

## Expressive Illocutionary Acts in the Ken Dedes Webtoon: A Digital Pragmatic Perspective

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**Abstract-** This study examines the use of expressive illocutionary acts in the Ken Dedes Webtoon, focusing on their role in portraying emotions, attitudes, and social relationships between characters. Using Yule's (1996) speech act theory and a qualitative descriptive approach, the study analyzes five types of expressive acts—gratitude, plea for mercy, anger, surprise, and sarcasm—through the verbal and visual expressions in dialogues. The results reveal that expressions of gratitude reflect respect and politeness norms, contributing to harmonious social relationships. Pleas for mercy highlight hierarchical relationships, illustrating fear and humility as mechanisms to seek forgiveness. Anger expressions emphasize dissatisfaction and interpersonal conflict, while surprise adds dramatic tension by depicting characters' internal struggles in unexpected situations. Lastly, sarcasm conveys disappointment and critiques through subtle rhetoric, underscoring power dynamics and cultural expectations in hierarchical societies. Overall, the expressive illocutionary acts in Ken Dedes enhance the story's dramatic elements while reflecting Javanese cultural values, such as hierarchy, politeness, and social responsibility. This study contributes to digital pragmatics by demonstrating how Webtoons serve as modern platforms for representing and reinterpreting cultural heritage, making it relevant for the digital generation.

**Keywords:** Expressive Illocutionary Acts, Ken Dedes, Webtoon, Digital Pragmatics, Cultural Heritage

### I. INTRODUCTION

Interest in reading among the younger generation, particularly Generation Z and Generation Alpha, has continued to grow, albeit in ways shaped by the digital age. Traditional forms of literature have increasingly given way to digital formats, with digital comics emerging as one of the most favored entertainment media; by combining elements of images and text arranged in sequential panels, digital comics present narratives visually in a manner that captivates readers. This combination not only simplifies story comprehension but also serves as a core attraction, significantly boosting reading engagement among these tech-savvy generations (Ramdhani, 2023:22; Aprilia, 2023:488).

The diverse genres available in digital comics spanning comedy, romance, adventure, fantasy, horror, and action—offer a broad creative canvas for comic artists. This diversity caters to varying reader preferences, allowing comic creators to experiment and innovate across multiple dimensions. Each genre possesses its unique characteristics, enabling artists to specialize in elements such as plot intricacy, distinctive visual styles, or even a fusion of both (Mailangkay et al., 2023:953; Zahra et al., 2023:60). This creativity extends to the nuanced depiction of characters' facial expressions and body language, elements essential in portraying emotions, attitudes, and traits. Through detailed visual art, comic artists breathe life into their characters,

crafting personas that resonate with readers as if they were real individuals. Such artistic depth makes digital comics an excellent medium for analyzing expressive speech acts.

Expressive speech acts in digital comics emphasize the interplay between linguistic and visual expressions to convey a character's emotional responses and attitudes toward various narrative situations. By integrating features like eyes, mouth, eyebrows, and body movements, comic artists skillfully depict complex emotions—ranging from joy and astonishment to confusion and sorrow—offering readers a profound sense of connection and understanding. This synergy between language and visuals enables a richer exploration of how storytelling constructs meaning and evokes emotional engagement.

Their accessibility further amplifies the appeal of digital comics. With platforms like Webtoon, Tapastic, Ciayo, and Storial offering on-demand content, digital comics are easily accessible through smartphones, tablets, and other devices. This convenience has made digital comics a ubiquitous form of entertainment among teenagers, who find them an engaging way to consume stories at any time or place (Cahyani et al., 2023:31; Yonkie & Ujianto, 2017:124). Beyond entertainment, digital comics also hold immense potential as mediums for cultural education, the promotion of values, and fostering social interactions, making them significant tools in contemporary literacy initiatives.

Relevant research has examined expressive illocutionary acts in various digital comics and Webtoons, providing foundational insights into this area. Devi Yulianti (2024), for example, analyzed Webtoon Eggnoind Season 1 and identified six forms of expressive illocutionary acts: saying thank you, congratulating, apologizing, praising, blaming, and sympathizing. The study found that apologies were the most dominant form, reflecting the themes of love and friendship that permeate the narrative.

Similarly, Rizky Ananda Putri and Hanafi (2024) conducted a study on the Witch Hunt comic, highlighting the significant role of expressive illocutionary acts in character development and conflict resolution. Their findings included 51 instances of expressive speech acts, with apologies once again emerging as the most prominent, indicative of the intricate emotional dynamics between the characters.

