

Language that judges love: A study of illocutions in the lyrics of the song *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Saher

Nur Islamiyah ^①✉, Cahya Buana ^②, Minatur Rokhim ^③,
Hafizh Jawd Naufal ^④, Khamesyah Naumi Azzahra ^⑤

^{①②③④⑤} Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

✉ nrislamiah894@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to explain the use of illocutionary acts in the lyrics of the song *Al-Mahkama* performed by Kazim Al-Saher and Asma El Mnawar, which describes a dialogue of a couple of lovers who demand justice for their broken love relationship. The title *Al-Mahkama* is not merely a metaphor, but rather the main concept that forms the structure of the dialogue in the song, where love is seen as a matter to be judged, and language functions as a tool to assess, demand, and declare the truth. This study aims to identify the types and communicative functions of the illocutionary acts contained in the lyrics of the song. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with song lyrics as primary data, while the analysis is based on Searle's speech theory. The result of the research show that there are three types of illocution speech that are dominantly used, namely assertive (as statements and defenses), directive (as orders and requests for justice), and expressive (as emotional expressions). These three findings represent a concrete manifestation of language that judges love, where every utterance functions as a judicial process. Language used not only to express feelings but also to judge, demand justice, and establish truth from each speaker's perspective. This research contributes to the development of pragmatic studies and expands linguistic research in the field of modern Arabic music.

Keywords

Al-Mahkama, Arabic music, pragmatic analysis, Searle's illocutionary acts

How to cite this article in APA format:

Islamiyah, N., Buana, C., Rokhim, M., Naufal, H. J., & Azzahra, K. N. (2026). Language that judges love: A study of illocutions in the lyrics of the song *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Saher. *Linguistics Initiative*, 6(1), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.61400>

Introduction

One from of human interaction is communication through conversation. Of all the communication tools available, from simple to sophisticated, language is the most effective means of communication (Purba, 2011). Effective communication can be achieved when both the speaker and the interlocutor use a language that is mutually understood. In a conversation, at least two parties must be involved: the speaker as the sender of the message and the interlocutor as the receiver, with language serving as the primary medium in the communication process. Therefore, communication requires knowledge, understanding, and experience in order to proceed effectively.

According to Devianty (2017), language can be understood in two senses. First, it refers to the sounds produced by the speech organs, and second, it denotes the meaning contained within the stream of sounds. Every utterance produced is not merely a sequence of sounds, but also carries a particular meaning. In the context of communication, such utterances function as speech acts, namely actions performed through language to achieve the intended communicative goals (Maulida, 2023). Consciously or unconsciously, speech acts have been performed by humans since the earliest stages of life in the world (Sumarlam et al., 2023). The branch of linguistics that deals with the speaker's intended meaning is pragmatics. In pragmatics, meaning is defined in relation to the speaker (Leech, 1993). Considering that the object of this study is song lyrics, which constitute a form of expression and indirect communicative action, a pragmatic approach is relevant because it examines the speaker's intended meaning and the relationship between the speaker's utterances and actions in determining linguistic meaning (Korta & Perry, 2006).

Speech acts are a pragmatic element that involve the speaker, the hearer, and the topic being discussed. Speech act theory examines the relationship between the speaker's utterances and the speaker's actions in order to determine linguistic meaning. John Austin, an English philosopher who first proposed speech act theory in his work *How to Do Things with Words*, stated that every utterance is essentially an action (Ibrahim, 1993). Austin (1962) classified speech acts into three categories: locutionary acts, which are acts performed by producing words or sentences in accordance with their literal meaning, illocutionary acts, which are acts performed with a particular intention and communicative function, and perlocutionary acts, which are acts intended to influence the listener.

Subsequently, John Searle, who was not fully satisfied with Austin's classification of speech acts, developed a classification of illocutionary functions in his works *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) and *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts* (1975). When a person utters a sentence, he or she does not merely produce the sentence; through the utterance, the speaker also "performs" an action (Retnaningsih, 2014). In illocutionary speech acts, Searle classifies them into five types: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative.

Speech acts employ various media for communication. The use of different types of speech acts is also found in Arabic literary works, one of which is the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Saher. In literary works such as songs, language functions not only communicatively but also aesthetically, emotionally, and symbolically. Song lyrics represent a form of linguistic expression that is aesthetically structured through word choice, structure, tone, and style. The use of language in song lyrics carries diverse meanings that correspond to their contextual use (Zulfan et al., 2018). A song is one of the literary works that contains elements of beauty and indirect expression which have implicit meanings from the creator (Damayanti et al., 2023). The beauty of language style does not only come from diction in each song lyric, but also arouses the listeners' curiosity through the meaning of the song that is created.

One of the Arabic literary works that interprets illocutionary speech acts in song lyrics is the song *Al-Mahkama*, popularized by Kazim Al-Saher, an Iraqi singer who is given the titles “Caesar of Arabic Song” and “Iraq’s Ambassador to the World” by his fans, together with Asma El Mnawar, a Moroccan singer who has won a best award at a festival organized by Moroccan radio and television. Since being published on October 16, 2012, on the Rotana YouTube account, it has been viewed 107 million times to date. This shows that many people are interested in Arabic songs. The selection of the song title *Al-Mahkama*, which literally means “court,” is not a coincidence; rather, it supports the main metaphor in the lyrics, namely that the love conflict between the two characters is treated like a case that must be tried in court.

