



## Assertive Acts in Digital Communication of BTS's Official Instagram Captions

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### Abstract

This study examined assertive actions in digital communication on BTS's Instagram captions, exploring how these linguistic actions shaped communication with fans in the dissemination of information. Assertive illocutionary acts were defined as utterances in which the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition, serving to convey facts, provide information, or describe events. This research used Yule's (1996) and Searle's (1985) theories for a deeper analysis of the function of assertives. This research used descriptive qualitative methods for data presentation. A total of 114 assertive actions were identified and analysed from 80 Instagram posts. The findings indicated that informing is the most dominant assertive function, with 64 instances (56.14%) identified. Descriptions accounted for 48 instances (42.10%), while 'stating' accounted for 2 instances (1.76%). This result highlighted that 'Informing' was the main assertive strategy for efficiently conveying important information and updates to the global ARMY or fans of BTS through the official BTS Instagram platform.

**Keywords:** *illocutionary act, assertive, instagram caption, BTS*

### Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti tindakan asertif dalam komunikasi digital pada keterangan Instagram BTS, mengeksplorasi bagaimana tindakan linguistik ini membentuk komunikasi dengan penggemar dalam penyebaran informasi. Tindakan ilokusi asertif didefinisikan sebagai ungkapan di mana pembicara berkomitmen pada kebenaran sebuah proposisi, yang berfungsi untuk menyampaikan fakta, memberikan informasi, atau menggambarkan peristiwa. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Yule (1996) dan Searle (1985) untuk analisis yang lebih mendalam tentang fungsi asertif. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk penyajian data. Sebanyak 114 tindakan asertif diidentifikasi dan dianalisis dari 80 postingan Instagram. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa fungsi asertif yang paling dominan adalah memberi informasi, dengan 64 contoh (56,14%) yang teridentifikasi. Deskripsi menyumbang 48 contoh (42,10%), sementara tipe 'stating' ditemukan 2 contoh (1,76%). Hasil ini menyoroti bahwa tipe 'informing' adalah strategi asertif utama untuk menyampaikan informasi penting dan pembaruan secara efisien kepada penggemar global atau ARMY melalui platform Instagram resmi BTS.

**Kata kunci:** *illocutionary act, assertive, caption instagrams, BTS*

## **Introduction**

Language makes it simpler for people to engage with one another (Fitriani,2020). Language makes human communication and interaction, and language plays a very important role in survival (Nisa,2021). Human activities cannot be separated from language activities. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of language use and effects of language itself (Suseno,2022). The study of pragmatics examines how language is used in context. According to Yule (1996,48), pragmatics is defined as the situation of communication that affects meaning interpretation. Speech acts are typically divided into three categories: locutionary acts, which focus on how speakers make utterances, illocutionary acts, which focus on the purpose of a speaker's words, and perlocutionary acts, which involve the impact those words have on the listener. Illocutionary acts are divided into five types: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. This study focused on assertive speech acts. Assertive acts are the type of illocutionary acts that establish credibility and convey factual information (Searle, 1985).

Research about Instagram captions and illocutionary acts has explored how language is used to perform various functions, such as giving information, persuading, and commanding, within social media contexts to convey information more effectively in Instagram content. Social media communication is the process of creating, sharing, and exchanging information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (University Canada West, 2025). Understanding illocutionary acts is especially important in digital communication. Efficient communication requires that the listener accurately grasp the message expressed by the speaker (Ernawati,2022). Illocutionary acts are acts that function to perform the intended meaning in utterances (Apriesta,2023). In the current digital era, social media has become one of the most influential platforms for communication, especially for public figures and celebrities. Instagram, for instance, is a widely used social networking platform enabling users to upload photographs, videos, and textual information, including captions, comments, and hashtags (Moreau, 2018). One of the most prominent accounts on Instagram is @bts.bighitofficial, the official Instagram account of BTS or Beyond the Stage, a South Korean boy band group famous worldwide.

The widespread Korean popular culture around the world, often referred to as the “Hallyu Wave”, has significantly influenced. According to Muhammad (2021) culture plays an important role in shaping language norms and communicative practices. This cultural phenomenon has sparked a real "K-pop craze" in Indonesia, where Korean music, fashion, and language have become increasingly popular. BTS is one of the most famous Korean boy bands, influencing Korean culture in Indonesia. K-pop's remarkable global reach, particularly through music, raises questions about the communication strategies groups like BTS use to foster such a massive cultural impact. This research explores the linguistic landscape shaped by these cultural trends by analysing the captions on frequently posted content on BTS's Instagram in an attempt to see the digital communicative construct of the group. Initial findings indicate that the captions on BTS's official Instagram account tend to be direct and assertive in their illocutionary force, this phenomenon contributes to their effective and widespread digital communication.

