforms such as TikTok or YouTube Shorts. It aims to better identify broader trends of pragmatic strategy use in the context of informal English language learning. Additionally, the integration of multimodal analysis such as gestures, intonation, or visual cues would enrich understanding of how meaning is co-constructed in micro-digital lessons. This multimodal integration ensures continuity between micro-learning on social media and more comprehensive learning activities.

In conclusion, the study shows that Lucy's Reels strategically combine assertive and directive acts for both informative and interactive functions. It is also supplemented by expressive and commissive acts for emotional connection. This synergy supports both comprehension and motivation, illustrating that short-form video can foster pragmatic awareness and communicative competence in informal learning contexts. Consequently, these findings add to the growing discussion on digital pragmatics in language learning by offering a new perspective on how short-videos can support both the teaching process and student engagement. Unlike earlier studies that mainly focused on linguistic accuracy or vocabulary, this study highlights how language actions can be applied as practical strategies to develop students' pragmatic awareness and motivation.

## CONCLUSION

This study employed Searle's Speech Act Theory to analyze 170 utterances from 15 educational Instagram Reels uploaded by @englishwithlucy. According to the results, directives and assertive acts were the most frequently used, while expressive and commissive acts were less common and declarative acts were non-existent. These findings support the idea that pragmatic strategies strongly influence how educational messages are presented and delivered in informal online settings. The dominance of directive and assertive actions reflects Instagram Reels' dual educational function of engaging viewers through interaction and engaging them through explanation. These speech acts collectively demonstrate how, when linguistic clarity and audience participation are properly balanced, microlearning content can continue to be both educational and captivating.

From a conceptual standpoint, this study broadens prior knowledge by demonstrating how instructional videos can function as a type of pragmatic pedagogy. While directive acts encourage reflection and learner response, assertive acts are frequently used to provide structure and input. The combination of these two features shows that interpersonal engagement and linguistic accuracy are both necessary for effective digital instruction. According to this viewpoint, the content of @englishwithlucy is a prime example of a dynamic teaching approach that motivates students to comprehend, react, and establish meaningful connections with English in real-life situations. This strategy emphasizes the value of communicative balance in educational practice, where opportunities for participation are offered alongside information delivery.

Practically, these results provide valuable implications for teachers and content creators. They suggest that improving understanding and engagement in digital learning can be achieved by combining directive acts for interaction with assertive acts for explanation. Even though expressive and commissive acts are less frequent, they help to build emotional bonds and motivate students, which is a factor that promotes supportive engagement in online learning. Teachers and online educators can modify this approach by adding brief explanations, prompts, or micro tasks that promote reflection and real communication. This kind of approach ensures that digital lessons remain meaningful, interactive, and personal while bridging the gap between formal instruction and informal learning environments.

Although this study provides insights into the use of speech acts in Instagram Reels, several limitations should be acknowledged. The dataset was limited to fifteen videos from a single content creator (@englishwithlucy), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or teaching styles. In addition, the analysis focused only on spoken utterances and did not include multimodal features such as gestures, visuals, or captions, which may also influence meaning-making and learner engagement. Future research could combine multimodal and learner feedback with a broader range of creators and platforms, such as YouTube Shorts or TikTok to capture deeper pragmatic patterns. Investigating how students perceive and react to various speech acts could further deepen knowledge of digital pragmatics in language learning. Overall, the findings support the successful integration of linguistic and pragmatic objectives in educational reels. At the same time, they also highlight the significance of social media as a platform for developing communicative competence and connect formal education with informal online learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to LPPM Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama for the continuous support and guidance throughout the completion of this research. The academic environment, resources, and encouragement provided by the university have been invaluable in shaping the study and ensuring its successful completion.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

Swarnadani, N.: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing –original drafts (lead). Sofiana, N.: Editing (lead), reviewing (lead).

## REFERENCES

- Andrea, D., & Fatmawati. (2023). Directive speech actions in the TikTok comments column Kompas TV. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, 10(3), 292–299. <https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.10.3.292-299.2023>
- Chadafi, M., & Khasanah, U. (2024). The effectiveness of reels Instagram toward students' English speaking performance. *Journal of English Education and Technology*, 5(3), 177–189. <https://doi.org/10.59689/jeet.v5i03.144>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Innovations and challenges in language learning motivation* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429485893>
- Ebadi, S., Zandi, M., & Ajabshir, Z. F. (2024). The effect of language learning engagement on L2 motivation over Instagram. *Acta Psychologica*, 250, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104512>
- El Miedany, Y. (2018). Flipped learning. In *Rheumatology teaching: The art and science of medical education* (pp. 285–303). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98213-7\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98213-7_15)
- Fadhilillah, A., Ro'ifah, R., & Yunianti, S. (2024). Effectualness of Instagram Reels in enhancing students' lexical knowledge. *TELL-US Journal*, 10(1), 97–116. <https://doi.org/10.22202/tus.2024.v1i1.7848>
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). Speech act analysis found in Instagram captions of "Who Indonesia." *Kajian Linguistik Dan Sastra*, 6(1), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.23917/cls.v6i1.13723>
- González-Lloret, M. (2022). Technology-mediated tasks for the development of L2 pragmatics. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211064930>
- Guo, X., & Lee, J. S. (2023). A systematic review of Informal Digital Learning of English: An ecological systems theory perspective. *System*, 117(3), 103097. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103097>
- Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review. *Sustainable Operations and Computers*, 3, 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susoc.2022.05.004>
- Hambali, A. J., Risdianto, F., & Rahma, S. S. (2024). Rethinking on expressive speech act realization in the comments section on YouTube channel. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 6(1), 52–73. <https://doi.org/10.18326/jopr.v6i1.52-73>
- Handayani, W., & Yulina, C. A. (2024). An analysis of speech acts performed by a fitness influencer, Kayla Itsines, in her Instagram captions. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Studies (IJELS)*, 10(1), 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v10i1.5075>