The concept of language that puts love on trial in this study refers to the function of language as a tool to decide, evaluate, and determine truth within a romantic relationship. The expression of a court here does not refer to a court in the literal sense, but rather serves as a metaphor that illustrates how utterances in song lyrics operate like a judicial process. The speaker uses language to accuse one another, present defenses, demand justice, and convey emotional judgments. An example of the language used by the speaker in putting love on trial can be clearly seen in the lyric excerpt *كُنْ مُنْصِفًا يَا سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي*, which means “Be fair, O my lord the judge.” The term “judge” represents an element of a trial, as if the speaker were bringing their love issue into a courtroom. What is being asked to be fair is not a real judge, but the heart, feelings, and the partner. Thus, what is meant by putting love on trial is not an actual legal process, but a symbolic representation of how language becomes the tool and the space where love is tested, judged, and its fate determined.

Previous research that used the works of Kazim Al-Saher as the object of analysis was conducted by Muhammad Al-Mu’tashim Ibrahim Al-Khudari, Anis Hamud Mu’ayyidi, and Prof. Dr. Khayri Muhammad ‘Amir which discussed the musical structure and poetic lyrics of Haddetsini and analyzed how Kazim arranged melodies in conveying meaning. The researchers chose the poem Haddetsini because of the diversity in the use of scales, rhythm, and vocal techniques. Then, a study on the elements of *al-ma’āniy* in the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Iraqi was conducted by Muhammad Emirio Rafif (2021). There is also a study that discusses the meaning of love in Kazim Al-Saher’s songs on the album *Entaha Al-Mishwar*, released on November 1, 2005, conducted by Himayatuz Zakiyyah (2020) using Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory, which includes three aspects: icon, index, and symbol. The object of this study was taken from three songs by Kazim: *Hareb*, *Al-Benayya*, and *Innī Uhibbuki*. Previous research discussing speech acts was conducted by Sharikhul Hanif (2023) entitled “Assertive, Directive, and Expressive Speech Acts in the Song Lyrics of Humood Al-Khudher.” This study focused on identifying forms of illocutionary speech acts in the songs *Kun Anta* and *Salamy* by Humood. Another study was conducted by Suriani (2022) which discussed illocutionary speech acts in the dialogue of the web series “Yakin Nikah” season 1 in the *Linguistics Initiative* journal. Sholikhah, Rosita, and Pancarani (2025) also examined expressive and directive speech acts in the film “Kejar Mimpi Gaspol” by Hasto Broto, finding 26 expressive data and 17 directive data. In addition to these three studies, research on Searle’s illocutionary speech acts was also conducted by Aditia (2025) on the song lyrics “Gala Bunga Matahari” by Sal Priadi, with directive acts being the most dominant finding.

Based on the gap analysis above, this study will focus on two main aspects. First, it aims to identify the types of illocutionary speech acts found in the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama*, namely assertive, directive, and expressive acts. Second, it analyzes the communicative functions of these speech acts within the context of the metaphor of a court of love. The novelty of this study lies in the object of analysis, as it is the first pragmatic study to analyze speech acts in the song *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Saher, particularly with the theme of a love trial. Furthermore, from the theoretical perspective, this study develops the concept of language that puts love on trial as a new analytical framework in the study of illocutionary speech acts. Thus, this research is

expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies in Arabic literary works, as well as to expand linguistic studies in the field of modern Arabic music and culture.

Method

This study uses a pragmatic theoretical approach. According to Geoffrey Leech, in a pragmatic approach, meaning is defined in relation to the speaker. This type of research is descriptive qualitative, because the data analyzed consist of utterances in song lyrics that contain meaning and speech act functions. Descriptive research describes the object or topic under study in a deep, broad, and detailed manner (Hanim et al., 2023). This view is in line with Ardyan, who emphasizes that qualitative research is used to understand, investigate, and analyze complex aspects of events in society (Ardyan et al., 2023). Therefore, descriptive qualitative research is intended to describe and illustrate existing phenomena, whether natural or human-made.

The researcher uses a pragmatic approach and a descriptive qualitative method with the aim of explaining how utterances in the song *Al-Mahkama* function within the metaphor of a court of love and identifying forms of accusation, defense, and requests for justice that appear in the dialogue between the two speakers. Thus, the descriptive qualitative pragmatic method is relevant for revealing how language is used as a tool to put romantic relationships on trial in the song lyrics.

The data sources in this study are divided into two types, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source in this study is the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama*, popularized by Kazim Al-Saher and Asma El Mnawar, which serve as the main object of speech act analysis. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources consist of various supporting literature, including books on pragmatic theory, scientific articles, and relevant previous studies. The data collection method used in this study is the observation method, as the researcher observes the use of language in the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama*, takes notes, and collects data related to the study of illocutionary speech acts. After the data are collected, the next step is to analyze the data to identify the forms and functions of speech acts in the song lyrics. The data analysis technique is carried out through the following steps: (1) identifying language as utterances in the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama*, (2) classifying the types of speech acts based on Searle's theory, namely assertive, directive, and expressive, (3) interpreting the illocutionary meaning of each lyric, and (4) drawing conclusions regarding the functions of speech acts contained in the utterances.