There are several studies in the literature that show that speech acts have been the subject of many investigations. The first study by Muhammad (2021), entitled *Assertive Illocutionary Acts Study of British and Koreans in a Korean Englishman's YouTube Channel*, was descriptive and qualitative in nature. The study collected data through an observation method by transcribing utterances from video content. Similar to the current research, Muhammad's study also focused on the analysis of assertive illocutionary acts. However, the previous study used YouTube as its data source, whereas the current research utilises Instagram captions, and the two studies used different theories. In Muhammad's investigation, a total of 38 assertive speech acts were found. This study ultimately aimed to provide a thorough explanation and analysis of the pattern of assertive illocutionary behaviours in Korean and British cultures.

The second study, written by Ernayanti et al. (2022) and entitled *Directives Function on the UP Movie*, also used a descriptive qualitative method. However, the current research, which focuses on assertive acts in Instagram captions. This study concentrates specifically on directive speech acts in movies, and the two studies used different theories. This study investigation 16 instances of directives, and its findings demonstrated that the commanding function was the most utilized, with 13 occurrences.

In a similar context study by Mbembo and Satwika (2024) examined the illocutionary acts in the movie *Wednesday Addams*. This study found 25 representative acts in a movie script. These speech acts reveal the beliefs, intentions, and personalities of the characters, while contributing significantly to the development of the narrative and characters in the movie. Thus, this study provides a deeper understanding of the role of language in building stories and characters in modern films through dialogue. This research is similar to the current study in that it focuses on the representative or assertive type. The difference is that the previous research used a movie as a data source.

Furthermore, a similar study by Malik et.al. (2024), entitled *Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Instagram Captions about Covid-19*. The purpose of this study is to investigate the kinds of illocutionary speech actions that are present in the COVID-19-related Instagram captions of the WHO account. The aim of this study is to provide a better knowledge of the use of illocutionary speech actions in health-related communications. This research is similar to current research, both of this study is use Instagram post captions. The difference is, the previous study also emphasises all types of Illocutionary act speech acts, while the current research only focuses on captions that contain assertive speech acts. This study shows how certain language choices may successfully communicate important information, convince audiences, and promote public adherence to health standards by examining the WHO's Instagram captions regarding Covid-19.

Another study by Candra (2024) entitled, *Analysis of Directive Speech Acts Found in 'The Expendable 2' Movie*. The fifth research by Candra examines directive speech acts in a Movie. The study aims to identify the types of directive speech acts by focusing on the main character, Barney Ross. Both of study have an analytical illocutionary act. The difference is that the previous study focuses on directive speech act, meanwhile this study analyses assertive speech acts in Instagram's caption. The

study used theory from Searle (1985) to analyse the data, and the main findings showed that of the 37 identified instances of directive speech acts. The type of commands are the most dominant, totaling 32 times (86.49%). Meanwhile, requests and advice were found 2 times (5.41%), and questions were only found 1 time (2.70%).

This study focuses on assertive illocutionary acts in Instagram captions, on the @bts.bighitofficial account. The captions that accompany these posts play a crucial role in providing context, improving meaning, and stimulating interaction with the audience (Alifia,2025). Concentrating on assertive speech acts, this research aims to provide a more detailed understanding of how language is used to shape public perception, reinforce the group's image, and strengthen engagement with followers. Instagram posts' captions can uncover how strategic linguistic choices contribute to building trust, authenticity, and relatability between BTS and their global fans or ARMY, through digital communication and how the group's digital communication plays a significant role in their widespread popularity.

## **Method**

The data used in this research comes from the Instagram captions of the BTS account official. This account was selected for its frequent use of assertive acts on the caption, and they are an iconic K-pop group that influences Korean music in Indonesia. The captions that contained English captions or fully English captions were selected as data from 80 posts taken from 2023-2025. The data were collected through an observation method that consisted of several steps. First, the researcher manually accessed and scrolled through the Instagram feed of @bts.bighitofficial. Second, screenshots of the selected posts were taken to preserve the original content. Third, all captions were transcribed into a note-taking. The data analysis by identifying types of assertive acts from the theories of Yule (1996) and Searle (1985) and employed a descriptive qualitative research method. The qualitative design allowed the researcher to interpret textual data and uncover communicative functions embedded in the language used (Stake,2010). The data presentation was ensured through formal and informal methods.