Meanwhile, Sri Juniaty's (2019) research on the Tahi Lalats Webtoon emphasized the importance of linguistic aspects, such as conversational implicatures, in constructing humor and interaction within the narrative. This study demonstrated how language is employed to convey implied meanings, often through the violation of the principle of cooperation.

While these studies have shed light on the use of language in Webtoons, they lack a focus on expressive illocutionary acts within cultural and historical contexts. This gap provides an opportunity for current research to contribute new insights. Using Yule's (1996) speech act theory, this study investigates how expressive illocutionary acts in the Ken Dedes Webtoon convey emotions, attitudes, and the rich cultural values embedded in its narrative.

In this context, the Ken Dedes Webtoon stands out as a unique blend of historical narrative and modern storytelling. As an adaptation of a significant figure in Javanese history, the Webtoon integrates traditional cultural elements with contemporary visuals and dialogue. The dialogues in Ken Dedes are replete with expressive speech acts that reflect the characters' emotional states, attitudes, and social dynamics. By exploring these elements, this study aims to bridge the gap in understanding how modern digital narratives can simultaneously preserve and recontextualize local cultural heritage.

## II. METHODS

The research employs a qualitative descriptive method to comprehensively describe the forms, functions, and contexts of expressive illocutionary acts in the dialogue of the Ken Dedes Webtoon. This method was chosen because the data analyzed consists of text-based utterances and visual elements, which require an in-depth understanding of the pragmatic and cultural contexts within the narrative. The primary data source for this research is the Ken Dedes Webtoon, with the main data comprising dialogues between characters that reflect expressive illocutionary acts. These are supported by visual elements, such as facial expressions and body language, that enhance the conveyed emotions and attitudes.

The data collection process involves documentation by systematically reading the Webtoon, taking notes on dialogues containing expressive illocutionary acts, and analyzing visual elements to observe how expressions and

body movements complement the text. The data analysis follows a pragmatic approach based on Yule's (1996) speech act theory, which includes identifying dialogues with expressive illocutionary acts, classifying them such as thanking, praising, blaming, or sympathizing, interpreting their functions and meanings within the cultural and narrative context, and verifying the findings by examining the coherence between text, visuals, and pragmatic context.

To ensure data validity, the study employs triangulation, comparing text and visual data, rereading episodes to understand the broader narrative context, and consulting relevant literature on Javanese culture to support interpretations. The research aims to provide a detailed description of the forms and functions of expressive illocutionary acts in Ken Dedes and their contributions to digital pragmatics and cultural literacy.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the ken dedes webtoon, there are several expressive speech acts.

#### 1. Gratiudes

Utterance: *"Ah, terima kasih, Nyonya."*

Speaker: Ken Dedes

Speech partner: The woman who praised him.

Context: The speaker expresses gratitude to someone who compliments her.

Meaning: This speech is an expressive illocutionary act that reflects the speaker's gratitude for the compliment received. This shows appreciation and politeness in a social context that prioritizes politeness norms.

In one of the scenes in Ken Dedes's Webtoon, the character Ken Dedes conveys an expression of gratitude through the utterance, 'Ah, thank you, Madam.' This is said in response to a woman complimenting Ken Dedes. The compliment, most likely, relates to Ken Dedes' role, action, or presence, which is considered valuable by the speech partner. In this context, the expression of gratitude functions as an acknowledgment of the appreciation received, as well as showing appreciation for the compliment.

This speech reflects an expressive illocutionary act of gratitude, which shows the speaker's awareness of the importance of appreciation in building interpersonal relationships. In addition, this utterance reinforces the norm of politeness, which is an important element in social interaction, especially in cultures that prioritize the values of politeness and respect for others. The meaning

contained in this speech is not only limited to the words spoken but also includes the speaker's intention to create a positive and harmonious social relationship with the speech partner. This confirms the role of language as a means to strengthen interpersonal relationships and maintain harmony in social interactions.

#### 2. Expression of Plea for Mercy

Utterance: *"Y-Yang Mulia! Mohon ampuni nyawa hamba!"*

Speaker: A court lady.

Speech Partner: Tunggul Ametung.

Context: In this scene, the speaker is in a stressful situation, feeling guilty or threatened by his actions. The speaker shows humility and fears possible punishment.

Meaning: This speech is an expression of fear and humility that illustrates the hierarchical relationship between the characters. The speaker is trying to show remorse and respect for authority to gain mercy.

In this scene, the utterance 'Y-Your Majesty! Please spare my life!' is uttered by the dayang to Tunggul ametung. This utterance appears in a stressful context, where the speaker feels guilty for an action that has been committed or is facing the threat of severe punishment. This situation illustrates the dynamics of power relations typical in hierarchical societies, where subordinates must show obedience and humility to authorities.