Results

Illocutionary speech acts are speech acts that have implications for action. These speech acts are utterances that do not only function to inform something, but also to perform an action. Therefore, illocution refers to discussing the intention and function of an utterance and for what purpose the utterance is performed (Retnaningsih, 2014).

In the song *Al-Mahkama*, illocutionary speech acts do not only function as ordinary communication; they also operate in an adjudicative function, namely a trial that takes place through language. In this mechanism, the truth of the love relationship between the two speakers is not determined by material evidence, but by rhetorical strength and how language is used to influence the interlocutor, defend oneself, demand, or express emotional judgments.

Based on the analysis of illocutionary speech acts proposed by Searle in the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama* by Kazim Al-Saher and Asma El Mnawar, the researcher found three types of illocutionary speech acts that most dominantly appear in expressing meaning and emotion

between the two speakers, namely assertive, directive, and expressive acts. The results of the analysis show that there are 7 data of assertive speech acts, 3 data of directive speech acts, and 4 data of expressive speech acts, each of which has specific functions and intentions, as will be explained in the following discussion.

Table 1. Assertive Speech Acts in the Song Lyrics *Al-Mahkama*

No	Translation	Transliteration	Song Lyrics
1	My sin is that I am a man who has a past.	Dzanbī anā rajulun lahu māḍī	ذَنْبِي أَنَا رَجُلٌ لَهُ مَاضِي
2	The woman who stands before you now was once the person I loved the most.	Tilka allatī amāmaka al-āna, kānat ladayya a'azza insānatan	تِلْكَ الَّتِي أَمَامَكَ الْآنَ , كَانَتْ لَدَيَّ أَعَزُّ إِنْسَانَةٍ
3	I loved her, and she loved me.	Wa aḥbabtuhā wa hiya aḥbbatnī	وَأَحْبَبْتُهَا وَهِيَ أَحَبَّتْنِي
4	I was honest with her and said: "O my beloved, my past relationships were indeed many.	Ṣāraḥtuhā wa qultu mawlātī, kathīratun kānat 'alāqātī	صَارَحْتُهَا وَقُلْتُ مَوْلَاتِي , كَثِيرَةٌ كَانَتْ عِلَاقَاتِي
5	Indeed, the one who stands before you now has filled me with injustice and neglect.	Inna alladhī amāmaka al-āna, ashba'anī ḡulman wa ḥirmānan	إِنَّ الَّذِي أَمَامَكَ الْآنَ , أَشْبَعَنِي ظُلْمًا وَحِرْمَانًا
6	She rebelled (she rebelled).	Tamarradat (tamarrada)	تَمَرَّدَتْ (تَمَرَّدَ)
7	She became arrogant (she was arrogant), and she became conceited (she was conceited).	Tajabbarat (tajabbara) wa takabbarat (takabbara)	تَجَبَّرَتْ (تَجَبَّرَ) وَتَكَبَّرَتْ (تَكَبَّرَ)

Table 2. Directive Speech Acts in the Song Lyrics *Al-Mahkama*

No	Translation	Transliteration	Song Lyrics
1	Be fair, O my lord the judge.	Kun munṣifan yā sayyidī al-qāḍī	كُنْ مُنْصِيفًا يَا سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي
2	My beloved, forget the past and kiss me.	Ḥabībī da' al-māḍī wa qabbilnī	حَبِيبِي دَعْ الْمَاضِي وَقَبِّلْنِي
3	Release my hand, O my lord the judge, release it! Free my hand! Free my hand!	Aṭliq yadayya sayyidī al-qāḍī, aṭliq, ḥarrir yadayya, ḥarrir yadayya	أَطْلِقْ يَدَيَّ سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي, أَطْلِقْ, حَرِّرْ يَدَيَّ, حَرِّرْ يَدَيَّ

Table 3. Expressive Speech Acts in the Song Lyrics *Al-Mahkama*

No	Translation	Transliteration	Song Lyrics
1	You spoiled me? Instead, you have destroyed me!	Dallaltanī? Dammartanī anta!	دَلَّلْتَنِي؟ دَمَّرْتَنِي أَنْتَ!
2	You have neglected me!	Ahmaltanī anta!	أَهْمَلْتَنِي أَنْتَ!
3	You, you are a torment to me.	Anta anta 'adhābī	أَنْتَ أَنْتَ عَذَابِي
4	I am truly in a pitiable condition, to the point that I forgot that I am a woman.	Anā ḥālatun fa'lan lahā yurtsā, ḥattā nasītu bī'annanī untā	أَنَا حَالَةٌ فَعَلًا لَهَا يُرَى , حَتَّى نَسِيتُ بِأَنِّي أُنْثَى

Discussion

Assertive Speech Acts

In the song *Al-Mahkama*, the language used in assertive illocutionary speech acts appears in the form of statements to affirm, defend oneself, and admit, as the speaker attempts to establish the truth before the interlocutor. Language in assertive acts means that the speaker is committed to the truth of what is expressed at various levels, for example ranging from proposing, suggesting, affirming, to swearing (Searle, 1975). Based on the results of the analysis, 7 data from the song lyrics *Al-Mahkama* were found to contain assertive speech acts. Of the total findings, 4 were uttered by the male speaker, 1 was uttered by the female speaker, and the remaining 2 were utterances produced by both speakers. This distribution indicates that in the assertive category, the male speaker is more dominant in stating truth, defending, and affirming his position. The following are four song lyric data uttered by the male speaker, including:

دَنْبِي أَنَا رَجُلٌ لَهُ مَاضِي
Dzanbī anā rajulun lahu māḍī
 My sin is that I am a man who has a past.