## **Result and Discussion**

The specific types of representative speech acts, as observed in this study and exemplified in depth by Searle (1985), encompass informing, describing, asserting, stating, and mentioning. The findings of this research showed that a total of 114 assertive acts were identified. Some captions were found to contain both 'informing' and 'describing' assertive acts within the same post. The data contained in three assertive types: 64 data found as Informing,48 data as describing, and 2 data found as stating. It is explained in the table below:

Table 1. Assertive Types Of Ilocutionary Act Found on BTS Instagrams

Type of Assertive act	Amount	Percentage (100%)
Informing	64	56.14%
Describing	48	42.10%
Stating	2	1.76 %
Asserting	0	0%
Mentioning	0	0%
Total	114	100%

The data presented above, "informing" accounts for 64 instances (56.14%), indicating that "informing" is the most prevalent form of assertive expression observed in the official Instagram captions of BTS, of the total 114 assertive acts identified. The second most frequently used assertive act type is "describing," with 48 instances or about 42.10% of the total. Types such as "stating" are present only in a limited manner, two accounted for 1.76% of the total collective. Analysis of the Instagram captions associated with BTS reveals a preponderance of assertive acts, particularly those classified as "informing" and "describing." This observation suggests a pronounced tendency to provide information and details for promotion. That can engage BTS branding. Informing type is the most common type of assertive act that BTS Instagrams use to keep engaging with their fans. A detailed explanation of these types is provided below :

### 1. Informing

Informing is an assertive speech act where the speaker aims to provide new information or facts to the listener, committing to the truth of the proposition conveyed (Searle,1985). This function's primary goal is to increase the listener's knowledge. This observation is presented in data 1 and data 2.

Data 1

SUGA | Agust D TOUR 'D-DAY' THE FINAL▶ ONLINE LIVE STREAMING#SUGA #AgustD #슈가 #SUGA\_AgustD TOUR #D\_DAY TOUR #DDAYTHE FINAL



Image 1: Suga's concert instructions

Data 1 is an image posted by the official BTS Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial on August 1, 2023. It features an infographic titled 'VIEWING INSTRUCTIONS,' which contains six steps for accessing the online live streaming of Suga BTS's concert. This post is part of the extensive promotional series for SUGA's debut solo album, 'D-DAY,' which was released in April 2023. From April to May, the

BTS Instagram account actively shared various promotions related to Suga's album 'D-DAY,' including the release of concept photos, music videos, and a documentary video. The 'Agust D TOUR 'D-DAY' itself commenced after the album's release, spanning several cities in North America and Asia. In the K-pop industry, major concert tours frequently conclude with a spectacular final concert in one country, which is usually also broadcast online. The clarity of the infographic in this post is supported by the emphasis in the caption, which provides factual information.

According to data 1, an official caption from BTS's account, effectively utilises this function to convey critical details about Suga's concert. That showed on the phrases "*SUGA|Agust D TOUR 'D DAY' THE FINAL*". The use of uppercase lettering on "*THE FINAL*" is to emphasise the importance of information related to the post. "*ONLINE LIVESTREAMING*" is a caption that provides specific, verifiable facts directly to the fans regarding the event's format. This explicitly details crucial information for fans unable to attend the offline concert and clearly differentiates these guidelines from offline concert ticket purchases and highlighting its exclusive focus on streaming access. It is informing the ARMY or fans of BTS, for the specific geographic event that is contained in the image of Data 1 Instagram's post.

#### Data 2

지민 (Jimin) 'MUSE' 2024.07.19. 1PM (KST) | 0AM (ET)  
[#지민](#) [#Jimin](#) [#Jimin\\_MUSE](#)



Image 2: Cover album Muse Jimin's

The second data, posted by the official BTS Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial on June 22, 2024, features an image displaying 'MUSE', serving as the official announcement following a series of teasers. On the same day, the BTS Instagram account had already posted two concept photos and a concept video clip, both hinting at 'MUSE' but without specific release dates or times. Thus, Data 2, which is the front cover of Jimin's solo album titled 'MUSE', functions as the key information revealed after the anticipation-building from the previous post. This reflects a common promotional strategy in the K-pop industry, where conceptual and visual teasers precede the full release announcement of a music project. The upload displays crucial information about Jimin's solo music project, effectively representing an assertive speech act with the function of informing. By Searle's (1985) speech act theory, the main function of "informing" is to convey new knowledge or facts to the audience, where the speaker is committed to the truth of the information.