- Hartomo, L. M., Waluyo, U., Putera, L. J., & Soepriyanti, H. (2024). The students' perceived effectiveness of TikTok as a means for learning unfamiliar vocabulary at SMAN 10 mataram. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 9(4), 3147–3162. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i4.3106>
- Haryanti, P., Saddhono, K., & Anindyarini, A. (2024). Illocutionary speech acts in President Jokowi's Instagram account: A multimodal pragmatic study. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 9(3), 83–103. <https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2024.1103009>
- Hermaya, K. C. Della, & Agung, W. K. S. (2023). An analysis of representative acts and language functions represented on code mixing and code switching used by Yuvi Phan in her Instagram Reels. *Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication*, 1(2), 141–161. <https://doi.org/10.61320/jolcc.v1i2.141-161>
- Hikmah, N., Nicole, W., Ilham, I., Irwandi, I., Hidayati, H., & Rahmaniah, R. (2024). Students' perceptions of using Instagram Reels as mobile-assisted language learning to improve speaking skills. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 12(1), 385–396. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i1.9277>
- Jegede, O. O. (2024). Speech acts in the digital sphere : A corpus-based exploration of interactional. *Corpus-Based Studies across Humanities*, 2(2), 359–383. <https://doi.org/10.1515/csh-2024-0023>
- Kesi, A. K. (2025). Pragmatic analysis on social media (YouTube): Perlocutionary speech acts in digital communication in the modern era. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 11(1), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.10.1.2024.39-45>
- Lee, J. S., & Lee, K. (2021). The role of informal digital learning of English and L2 motivational self system in foreign language enjoyment. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 52(1), 358–373. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12955>
- Lee, Y.-J. (2023). Language learning affordances of Instagram and TikTok. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 17(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2051517>
- López-Serrano, S. (2025). The impact of self-access web-based instruction on EFL learners' pragmatic awareness of email requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 243(7), 24–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.05.006>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Rev ed.). Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Navarrete, M. (2024). Converting semiotic signs into a linguistic code: Implications for language learners' oral skills. *Parallèles*, 36(1), 88–107. <https://doi.org/10.17462/para.2024.01.06>
- Risianti, Y., Dwi, D., & Santhi, Y. (2025). The use of reels instagram to facilitate the secondary school students' speaking skills. *Dinasti International Journal of Education Management & Social Science (DIJMESS)*, 6(4), 2852–2871. <https://doi.org/10.38035/dijemss.v6i4.4214>
- Sailer, M., Murböck, J., & Fischer, F. (2021). Digital learning in schools: What does it take beyond digital technology? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 103, 103346. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103346>
- Saleem, A., Kausar, H., & Deebea, F. (2021). Social constructivism: A new paradigm in teaching and learning environment. *Perennial Journal of History*, 2(2), 403–421. <https://doi.org/10.52700/pjh.v2i2.86>
- Searle, J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1–

23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500006837>
- Shen, C., & Ho, J. (2020). Technology-enhanced learning in higher education: A bibliometric analysis with latent semantic approach. *Computers in Human Behavior, 104*, 106177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106177>
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Sukmawati, S., Sufyadi, S., Utama, A. H., & Mastur, M. (2024). Pemanfaatan media short video learning untuk mendukung pembelajaran metode self-paced learning. *Journal of Education Research, 5*(4), 6255–6265. <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i4.1935>
- Taguchi, N. (2024). Technology-enhanced language learning and pragmatics: Insights from digital game-based pragmatics instruction. *Language Teaching, 57*(1), 57–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000101>
- Ulfah, A., Jumrah, N., Paraswati, Y. D., Kusumawati, A., Utomo, A. P. Y., Mijianti, Y., & Kesuma, R. G. (2024). Analysis of representative speech acts on the education portal channel "Summary of Indonesian language material class 7 K-13 ". *International Journal of Educational Development, 1*(2), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.61132/ijed.v1i2.34>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wu, Y. (2018). Social media engagement in the digital age: Accountability or threats. *Newspaper Research Journal, 39*(3), 287–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739532918796236>