In these lyrics, the male speaker intends to inform the interlocutor of the reality about himself, namely that he is a man who has a past. This utterance is categorized as an assertive speech act that functions as a confession within the context of a court of love. The key word in these lyrics is “دَنْبِي” (my sin). The word *sin* is a term commonly used in a legal context to indicate wrongdoing. By using this word, the speaker appears to be confessing a fault before a judge. However, this confession is not an ordinary one. The speaker uses the limiting expressions “أَنَا رَجُلٌ” (I am a man) and “لَهُ مَاضِي” (who has a past) to reduce the burden of the wrongdoing. The linguistic structure “my sin is only” indicates that the speaker intends to minimize the fault, as if saying, “my wrongdoing is not as serious as you think.” Language and the speech act here function as tools to confess while simultaneously defending oneself. The speaker does not deny his past, but he also does not wish to be judged too harshly for something that he considers natural and unchangeable.

تِلْكَ الَّتِي أَمَامَكَ الْآنَ , كَانَتْ لَدَيَّ أَعَزَّ إِنْسَانَةً
Tilka allatī amāmak al-āna, kānat ladayya a'azza insānatan
 The woman who stands before you now was once the person I loved the most.

These lyrics are categorized as assertive speech acts in which the male speaker states the truth that the woman once occupied the highest position in his heart. The words “الآن” (now) and “كَانَتْ” (formerly) function as a temporal comparison that serves as evidence of change. This indicates that the speaker’s feelings toward the interlocutor have changed, and that this change did not occur without reason. The speaker also employs the expression “أَعَزَّ” (the most beloved) to demonstrate that he once loved the interlocutor deeply and to provide evidence that he was not indifferent. The function of the assertive speech act and language here is to state the truth of the past as a form of self-defense, in which the speaker uses past evidence to protect himself from accusations that he was never serious in the relationship.

وَأَحْبَبْتُهَا وَهِيَ أَحَبَّنِي
Wa aḥbattuhā wa hiya aḥbbatnī
 I loved her, and she loved me..

This lyric constitutes an assertive illocutionary act intended to emphasize the speaker's belief in a reciprocal relationship between the male speaker and the female interlocutor, who are positioned equally, rather than a one-sided love. The existence of reciprocated love indicates happiness and completeness within the relationship. The linguistic structure "أَحْبَبْتُهَا" (I loved her) and "وَهِيَ أَحَبَّتْنِي" (and she loved me), connected by the conjunction *and*, links two parallel and equivalent statements. This illocutionary act demonstrates how language functions to establish fairness at the beginning of the relationship. The speaker seeks to assert that the relationship began with justice and mutual love; therefore, if the relationship is currently problematic, it is not due to any initial injustice. This serves as a strong defense, as it shows that the speaker cannot be held fully responsible for the breakdown of the relationship. The function of this assertive illocutionary act is to state the truth of emotional equality as the basis for self-defense.

صَارَ حُكُّهَا وَقُلْتُ مَوْلَاتِي , كَثِيرَةٌ كَانَتْ عِلَاقَاتِي

Ṣāraḥṭuhā wa qultu mawlātī, kathīratun kānat 'alāqātī

I was honest with her and said: "O my beloved, my past relationships were indeed many.

In these lyrics, the male speaker demonstrates courage in opening his heart without hiding his past by using the tender address "مَوْلَاتِي" as if the speaker places the woman in the most noble position in his heart. The word "صَارَ حُكُّهَا" (I was honest with her) has the same meaning as being frank or open. In court, honesty is highly valued, someone who confesses honestly usually receives a reduced sentence. The male speaker uses this strategy, by confessing first in hopes of obtaining forgiveness. The confessional language "كَثِيرَةٌ كَانَتْ عِلَاقَاتِي" (my past relationships were indeed many) which indicates past time with the purpose that the speaker wants to emphasize that in the past he did have many relationships, but before being with the interlocutor, so it is not relevant to judge his current loyalty. The language function and assertive speech act in these lyrics is to state the truth with the hope of obtaining forgiveness, not punishment.

Next, one song lyric data spoken by the female speaker. The female speaker appears less frequently in the assertive category because her emotional focus is more directed towards expressing feelings rather than conveying statements of truth. The song lyric is as follows:

إِنَّ الَّذِي أَمَامَكَ الْآنَ , أَشْبَعَنِي ظُلْمًا وَحِرْمَانًا

Inna alladhī amāmak al-āna, ashba'anī ḡulman wa ḥirmānan

Indeed, the one who stands before you now has filled me with injustice and neglect.

In this lyric, there is a shift in the speaker from the male character to the female character. This change of speaker is indicated by a difference in the content of the utterance and the style of delivery. While in the previous verses the male character functions as the party who acknowledges and explains his past, in this section the female character appears as the speaker who responds to, evaluates, and explains her emotional expression toward the male's confession. The speaker uses the word "إِنَّ" (indeed/truly), which in Arabic functions as an emphatic particle; therefore, in this lyric the speaker asserts an undeniable truth.

