

HATE SPEECH RELATED TO 3R ISSUES IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ANALYSIS OF DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS

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(Received 31st October 2025; revised 16th January 2026; accepted 24th January 2026)

Abstract. Malaysia, which is called unique because it has a diversity of races and religions under the umbrella of the royal institution, is in fact facing a crisis due to the freedom to send hate speech on social media. The increasingly advanced world with the explosion of technology has caused hate speech related to the 3R issue to circulate on social media platforms without control. The language used is very sad and affects the harmony of society in this country. Hate speech is the act of belittling, insulting, discriminating or provoking something whether verbally, in writing or in other forms. This study was conducted to identify and analyse directive speech acts in social media related to the 3R issue, namely religion, race and royal institutions. Directive speech acts are speech that gives the effect of the action that will be taken by the listener due to the intention of the speaker. The theory of speech acts by Searl in 1969 and qualitative methods through the content analysis approach were utilized to make this study successful. Four social media platforms, namely Facebook, X Application, TikTok and Threads, which have become a trend in the social field of Malaysian society, were chosen as data search platforms by using certain keywords in the search field. Data is only focused from January 2025 to July 2025. The results of the study found that directive speech acts, especially the subcategories of requests, questions and advice, are more dominantly used in delivering hate speech. The function of directive speech acts in hate speech is clearly seen and can have a negative impact and become a cancer in the harmony of Malaysian society. The implication of this study is that it can provide exposure regarding hate speech from the perspective of language forms that should be avoided either by saying it or spreading it. In addition, this study can also contribute to the development of pragmatic knowledge of the Malay language.

Keywords: *hate speech, 3R, directive speech acts, pragmatics, social media*

Introduction

Speech uploaded on social media is a form of communication to convey information, share opinions, express wishes, criticize, praise and many more. All of these are actions conveyed using language which are called speech acts. The use of speech acts is very comprehensive in human daily communication whether physically or in the virtual world. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are actions carried out through language, not just conveying information but used to do something. There are various types of speech acts that have been categorized by previous scholars such as constative, directive, declarative, commissive, expressive and others. Each type of speech acts has certain characteristics to be identified whether it is conveyed explicitly or implicitly. This study will only look at the type of directive speech acts since this type of speech acts is quite dominantly used in the study data, namely hate speech related to the 3R issue on social media. Directive speech acts are speeches that give the impression of an action that will be taken by the listener due to the intention of the speaker. This speech act describes the speaker's action to make the other party do something as said (Searle,

1969). Therefore, the intention expressed by the speaker will be used as a reason for the listener to act. For example, statements such as "please put the plates and cups in the container provided", "don't be easily influenced by what people say" or "study hard so that you will be successful". Based on these three examples, the speaker's speech gives instructions and causes the other party to act. Other indicators under this directive speech acts include the acts of advising, prohibiting, requesting, ordering, and so on. In the context of this study, directive speech acts have been used to cause hatred related to issues of race, religion and royal institutions which will clearly result in conflict and threaten public welfare.

According to the UN (2019), hate speech refers to a form of communication, whether verbal, written or otherwise, that is insulting or discriminatory towards individuals or groups based on their identity such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, skin colour, social background, gender and other factors. Therefore, hate speech is often associated with sensitive issues involving race, religion and royal institutions (3R), which are often the focus of society in Malaysia. In a report by the UN (2019), it is stated that hate speech has the potential to damage individual dignity, undermine social harmony and undermine the rule of law in countries that practice a democratic system. This is also supported by Ismail (2020) who stated that hate speech can pose a threat to national security and damage community unity. In addition, Mahmud and Pitchan (2017) also emphasized that such speech has a negative impact on society and needs to be addressed immediately. Therefore, the spread of hate speech on social media platforms should be curbed through comprehensive exposure and education to users, in addition to stricter law enforcement.