This caption explicitly presents several important and new facts to the fans, including the name of Jimin's new album, 'MUSE', with a mention of the specific

release date '2024.07.19', as well as details of the release time '1 PM (KST) | 0 AM (ET)'. The explanation of KST (Korean Standard Time) and ET (Eastern Time, which is used in most of the east coast of United States and Canada). This caption post, being an official source, is fully committed to the accuracy of all details provided. and the specific time zones emphasize the relevance of this information for global fans. This detailed information helps fans find out Jimin's music on music platforms based on their time zone. In addition, the use of hashtags such as #지민, #Jimin, and #Jimin\_MUSE not only serves to reinforce factual information regarding the MUSE album theme and artist identity. It also strategically increases the visibility of the content to easier for fans to find out details of Jimin's new album release.

## 2.Describing

According to Searle's (1985) theory, describing is an assertive speech act where the speaker aims to provide a depiction, characteristic, or detail about an object, event, or state of affairs, committing to the truth of the representation. This function's primary goal is to increase the listener's knowledge. This observation is presented in data 3 and data 4 .

### Data 3

RM 'come back to me' Poster. Pre-release track#comebacktome  
May10,1PM(KST)|0AM(ET)

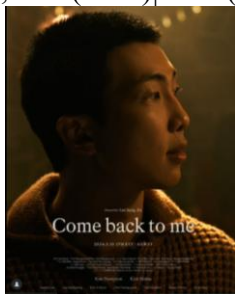


Image 3: Poster of RM's pre-release album

The data 3, posted by the official BTS Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial on May 6, 2024, displays a music single poster by the leader of BTS, RM. This poster contains detailed information regarding the single's title, director, and the cast of the music video. This post serves as the initial step in a series of promotions for RM's upcoming second solo album. Before this poster was uploaded, on the same day, the BTS Instagram account released four concept photos of RM, which only included the title 'come back to me' as their caption. This poster functions as a more in-depth official announcement and description of the 'Come Back to Me' single. The description presented on this poster, includes the photo, which is a still from the music video. It is a common in K-pop music promotion to release music single posters that present visualisations of key scenes from the music video, serving as a concise informational medium that gives fans an initial description. This function serves to paint a comprehensive picture for their fans, enabling them to visualise or understand the subject more clearly based on the provided attributes.

The caption is intended for the followers of BTS's official Instagram to form a deep understanding of the content. The caption phrase, 'RM 'come back to me' Poster' directly serves this descriptive purpose. The word "Poster" is the main descriptive element, instantly classifying what image is being posted. This description also provides the audience with important immediate context for the visual, informing them exactly what type of media they are viewing. Additionally, RM's inclusion of 'come back to me' in this descriptive phrase defines what the title of the single is promoting, connecting the nuances of the song title and visual directly to a new piece of music by RM. The phrase 'Pre-release track #comebacktome May 10, 1 PM (KST) | 0 AM (ET),' continues this descriptive function by detailing the attributes of the release schedule. This caption provides a description of the song. This information describes the initial track of RM's album, with the pre-release time clearly conveyed for easier understanding by ARMY or BTS fans.

#### Data 4

#StandingNextToYou Performance Video Behind the Scenes 🎬



Image 4: Jung Kook's dance video

The data 4, posted by the official BTS Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial on December 15, 2023, is a 1-minute video reel of the recording process, the dance performance 'Standing Next to You' by Jung Kook. The image showed part of Jung Kook with his back dancer. On the same date YouTube channel of BTS's agency, Big Hit channel, published a dance performance video of Jung Kook 'Standing Next To You'. This post on Instagram emerged as supplementary content to Jungkook's 'Standing Next to You' performance video. This Instagram reel strategically showcases the filming preparations and video takes on location, offering an exclusive behind-the-scenes view. This post serves as a further step in promoting Jungkook's solo album titled 'GOLDEN,' aiming to strengthen fan engagement by demonstrating the hard work and dedication behind the video's production. The selection of the Instagram Reels format, is a short and dynamic video medium for quick and easy consumption by social media audiences. The video reel begins with Jungkook walking to the shooting location. This video also does not contain the title of the song "Standing Next To You" or a visual description. In this context, such visual ambiguity could arise for fans. The caption on this post plays a crucial role in communicating the nature and descriptive details of the video content.