The female speaker states that she has experienced extensive suffering caused by the interlocutor: being hurt, wronged, and neglected. The word *kenyang* (satiated) here is not interpreted literally, but rather signifies being full, overwhelmed, and continuous, to the extent that there is no remaining space for any other pain. The speaker complains and resists the interlocutor's claims that he loved her and attempted to avoid conflict in the relationship. In reality, the speaker asserts how severe the treatment she received from the person in front of her was and feels that their love relationship was unjust and instead inflicted emotional torment.

The linguistic structure “الَّذِي أَمَلَكْتَ الْآنَ” (the one before you now), which mirrors the male speaker’s earlier expression, is deliberately used by the female speaker to show that she also possesses an equally valid truth. The phrase “أَشْبَعَنِي ظُلْمًا وَجَرَمَانًا” (he has made me satiated with injustice and deprivation) functions as a means for the speaker to amplify her suffering. *Satiated* here does not refer to being full of food, but rather to having endured too much, exceeded all limits, and reached a point of unbearable endurance. This demonstrates that language and illocutionary acts function as an act of accusation by presenting an abundance of suffering as evidence. The speaker refutes the male interlocutor’s self-defense statement “I once loved you,” with the counterclaim, in essence, “but you tormented me”.

Meanwhile, the lyrics of the song *Al-Mahkama* that are spoken by both the male speaker and the female speaker are found in two song lyric data, namely:

تَمَرَّدَتْ (تَمَرَّدَ)
Tamarradat (tamarrada)
 She rebelled (she rebelled).

This lyric constitutes a statement in which the speaker accuses and suspects the interlocutor, and vice versa. Both the male and female speakers equally assert that their lover has changed—from being gentle to harsh, from faithful to defiant and rebellious. Although the context is a direct, face-to-face dialogue, the speakers choose to refer to the interlocutor using a third-person reference. This choice of third-person form functions as a pragmatic strategy to position the utterance as if it were a report being delivered to a judge who evaluates the conflict within the relationship.

The use of the words “تَمَرَّدَتْ” and “تَمَرَّدَ” constitutes a repetition of the lyrics, which, although spoken by different speakers, illustrates that they no longer listen to one another and instead focus solely on their own accusations. The male speaker accuses the woman of rebelling, while the female speaker likewise accuses the man of rebelling. This language creates mutually opposing accusations, with both speakers perceiving themselves as victims and positioning the interlocutor as the perpetrator. In the context of judging love, the assertive speech acts and the language in these lyrics function to indicate a judicial deadlock. No one can prevail, because each party presents the same accusation.

تَجَبَّرَتْ (تَجَبَّرَ) وَتَكَبَّرَتْ (تَكَبَّرَ)
Tajabbarat (tajabbara) wa takabbarat (takabbara)
 She became arrogant (she was arrogant), and she became conceited (she was conceited).

Similarly to the previous lyrics, both the male and female speakers continue to accuse and blame each other through repeated lines and the use of third-person pronouns. This speech act belongs to the assertive category and simultaneously carries an expressive function. The use of the words “تَجَبَّرَتْ” and “تَجَبَّرَ” (became arrogant) as well as “تَكَبَّرَتْ” and “تَكَبَّرَ” (became conceited) illustrates an accumulation of accusations. The speakers do not feel satisfied with a single charge; therefore, a second accusation is added to intensify the partner’s fault. This marks an early stage in which the relationship is already severely damaged. By employing terms such as arrogant and conceited, which constitute accusations against one’s character, this language—within the metaphorical court—can lead the judge and others to believe that the person’s character is indeed flawed. The assertive utterances with expressive nuances function here as acts of accusation while simultaneously revealing deep emotional pain. However, when considering the lyrics and the music video of *Al-Mahkama*, behind all these accusations, both

speakers still long for one another, and this trial ultimately represents the cry of individuals who are still in love but deeply wounded.

The dominance of assertive speech acts found in the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama* is consistent with Hanif's study (2023), which also identified assertive speech acts as dominant in Arabic song lyrics by Humood Al-Khudher. In Hanif's research, assertive speech acts function to inform and to affirm positive values related to self-identity and friendship. In contrast, in *Al-Mahkama*, assertive speech acts function as instruments of self-defense and the establishment of truth within a romantic conflict. This difference demonstrates that although the structure of assertive speech acts may be similar, their communicative functions depend on the context and theme of the song.

Directive Speech Acts

The language that constitutes directive illocutionary speech acts in the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama* functions as actions intended to prompt the interlocutor to do something, such as commanding, pleading, and demanding justice. The speaker attempts to make the interlocutor act in accordance with what is being expressed (Korta & Perry, 2005). Searle's discussion in *A Taxonomy of Communicative Illocutionary Acts* includes six subcategories of directive speech acts, namely: requestives, which involve requesting, begging, pleading, inviting, and pressuring; requirements, which involve commanding, requiring, demanding, and regulating; permissives, which involve consenting, granting, releasing, forgiving, and allowing; questions, which involve asking and interrogating; prohibitives, which involve prohibiting and restricting; and advisories, which involve advising, warning, suggesting, and encouraging (Bach & Harnish, 1982). In the context of the court of love, directive speech acts function as forms of prosecution and appeals for justice, in which the speaker not only makes statements but also asks the interlocutor and the heart to establish justice and grant freedom. In the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama*, the researcher found three instances of language that constitute directive speech acts: one produced by the male speaker, one by the female speaker, and one produced by both speakers, beginning with the male speaker and followed by the female speaker. Both speakers express requests, pleas, and commands in the process of judging their love story. The song lyric spoken by both speakers is as follows:

كُنْ مُنْصِيفًا يَا سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي
Kun munṣifan yā sayyidī al-qāḍī
Be fair, O my lord the judge.