One of the steps that can be taken to increase public awareness of this issue is through an educational approach. The education in question involves research in the field of language, especially by revealing the forms of directive speech acts found in hate speech through examples uploaded and shared on social media. Hate speech usually uses language that has its own characteristics, which can be identified through the function and form of directive speech acts. Research on this aspect can help the public understand and realize the implications of using hate speech, so that they are more careful and do not arbitrarily express speech related to the 3R issue (race, religion, and royalty). According to the UN (2019), the UN recommends that more studies be conducted on the misuse of the internet and social media in spreading hate speech. Therefore, studies like this are important to raise awareness about the importance of using ethical language and respecting diversity. This study was conducted to identify and analyse the forms of directive speech acts in hate speech on social media platforms such as Facebook, X Apps, TikTok and Threads related to racial, religious, and royal institutions issues, to provide exposure and build awareness among the public.

Literature review

Many scholars in various disciplines have conducted research on the 3R issue and unanimously acknowledge that this issue deserves serious attention in Malaysia because of its increasingly free use and the potential for negative implications. A previous study by Meerangani et al. (2020), for example, examined the 3R issue in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. Technological advances that should have been used positively have been misused by a few communities to convey insults to religion, race and royal institutions without control. In this regard, the study calls on the community to cooperate with each other, practice noble values and maintain harmonious relationships

to ensure continued well-being in the formation of Malaysian society. Studies related to hate speech from a linguistic perspective have been conducted both locally and internationally. However, studies from abroad usually do not emphasize the 3R issue because most of the countries involved do not have religious and racial diversity and the absence of a royal institution like in Malaysia. Therefore, international research is more focused on hate speech in general issues that have the potential to disrupt public order through various social media platforms. Among the relevant studies are research by Albladi et al. (2025), Rama et al. (2023), Mintowati and Dasion (2019), Poshka (2019) and others. In Malaysia, research on hate speech in the 3R issue from a linguistic perspective is still limited. Among the existing research are studies by Jalaluddin (2025) which focus specifically on language. Therefore, research on hate speech related to the 3R issue from a linguistic perspective needs to be improved in line with the call of the United Nations so that the community has a deeper understanding and awareness of this issue. This type of research is important to increase public awareness of forms of language that are classified as hate speech and encourage them to avoid using it.

Past studies have shown that the issue of hate speech in Malaysia has received increasing attention, especially with the rapid development of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Previous research has found that digital platforms are the main medium for the dissemination of racial, religious and political hate speech. This is influenced by the nature of anonymity, wide reach and rapid dissemination of information without strict control. In addition, past studies have found that hate speech in Malaysia is often closely linked to ethnic and religious identity in a plural society. Narratives that perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices have been found to trigger social polarisation and undermine national unity. In the context of communication psychology, researchers have emphasised that repeated exposure to hateful content can normalise aggressive language and reduce public sensitivity to its negative implications. Overall, past studies have concluded that the issue of hate speech in Malaysia is a complex phenomenon involving technological, political, legal and social factors. Therefore, a holistic approach involving law enforcement, media literacy, language and civic education is seen as important to address this problem effectively.

Materials and Methods

Qualitative approach refers to the effort to understand and describe something through non-numerical observation, interpretation, and meaning contained in the communication process (Jasmi, 2012). In this study, this approach was used to conduct content analysis on texts obtained from social media. Data was collected from several social media platforms such as Facebook, X application, TikTok, and Threads. To obtain relevant data, several keywords such as hate/insult to the king/religion/race were used in the search to identify related posts and comments. This study only took data uploaded from January to June 2025, to ensure that the data analysed was up-to-date and related to current issues in that year. The amount of data obtained in this six-month period was considered sufficient to achieve the study's objectives. This study uses the speech act theory by Searle (1969) to analyse the form of directive speech acts used in hate speech. This directive speech acts have its own characteristics that can help identify whether it is conveyed directly or implicitly. If a hate speech does not contain performative verbs, the analysis will be made based on the meaning intended to be conveyed using words, phrases, clauses or entire sentences. Therefore, Searle (1969)

directive speech acts theory is considered very suitable for analysing communication on social media related to hate speech.