In this case, the main caption “Performance Video Behind the Scenes” serves to directly describe the type of video content uploaded. The use of the phrase “behind the scenes” specifically informs the audience that the video presented is not the final content, such as Jung Kook's official music video, but rather a recording of the behind-the-scenes process of making a performance video. The emphasis on the song title “Standing Next To You” further identifies the main subject of the content to inform the audience of a summary of the process of making the music video. This caption effectively provides accurate information regarding the nature of the uploaded video, so fans of BTS can have a clear understanding and proper expectations of the content.

### 3. Stating

According to Searle (1985) 'stating' is a category of assertive speech acts where speakers use language to describe how the world is or to represent factual conditions, committing to the truth of their representation. This type is presented in data 5.

#### Data 5

[@bts.bighitofficial](#)'s [@agustd](#) invites Jimmy to join him for his pre-show tradition: taking a shot of whiskey! [#SUGAonFallon](#) [#SUGA](#)



Image 5: Suga's interview with Jimmy Fallon

The data 5 is a collaborative post by the official BTS Instagram account [@bts.bighitofficial](#) and [@fallontonight](#), uploaded on May 2, 2023. This post is a video reel containing a brief excerpt of Suga's interview on Fallon Tonight, an American talk show hosted by Jimmy Fallon. In this image, Suga is shown listening to Jimmy's question about what mandatory activities Suga does before performing is also related to the promotion of the album 'D-Day'. This post collaboration aims to broaden the promotional reach of 'D-Day' to a global audience and American talk show viewers, while also introducing Suga's personality more personally. Although it is only a brief clip from a longer interview, this Instagram reel strategically highlights a key, interesting, and perhaps surprising moment, such as the revelation of Suga's pre-show tradition. Thus, this reel briefly depicts Suga's in-depth interview interaction on Fallon Tonight and functions as a teaser to attract further attention. In this context, the caption accompanying the video becomes crucial in conveying the core information or significant moment highlighted from the interview.

In this context, the Instagram caption functions as a factual statement, directly informing the audience about a specific event or claim presented within the accompanying video reel. The caption ‘@agustd invites Jimmy to join him for his pre-show tradition: taking a shot of whiskey!’ The inclusion of '@agustd' or Suga's official

Instagram account, within this caption, significantly lends credibility to the statement in the caption. Its primary purpose is to verify the authenticity of the claim regarding Suga's 'taking a shot of whiskey!' Indeed, in the accompanying video interview, Suga verbally asserts that his tradition before a gig is to drink whiskey with the BTS members. This verbal assertion is presented as a verifiable fact, solidifying the truthfulness of his pre-show habit. Therefore, through this explicit claim, the caption precisely fulfils its function as a 'stating' assertive speech act, providing a clear and verifiable factual account of Suga's pre-show tradition to the audience.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the assertive speech acts used in BTS' official Instagram captions, revealing their significant contribution to digital communication aimed at the ARMY fandom. The findings show that informing is the most dominant assertive speech act, and all of the captions are direct assertive. Direct assertive is where the illocutionary force is directly and explicitly conveyed through the literal meaning of the utterance, without relying on indirect implication. The informative type accounts for 56.14% of the observed instances. It is mainly used to convey important and factual information such as album releases and concert details for solo members, which directly facilitates the efficient dissemination of important information to a global audience. Following this, describing constitutes a substantial portion (42.10%) of the assertive acts. These descriptions emphasize visual and thematic information about Instagram content, including pre-release track posters or behind-the-scenes videos. This function effectively manages audience expectations by providing clear insights into the nature of the uploaded media. Furthermore, a smaller but distinct category of stating acts (1.76%) was identified. The assertive speech acts observed in BTS's Instagram captions are strategically employed to efficiently deliver digital information to ensure that fans receive the latest and most important information about event schedules, BTS members' music, and member activities. This direct and unambiguous delivery of factual information is crucial for official channels that aim to keep their vast global fanbase informed and engaged. Despite the insight, this study has several limitations that could be addressed in future research. The analysis was taken from a limited post on the official BTS Instagram account. Based on these limitations, future studies are encouraged to expand on the current findings. Researchers could explore assertive speech acts across a broader range of K-pop groups to examine whether the dominance of the informing function is a universal strategy. Such studies would contribute significantly to the fields of linguistics, digital communication, and fan studies.

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