This lyric is classified as a directive illocutionary speech act because it constitutes a plea or a direct request for the judge to act justly. The key words here are “كُنْ” (be), which is a firm imperative form in Arabic, and “مُنْصِيفًا” (just). This lyric is uttered by both the male and female speakers before they present their truth and self-defense. The speaker does not merely ask, but commands with a pleading tone for the “judge” to be fair. The form of address “يَا سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي” (O my lord, the judge) indicates that the speaker positions himself or herself as weak and appeals to a higher authority. The term “judge” here is ambiguous, as it may refer to the speaker's own conscience, the interlocutor's heart, fate, or even God. The function of the directive speech act and the language used here is to plead for justice in an urgent tone, while simultaneously expressing hope that a fair resolution is still possible. This plea emerges from the speaker's sense of powerlessness in facing a relationship that is perceived as chaotic and unjust. The speaker hopes that, through the establishment of justice, he or she can be released from the suffering caused by the beloved.

The second directive lyric is uttered by the female speaker and reads as follows:

حَبِيبِي دَعْ الْمَاضِي وَتَقَبَّلْنِي
Ḥabībī da' al-māḍī wa qabbilnī
 My beloved, forget the past and kiss me.

Considering the assertive lyrics above that express the man's honesty about his past involving many relationships, in this lyric, which constitutes a directive illocutionary speech act, the female speaker commands her beloved to forget the past and to kiss her as a partner who is now always in her embrace. The speaker uses two commands simultaneously, "دَعْ الْمَاضِي" (forget the past) and "تَقَبَّلْنِي" (kiss me), which are not merely physical actions but symbols of reconciliation, carrying the meaning of commitment and the closure of the past. The address "حَبِيبِي" (my beloved) at the beginning of the lyric creates a gentle and romantic tone. This indicates that despite the conflict, there remains hope for reconciliation. The directive speech act in this lyric shows how language functions to end the dispute and to begin a new chapter.

The male speaker also expresses a plea and a command in the dialogue of the song *Al-Mahkama* to judge his love, namely:

أَطْلُقْ يَدَيَّ سَيِّدِي الْقَاضِي، خَرَّرْ يَدَيَّ، خَرَّرْ يَدَيَّ
Aṭliq yadayya sayyidī al-qāḍī, aṭliq, ḥarrir yadayya, ḥarrir yadayya
 Release my hand, O my lord the judge, release it! Free my hand! Free my hand!

This lyric represents the peak of the male speaker's frustration and despair. The key words in this lyric are "أَطْلُقْ" (release), which is first uttered by the speaker, and "خَرَّرْ" (free), which is repeated twice. These two words indicate that the male speaker is increasingly desperate and longs for freedom and complete release from a relationship that torments him. The word "يَدَيَّ" (my hands) functions as a metaphor; what is being asked to be released is not physically bound hands, but rather a symbol of the shackles of the past, accusations, jealousy, unfulfilled expectations, and ongoing pain. The language in this speech act operates as a cry for liberation and a plea to end the court of love, either through separation or through unconditional reconciliation.

The use of directive speech acts in the song *Al-Mahkama* shows a pattern that differs from Suriani's findings (2022) in the dialogue of the web series *Yakin Nikah*. Suriani found directive utterances to be the most dominant type of speech act, with 25 instances, due to the nature of everyday conversational dialogue that frequently employs questions, requests, and commands, such as "Think of my feelings!" and "You don't trust me?". In contrast, the directive speech acts in this study are not merely ordinary requests or commands, but rather appeals for justice in love through the metaphor of a court.

Expressive Speech Acts

Expressive illocutionary speech acts are actions that serve to indicate the speaker's psychological state regarding a certain situation or event. Expressive speech acts are considered important in communication because they can strengthen the social relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor (Ahmad et al., 2025). Examples of expressive speech acts include expressing thanks, congratulating, apologizing, praising, comforting, welcoming, and showing regret (Artati et al., 2020). The truth in expressive speech acts is considered to be already established, and the speaker cannot judge its correctness or incorrectness. The researcher found

four lyric data from *Al-Mahkama* that fall under expressive speech acts, all of which are uttered by the female speaker. The complete dominance of the female speaker in this speech act indicates that the expression of feelings and emotional statements emerges more from the female perspective. These expressive utterances also reflect the tendency of women to convey their emotions more openly when in a situation of romantic conflict. The four expressive song lyrics are as follows:

دَلَّلْتَنِي؟ دَمَّرْتَنِي أَنْتَ!
Dallaltanī? Dammartanī anta!
You spoiled me? Instead, you have destroyed me!