Concept of speech acts

The theory of speech acts, introduced by John Searle in 1969 through his seminal work (*Figure 1*), *Speech Acts*, is an extension of the initial ideas put forward by Austin (1962). Searle asserted that language is not just a tool for conveying information, but also a form of social action. When someone speaks, they not only produce utterances that have literal meaning, but also act on those utterances. This concept is known as “speech acts”. Searle detailed that every utterance contains three main components, namely locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the production of the utterance itself, illocutionary acts refer to the intention or social function of the utterance, such as commanding, promising or requesting, while perlocutionary acts involve the effects or implications of the utterance on the listener, such as persuading, frightening or convincing. The debate on Searle's theory also emphasises the concept of "felicity conditions" which determine whether a speech act is legitimate or successfully performed. According to Searle, an utterance is only considered effective if it meets certain conditions, such as the existence of authority, sincere intention, and an appropriate context. For example, the declaration of a decision is only valid when it is made by an individual who has authority in a recognised situation. Without compliance with these conditions, the act is considered to have failed even if the utterance is pronounced with the correct language structure. This concept shows that the meaning of an utterance cannot be understood literally alone, but requires interpretation based on the connection between language, speaker, listener, and social norms that bind the interaction.

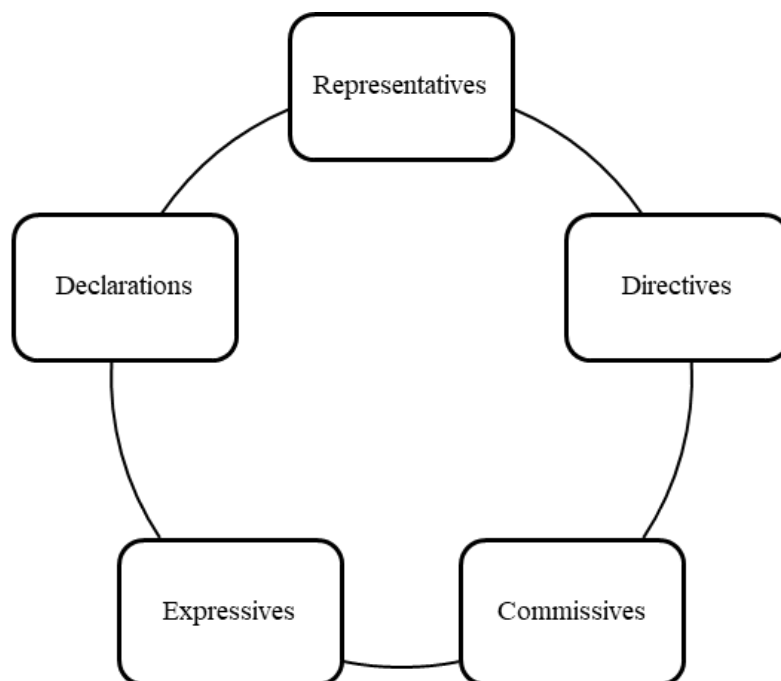


Figure 1. Types of speech acts by Searle.