Contextually, this expression not only reflects a deep fear of the consequences of certain actions but also emphasizes the speaker's subordinate position. In cultures where respect for authority is paramount, this kind of speech often serves as a means of showing remorse and asking for mercy from figures of greater power. The speaker chooses honorable words, such as 'Your Excellency,' to emphasize respect while evoking empathy from the addressee.

The meaning of this speech includes emotional and social dimensions. On the one hand, it reflects the speaker's fear and humility, which are natural responses to threats or pressure from authority figures. On the other hand, it also functions as a communication strategy to show deep regret and evoke compassion. The speaker hopes that by showing sincere respect and acknowledgment of the mistake, the speech partner will grant forgiveness or commute the sentence. This speech also reinforces social values that emphasize the importance of politeness, respect, and remorse in maintaining

the harmony of hierarchical relationships.

### 3. Angry Expression

Utterance: *"Kau membuatku malu, Tunggul Ametung!"*

Speaker: His Majesty King Kertajaya

Speech Partner: Tunggul Ametung

Context: The speaker expresses his disappointment to Tunggul Ametung for actions or behavior that are considered to defame him. This situation occurs in the context of an interpersonal relationship colored by conflict.

Meaning: This speech act is an expressive illocutionary act that reflects the speaker's anger and disappointment with the speech partner's actions. This emphasizes the negative emotions that strengthen the dynamics of conflict in the narrative.

In this scene, the utterance 'You make me ashamed, Tunggul Ametung!' is spoken by His Majesty King Kertajaya to Tunggul Ametung as a form of expression of anger. This speech arises in a situation involving interpersonal conflict, where the speaker feels disappointed and angry at Tunggul Ametung's actions or behavior, which is considered to tarnish his good name. As a king, a good name and honor are very important, so any action that tarnishes his reputation will trigger a strong emotional response.

The context of this expression reflects the strict power relations between a leader (King Kertajaya) and his subordinate (Tunggul Ametung). In a culture that prioritizes hierarchy and honor, actions that harm the good name of the leader are not only seen as personal offenses but can also undermine the legitimacy of power. This situation demonstrates the complex dynamics of the relationship between speaker and speech partner, where the social roles and positions of each party amplify the intensity of the conflict. This expression of anger also highlights the burden of moral and social responsibility that the speech partner, Tunggul Ametung, must bear for his actions.

The meaning of this speech act involves emotional and social dimensions. Emotionally, it is an expressive illocutionary act that expresses the speaker's anger, frustration, and disappointment. Raja Kertajaya uses this speech act to emphasize his dissatisfaction, as well as to demand acknowledgment of the negative impact of Tunggul Ametung's actions on him. Socially, this speech functions as a warning or stern warning to speech partners, reminding them of the importance of maintaining the honor of

leaders as part of a stable social structure. It also reflects the speaker's attempt to assert his authority, restore the honor that he considers to have been undermined, and set clear boundaries in interpersonal relationships in the midst of conflict.

As such, it not only reinforces the dynamics of conflict in the narrative but also provides insight into the importance of honor and social hierarchy in the cultural context of the Ken Dedes story.

### 4. Expression of Surprise

Utterance: "Bangun-bangun, jiwaku masuk ke dalam tubuh Ken Dedes!"

Speaker: Mita

Speech Partner: Self (monologue).

Context: The speaker realizes that his soul has entered Ken Dedes' body, an unexpected situation. This expression is delivered in the form of a monologue, which describes the speaker's feelings of surprise and confusion regarding this unexpected situation.

Meaning: This speech act is an expressive illocutionary act that describes deep shock and confusion. It adds a dramatic element to the story and reinforces the character's internal conflict. In this scene, the soul suddenly finds himself in the body of the character Ken Dedes and utters the utterance, "Bangun-bangun, jiwaku masuk ke dalam tubuh Ken Dedes!" This utterance is delivered in the form of a monologue, which illustrates a spontaneous response to a completely unanticipated situation. The speaker expresses his shock and confusion at finding himself in a completely alien condition where her identity and physical existence have drastically changed.

The context of this utterance is highly significant, as it illustrates a critical moment of transition in the narrative. The speaker, who may have previously had his own body or identity, suddenly has to face the fact that he is now in the body of another person, namely Ken Dedes. This change not only creates internal conflict in the form of confusion and rejection but also opens up the possibility of wider external conflict, especially if this new identity brings responsibilities, expectations, or threats that the speaker must face. This situation provides a strong dramatic element, creating emotional and narrative tension that draws the reader in.