In this lyric, which constitutes an expressive illocutionary speech act, the female speaker demonstrates deep disappointment and anger. The use of a question mark to indicate rejection and an exclamation mark to convey an outburst of emotion serves as a clear expressive marker. The language structure “دَلَّلْتَنِي؟” (You spoiled me?) functions as a strong rebuttal to the male speaker’s defense, and “دَمَّرْتَنِي أَنْتَ!” (You have destroyed me!) with a firm tone points to the male speaker who has caused her pain. The language and speech act in this lyric function to express profound anger and disappointment while delivering a judgment that the partner is entirely at fault for her suffering.

أَهْمَلْتَنِي أَنْتَ!
Ahmaltanī anta!
You have neglected me!

This lyric is a continuation of the female speaker’s emotional expression in the previous lyric, where the interlocutor has broken her heart. In this lyric, the female speaker feels deeply anxious due to being neglected and abandoned when she needed the presence and support of her partner. The verb form “أَهْمَلْتَنِي” (you have neglected) proves that this is an action that has already occurred and is factual, not merely an assumption. In the context of a courtroom, such proven facts serve as strong evidence. The speaker again emphasizes with the word “أَنْتَ” (you), underscoring that it is indeed her partner who has neglected her. The language in this expressive speech act demonstrates how the female speaker feels lonely and disappointed due to being neglected, while simultaneously accusing her interlocutor of negligence.

أَنْتَ أَنْتَ عَذَابِي
Anta anta 'adhābī
You, you are a torment to me.

This lyric portrays the feelings experienced by the female speaker when she identifies her interlocutor as the source of her suffering and torment. The repetition of the word “أَنْتَ” (you) emphasizes the intensity of her pain, it is truly you who caused it, not anyone else. The speaker also uses the term “عَذَابِي” (my torment), which in Arabic is often associated with the context of hellish punishment or severe suffering. This conveys that the speaker’s disappointment is not mere sadness or ordinary pain, but continuous torment. The language structure further suggests that the speaker has redefined her partner’s identity from lover to her source of suffering. The function of the language and the expressive speech act in this lyric serves as an emotional outlet for the speaker to release long-held feelings by designating her partner as the source of torment.

أَنَا حَالَةٌ فَعْلًا لَهَا يُرْتَى , حَتَّى نَسِيتُ بِأَنْنِي أَنْتَى

Anā ḥālatun fa'lan lahā yurtsā, ḥattā nasītu bi'annanī untā

I am truly in a pitiable condition, to the point that I forgot that I am a woman.

After expressing all the suffering she has endured and kept inside, in this lyric the female speaker experiences the destruction of her identity as a woman. The phrase “فَعْلًا لَهَا يُرْتَى” (truly pitiable) serves as an emotional emphasis, depicting the speaker’s condition as so dire that it calls for empathy. The use of the word “حَتَّى” (until) indicates that her suffering has reached the utmost limit or exceeded normal bounds. This is followed by “نَسِيتُ بِأَنْنِي أَنْتَى” (I forgot that I am a woman), which evidences profound psychological damage. In both Arab and other cultures, women have the right to be treated with respect, protected, and cherished. By stating all of this, the speaker asserts that all these rights have been violated by her partner. The function of language in this expressive speech act works as the speaker’s testimony about her personal damage. In a courtroom context, this could serve as the most dramatic evidence presented by the victim.

Based on the findings, the expressive speech acts in *Al-Mahkama* differ from the expressive acts in the film *Kejar Mimpi Gaspol* (Sholikah et al., 2025) which include expressions of praise, apology, gratitude, complaints, and condolences. The expressive acts in Sholikah’s study are more positive and motivating. In contrast, the expressive acts in the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama* are dominated by deep disappointment and identity destruction. There is not a single expressive act that is positive, such as giving thanks, praise, or prayers. This stark difference indicates that the theme strongly determines the type of emotion expressed. Motivational songs tend to use expressive acts to build spirit and encourage perseverance, whereas love-conflict songs use expressive acts to convey suffering within the context of a court of love.

Conclusion

The three types of speech acts described above illustrate the emotions and attitudes of the speakers toward their partners in a turbulent romantic relationship, where both speakers exchange arguments and feelings amid conflict that is still underpinned by love and a desire to be understood. Assertive acts are used to state the truth, predominantly voiced by the male speaker, indicating that the male speaker more often assumes the position of providing statements, self-defense, and affirmation. Directive acts are used to influence the interlocutor to take action, such as giving commands and requesting justice, with a balance between male and female speakers who both seek fairness in their troubled relationship. Expressive acts are used to convey the speaker’s emotions, entirely voiced by the female speaker to express her emotional and psychological state in the romantic conflict. Overall, the analysis reinforces the thesis that the lyrics of *Al-Mahkama* represent language acts that adjudicate love, where each illocutionary utterance functions as a form of defense, acknowledgment, and determination of emotional judgment.

This study demonstrates that the analysis of speech acts can be applied to musical literary works, including modern Arabic songs. However, this research has several limitations. First, the analysis is limited to only three types of speech acts in the song *Al-Mahkama* and does not include commissive and declarative acts. Second, this study analyzes only a single song, so the results cannot yet be generalized to all works by Kazim Al-Sاهر. For future research, it is recommended to examine other types of speech acts or analyze different songs by Kazim Al-Sاهر to broaden the understanding of linguistic style and communicative functions in his works. Furthermore, the pragmatic approach can also be combined with other studies, such as stylistics or semiotics, to produce a more comprehensive analysis.