However, Searle's theory of speech acts has also received criticism and further developments in the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis. Among the issues raised is the difficulty of strictly distinguishing between the categories of illocutionary acts in real situations, since an utterance can have more than one function simultaneously, depending on the context. In addition, contemporary language researchers argue that this theory was originally interpreted by Western culture and may need adaptation when applied in societies with different communication norms. Nevertheless, Searle's contribution remains significant because his theory provides a systematic framework for understanding language as a social act. In the context of modern communication, including digital media, this theory remains relevant in analysing how utterances not only convey meanings, but also shape social reality and relationships between individuals. According to John Searle in his work *Speech Acts*, types of speech acts are classified into five main categories based on the illocutionary function of an utterance. The first is representative, which is an utterance that expresses the speaker's belief in the truth of a proposition, such as making a statement, report or assertion. The second is a directive that aims to influence the listener's action, for example, through instructions, requests, advice or questions. The third is commissive, which involves the speaker's commitment to do something in the future, such as a promise, pledge or offer. The fourth is expressive, which describes the speaker's feelings or attitude towards a situation, such as a thank you, apology or congratulations. Finally, a declarative is an utterance that could influence or change the status or social situation directly when pronounced in a legitimate context, such as an official declaration or appointment. All of these types show that language is not just a tool for conveying information, but also an instrument of social action that shapes reality in human interaction.

Results and Discussion

Based on data collected from January to June 2025, many hate speech were found on various social media platforms that touched on the 3R issue. This study found that directive speech acts were used frequently, especially in delivering hate speech related to royal institutions. This is because the king, who is influential and has a higher position than the people, caused the people to use many acts such as advice, asking, requesting, ordering, and so on. The people seemed to want answers and actions from the royal party, which is why directive speech acts were used. In line with Searle (1969) who stated that directive language acts will cause the second party to respond as the speaker said. Below are examples of hate speech related to royal institutions that were delivered using directive language acts. Based on *Table 1*, three subcategories of directive speech acts, namely requests, questions and advice, are most dominantly used in the study data. For the type of request, data D1 clearly shows a request acts because it is marked with the word "harap" is "hope" which carries the connotation that he is asking the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong to withdraw the citizenship of Chinese in Malaysia for a certain reason. This speech is hateful because it is an extreme request and can anger the Chinese in Malaysia. According to Searle (1969), directive speech acts are used by speakers to ask something respectfully to the listener, and the use of lexical words such as 'minta', 'mohon', 'boleh', and 'tolong' are very common. These forms are direct or indirect categories in the request act.

Table 1. Examples of hate speech by type.

Hate speech	Subcategory type of directive speech acts	Social media
(D1) harap agung tarik balik kerakyatan apek tu	Request	Tiktok
(D2) jadi kenapa tak nak tegur sultan pahang untuk buat sesuatu? sultan adalah 'pelindung bumiputera' kan? sultan buat apa selama ni? buat bodo ke? atau kerja keras sakau duit rakyat ke?	Question	X
(D3) Itula tu kaum kerabat ke musibat ni?	Question	Threads
(D4) kat mana undang2 Malaysia...? Ramai yang berselindung di bawah Payung Kuning yang sudah koyak?	Question	Tiktok
(D5) Bab ketegasan tmj dan kesultanan johor, aku suka. Tapi kadang2 aku memang rasa dorang angkuh sikit. Rasa macam dorang je bagus. Nak cakap kt orang xde masalah, tapi bila orang nk tegur xleh sbb keluarga diraja. Lpstu, selalu bercakap macam dorang je betul.	Advice	X
(D6) Kenapa ye pemimpin Islam kat Malaysia ni macam takut dengan orang Kafir? kenape? payung kuning buat ape?	Question	Threads
(D7) Yang payung kuning 9 org tu tak rasa hina ke??	Question	Threads
(D8) Seorg anak raja yg rasa dia sorg je yg hebat dan boleh bersuara...bila org lain bersuara semuanye dia nak bidas...kemon laaa org lain pon ada hak masing2, tak perlu semua ko nak cantas...dalam sukan kena ada sifat hormat menghormati, satu malaya setuju JDt pasukan hebat	Advice	Facebook
(D9) seorg ketua negara patut menunjukkan contoh yg baik utk rakyat	Advice	Tiktok