The meaning of this speech act includes deep emotional and psychological dimensions. Emotionally, it is an expressive illocutionary act

that highlights the speaker's feelings of shock and deep confusion. These feelings arise from the sudden realization of a major change affecting his existence. Psychologically, this speech reflects the initial process of adapting to a new situation full of uncertainty. This monologue not only expresses shock but also serves as a means for the speaker to process and understand the changing reality.

It also has an important function in building narrative dynamics. This expression of shock marks a turning point in the story, introducing a complex internal conflict that will drive further character and plot development. In addition, this situation arouses the reader's curiosity about how the speaker will navigate his new identity and face the challenges that may arise from being inside Ken Dedes' body. As such, it not only enriches the dramatic elements of the story but also deepens the themes of identity and existential struggle at the heart of the narrative.

## 5. The expression of sarcasm

Utterance: "Begini caramu berterima kasih pada anugerah yang kuberikan?!"

Speaker: Sri Baginda Raja Kertajaya

Speech Partner: Tunggul Ametung

Context: The speaker feels unappreciated for the service or gift that has been given to the speech partner. This situation illustrates the speaker's dissatisfaction and disappointment with the speech partner's response, which is considered inappropriate.

Meaning: This speech is an expressive illocutionary act containing innuendo and disappointment. The speaker uses rhetoric to convey frustration in a subtle but firm way, showing power relations in the social context.

In this scene, the speech "Is this how you thank me for all that I give to you?!" is delivered by Sri Baginda Raja Kertajaya to Tunggul Ametung as an expression of sarcasm. The speaker conveys a strong sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment, feeling that the speech partner has inadequately acknowledged their efforts or contributions. This utterance arises from a relational dynamic where the speaker, as a figure of authority, expects gratitude and respect in return for their benevolence. However, the perceived lack of appreciation triggers an emotional response that blends sarcasm with criticism.

The context of this speech is rooted in a hierarchical relationship between a ruler (Sri Baginda Raja Kertajaya) and his subordinate

(Tunggul Ametung). The speaker likely refers to a specific service, favor, or gift provided to Tunggul Ametung, expecting it to be met with acknowledgment or appropriate behavior. The lack of such a response violates the speaker's expectations, resulting in this rhetorical question. The utterance serves as both a critique and a reminder of the implicit obligations owed to the speaker as a benefactor and authority figure.

This speech represents an expressive illocutionary act with a tone of sarcasm and disappointment. The rhetorical question employed by the speaker functions as a subtle yet firm expression of frustration, using innuendo to highlight the perceived inadequacy of the speech partner's actions. The use of sarcasm reinforces the speaker's disapproval while maintaining an air of authority. This expression not only conveys the speaker's emotions but also underscores the power dynamics within the social context, where gratitude and loyalty are expected from subordinates. The utterance serves as a means to reassert the speaker's dominance and demand recognition, reflecting the cultural emphasis on hierarchy and reciprocity in interpersonal relationships.

This interaction not only reveals the characters' emotional landscapes but also contributes to the narrative tension, highlighting themes of loyalty, power, and the consequences of unfulfilled social expectations.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that expressive illocutionary acts in the Ken Dedes Webtoon play an important role in portraying the emotions, attitudes, and social relationships between the characters. Through five forms of expressive speech acts- grace, forgiveness, anger, surprise, and sarcasm- the research shows how verbal and visual expressions in dialogue reinforce narrative dynamics and characterization. Expressions of gratitude reflect the importance of respect and norms of politeness in building harmonious social relationships, especially in cultures that prioritize the value of politeness. Pleas for forgiveness reflects strong hierarchical relationships, displaying fear and humility as a form of remorse to gain mercy from authority figures. Expressions of anger are used to emphasize dissatisfaction and disappointment with the speech partner's actions while reinforcing the interpersonal conflict in the narrative. Expressions of surprise add to the dramatic elements, depicting deep confusion due

to unexpected situations that reinforce the characters' internal conflicts. Meanwhile, sarcasm through rhetoric expresses disappointment in a subtle but firm manner, reflecting the complexity of power relations and social expectations in a hierarchical culture.

Overall, the expressive illocutionary acts in Ken Dedes not only enrich the dramatic elements of the story but also reflect local cultural values such as hierarchy, politeness, and social responsibility. This research contributes to the study of digital pragmatics by showing how modern media, such as Webtoons, can be a platform to represent and reinterpret cultural heritage in a form that is relevant to the digital generation.

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