References

- Aditia, R. (2025). Tindak Tutur Ilokusi Pada Lagu “Gala Bunga Matahari” Yang Dipopulerkan Oleh Sal Priadi. *Bahtera Indonesia: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 10(1), 187–195. <https://doi.org/10.31943/bi.v10i1.1002>
- Ahmad, D. U., Riadi, B., & Prayogi, R. (2025). Tindak Tutur Ekspresif Pada Artikel Tahun 2021-2024. *Aksentuasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 4(1).
- Al-Khudari, M. A.-M. I., Mu’ayyidi, A. H., & ‘Amir, K. M. (2022). Kajian analisis terhadap lagu Kazim Al-Saher. *Majallat ‘Ulum wa Funun al-Musiqah*, 48.
- Ardyan, Dr. E., Boari, Y., Akhmad, Yuliyani, L., Hildawati, Suarni, A., Anurogo, D., Ifadah, Ns. E., & Judijanto, L. (2023). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif di Berbagai Bidang* (1st edn). PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
- Artati, A., Wardhana, D. E. C., & Basuki, R. (2020). Tindak Tutur Ilokusi Asertif, Direktif, Ekspresif, Komisif, dan Deklaratif pada Program Gelar Wicara Mata Najwa. *Diksa : Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 6(1), 43–57. <https://doi.org/10.33369/diksa.v6i1.9687>
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How To Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press, Amen House, London.
- Bach, K., & Harnish, R. M. (1982). *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. The MIT Press.
- Damayanti, I. K., Yuniseffendri, Y., & Indarti, T. (2023). Analisis Tindak Tutur Ilokusi dalam Lirik Lagu Tertawaan Hati Karya Awdella: Kajian Pragmatik. *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 4(2), 2707–2712. <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v4i2.655>
- Devianty, R. (2017). Bahasa Sebagai Cermin Kebudayaan. *Jurnal Tarbiyah*, 24(2).
- Hanif, S. (2023). Tindak tutur asertif, direktif, ekspresif dalam lirik lagu Humood Al-Khudher. ‘A Jamiy: *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Arab*, 12(1), 142. <https://doi.org/10.31314/ajamiy.12.1.142-158.2023>
- Hanim, L., Mesra, R., Pratiwi, S. H., Putri, P. O., Marlana, R., Zuriah, N., Widadiyah, Q., Rogahang, S. S. N., Hajar, S., Syukrilla, W. A., Anantadjaya, S. P., Sari, R., Kudus, A., Paling, S., & Safriyani, E. (2023). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan*. PT. Mifandi Mandiri Digital.
- Ibrahim, A. S. (1993). *Kajian Tindak Tutur*. Usaha Nasional.
- Korta, K. & John Perry. (2006). Pragmatics. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Korta, K., & Perry, J. (2005). Three demonstrations and a funeral. *Mind & Language*, 21(2), 166–186. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0268-1064.2006.00310.x>
- Leech, G. N. (1993). *Prinsip-prinsip pragmatik*. (M. D. D. Oka, Trans.). Universitas Indonesia (UI-Press).
- Maulida, M. N. (2023). Tindak Tutur Representative Dalam Quotes Taylor Swift Pada Qutetab.com. *Calakan: Jurnal Sastra, Bahasa, Dan Budaya*, 1(1), 25–32.
- Purba, A. (2011). Tindak tutur dan peristiwa tutur. *Pena: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*, 1(1).
- Rafif, M. E. (2021). *Unsur al-Ma’āniy dalam lirik lagu Al Mahkamah karya Karim Al- Iraqi* [Unpublished undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Indonesia. <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=9999920554206&lokasi=lokal>
- Retnaningsih, W. (2014). *Kajian Pragmatik Dalam Studi Linguistik* (1st edn). CV. Hidayah.
- Searle, J. (1969). *A Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts*.
- Sholikah, R. A., Rosita, F. Y., & Pancarani, B. (2025). Tindak Tutur Ekspresif dan Direktif dalam Film “Kejar Mimpi Gaspol” Karya Hasto Broto. *Narasi: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia, dan Pengajarannya*, 3(2), 211–221. <https://doi.org/10.30762/narasi.v3i2.5687>
- Sumarlam, Pamungkas, S., & Susanti, R. (2023). *Pemahaman dan Kajian Pragmatik*. bukukatta.
- Suriani, P. C. (2022). The Analysis of Illocutionary Types of Speech Acts in Yakin Nikah Web Series Season 1: Indonesian YouTube Short Film. *Linguistics Initiative*, 2(2), 137–147. <https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.2239>

- Zakiyyah, H. (2020). *Makna Cinta Pada Lagu Kazim Al-Safer dalam Album Entah Al-Mishwar: Kajian Semiotika Charles Sanders Pierce*. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim.
- Zulfan, Sinar, T. S., Setia, E., & Mulyadi. (2018). Types of Assertive Illocutions in the Dawah of Dai in the City of Medan: *Proceedings of the International Conference of Science, Technology, Engineering, Environmental and Ramification Researches*, 1352–1359.
<https://doi.org/10.5220/0010074413521359>