Meanwhile, for D2, D3, D4, D6 and D7, they are subcategories of question speech acts. All these data are directive speech acts that are presented in a question that demands an answer or response from the second party. Among the questions written, social media users are disrespectfully questioning the king's responsibilities. All of these examples of questioning speech acts do not use question words in their utterances but use question marks at the end of the sentence. All these questioning speech acts have insulted the king by stating something that suggests public hatred towards this institution. Such questions should not be asked because they are hating speech that clearly shows contempt for the royal institution in Malaysia. According to Shuib and Yusof (2019), the function of questioning speech acts in communication is to gather information, but also as a didactic or rhetorical tool. Therefore, this hate speech delivered in the form of questions carries many functions that are intended to be conveyed to the royal institution. Next is the subcategory of advice speech acts. There are also social media users who are seen trying to advise the royal institution, but unfortunately the advice is not prudent and has caused elements of hatred. Among the advice speech acts are through D5, D8 and D9. The advice is a reprimand to TMJ, the son of the Sultan of Johor, about his nature which is equated with arrogance. However, the advice is seen as quite rude and disrespectful to the royal institution. Meanwhile, the advice in D9 is to the head of state so that he should set a good example to the people. In a pragmatic context, the speech acts of advice falls into the directive category which aims to influence the actions or thoughts of the listener (Searle, 1969). According to Shuib and Yusof (2019), advice is a form of communication that is used politely to provide guidance, but if delivered impolitely, it can turn into an offensive element.

Ibrahim et al. (2017) also explained that advice as a subcategory of directives must be delivered with great manners, especially in the context of relationships involving social hierarchy such as between the people and royal institutions. In summary, the examples of data shown in this study illustrate that hate speech delivered in a directive manner should be avoided by social media users. Various forms of directive speech acts have been used by society to insult and belittle the royal institution in Malaysia. These forms of language can be used as a guide so that society is aware that this hate speech does indeed carry negative and bad connotations and needs to be avoided. Overall, the data presented in this study clearly shows that hate speech conveyed through directive

speech acts is a worrying phenomenon among social media users. Such speech not only reflects disrespect towards certain parties, but in the context of this study, it is seen as a form of verbal attack aimed at the royal institution in Malaysia. Various language strategies have been used to convey insult and belittle the institution, whether overtly or implicitly. Therefore, these forms of language should be used as an example and a reminder to society to be more careful in communicating in the digital space.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that the use of directive speech acts is widespread in the delivery of hate speech related to the 3R issue on social media. The most frequently used subcategories include requests, questions and advice used to convey hate messages. The variety of forms of directive speech acts proves that social media users channel their hatred through various instructions aimed at influencing the actions of readers or listeners. Each form of directive speech acts has a specific intention and needs to be controlled since it has the potential to threaten national harmony and should not be a common practice. This study provides exposure to the public about the forms of language used in hate speech, thus building awareness about the forms of language that need to be avoided. Although the focus of this study is from a linguistic perspective, its impact can be felt by various parties including academics, the public, social media users and authorities. The public should be aware that the dissemination of hate speech on social media can trigger conflict. Therefore, the identification of these forms of directive speech acts can be used as a reference to educate the public that hate speech has negative effects and should be avoided.

The use of hate speech in the 3R issues can clearly have a profound impact on the harmony of a diverse society such as Malaysia. Hate speech spreads through social media not only creates misunderstandings and prejudices between races and religious adherents, but also eroding the mutual trust that has been built. When the 3R issues are polemized excessively, it has the potential to undermine political stability, undermine national unity and threatens public safety. Furthermore, the spread of unverified information and extreme rhetoric can influence public emotions to the point of triggering open conflicts. Therefore, all parties need to practice a responsible attitude in communicating, obey the law, and prioritise prudent dialogue to ensure that the country's peace and harmony continue to be maintained.

Acknowledgement

This research was sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme Early Career (FRGS-EC/1/2024/SSI01/UITM/02/2). Many thanks to the sponsors for the opportunity and space provided to conduct this study. Hopefully this study will provide widespread benefits to the field of knowledge, society and the country.

Conflict of interest

The author confirms that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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