

HATE SPEECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA: AN INTEGRATED ANALYSIS OF FORENSIC LINGUISTICS AND INDONESIAN CRIMINAL LAW

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
Diterima: 12 Juli 2026 Direvisi: 13 Juli 2026 Disetujui: 20 Juli 2026 Tersedia Daring: 21 Juli 2026 Kata Kunci: <i>Ujaran Kebencian; Bahasa; Hukum</i>	Media sosial telah menjadi kebutuhan dasar interaksi sosial, tetapi pengguna sering tidak menyadari bahwa tulisannya dapat menjadi ujaran kebencian, sehingga kajian ini penting untuk memahami niat di balik ujaran. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian hukum normatif dengan pendekatan perundang-undangan dan konseptual yang dipadukan dengan pendekatan linguistik forensik, menggunakan bahan hukum primer berupa KUHP, UU ITE, UU Nomor 40 Tahun 2008 tentang Penghapusan Diskriminasi Ras dan Etnis, serta Surat Edaran Kapolri Nomor SE/6/X/2015. Ujaran kebencian merupakan persoalan multidisipliner yang mencakup aspek hukum, bahasa, dan komunikasi. Dari perspektif hukum, ujaran kebencian dapat dipidana apabila memenuhi unsur dalam peraturan perundang-undangan, sedangkan dari perspektif linguistik forensik analisis difokuskan pada makna, konteks, dan tujuan ujaran menggunakan Prinsip Kerja Sama Grice dan Prinsip Kesantunan Leech sebagai kerangka pragmatik. Analisis terhadap dua putusan pengadilan menunjukkan bahwa penentuan ujaran kebencian tidak dapat hanya didasarkan pada makna leksikal, melainkan harus mempertimbangkan konteks, implikatur, dan tujuan penutur, sehingga integrasi analisis pragmatik dan hukum menghasilkan penilaian yang lebih objektif dan proporsional demi penegakan hukum yang adil.

	ABSTRACT
Keywords: <i>Hate Speech; Language; Law</i>	Social media has become a basic need for social interaction, yet users often fail to realize that what they write can constitute hate speech, making it important to understand the intent behind an utterance. This is a normative legal study using a statute and conceptual approach combined with a forensic linguistic approach, drawing on primary legal materials including the Criminal Code, the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions, Law Number 40 of 2008 on the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, and Police Chief Circular Letter Number SE/6/X/2015. Hate speech is a multidisciplinary issue spanning legal, linguistic, and communicative aspects. Legally, it can be criminally punished if it fulfills the elements set out in statutory regulations; linguistically, analysis focuses on meaning, context, and purpose using Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle as the pragmatic framework. Analysis of two court decisions shows that classifying an utterance as hate speech cannot rely on lexical meaning alone but must account for context, implicature, and speaker intent, so that integrating pragmatic and legal analysis produces a more objective, proportional basis for law enforcement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hate speech is a form of communication that attacks, demeans, or incites hatred toward individuals or groups based on certain characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or nationality. In the context of Indonesian law, hate speech encompasses acts in the form of insult, defamation, blasphemy, provocation, discrimination, and incitement that have the potential to disturb public order and violate the rights of others.

Regulation concerning hate speech in Indonesia is reflected in Police Chief Circular Letter Number SE/6/X/2015 and Law Number 40 of 2008 on the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination. Both instruments affirm that utterances containing insult, hostility, discrimination, or incitement against individuals or groups based on a certain identity can be categorized as hate speech.

Hate speech can appear in various forms, such as insult, blasphemy, defamation, provocation, discrimination, and the spreading of information that attacks individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, or other protected characteristics (Tana & Nita, 2024). In law enforcement practice, the assessment of these forms is based not only on the lexical meaning of an utterance, but also takes into account the context of its delivery.

Defamation is one form of hate speech regulated in Indonesian criminal law (Guntik & Yustiawan, 2022). Article 310 of the Criminal Code provides that any person who intentionally attacks the honor or good name of another person through an accusation conveyed to the public can be subject to criminal sanctions. Therefore, proving the elements of this criminal act requires interpretation of both the content and the context of the utterance conveyed (Erlinawati, 2016).

In addition to defamation, hate speech can also take the form of acts of insult, provocation, incitement, or the spreading of false information that has the potential to cause hatred or harm to individuals or groups. Therefore, the identification of hate speech requires analysis not only of the form of language used, but also of the communicative purpose and the impact it produces.

In forensic linguistic studies, hate speech can be realized through various units of language, ranging from words, phrases, and clauses, to sentences. The interpretation of these units of language cannot be carried out based on lexical meaning alone, but must also take into account contextual meaning, the speaker's purpose, and the communicative situation, because these factors determine whether an utterance fulfills the legal elements of hate speech.

Research on hate speech in Indonesia has developed from various perspectives. Some research focuses on forensic linguistic analysis of utterances on social media by identifying forms of speech, speech acts, and violations of the principle of politeness (Kusno et al., 2022; Putra et al., 2024; Rahmayantis et al., 2025). Other research more often discusses hate speech in the context of criminal law and the application of statutory provisions, particularly the Criminal Code and the Law on Electronic Information and

Transactions (UU ITE), without deeply integrating linguistic analysis as a basis for interpreting the elements of the offense (Azhar & Soponyono, 2020; Kamalludin & Arief, 2019; Pratama, 2023).

Nevertheless, there is still a research gap, because these studies generally separate linguistic analysis from legal analysis. In fact, in law enforcement practice, proving alleged hate speech requires not only the fulfillment of the elements of a criminal act, but also interpretation of meaning, context, the speaker's purpose, implicature, and the impact of the utterance through a forensic linguistic approach (Ria & Setiawan, 2023; Syahid et al., 2021). Thus, there has not been much research that comprehensively connects pragmatic theory, particularly Grice's cooperative principle and Leech's politeness principle, with the legal construction of hate speech in the Indonesian criminal law system.

Based on this gap, this research aims to analyze hate speech in an integrated manner from a linguistic and legal perspective. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of forensic linguistic analysis, Grice's pragmatic theory, and Leech's politeness theory in explaining the fulfillment of the legal elements of hate speech based on the provisions of Indonesian criminal law. This integrative approach is expected not only to enrich the development of forensic linguistic studies, but also to provide a more comprehensive analytical framework for law enforcement officers in assessing the boundary between freedom of expression and speech that can be qualified as a criminal act.

2. METHOD

This research is a normative legal study using a conceptual approach and a statute approach combined with a forensic linguistic approach. The research aims to analyze the concept of hate speech from a linguistic and legal perspective, as well as to examine the relationship between the linguistic meaning of an utterance and the elements of the criminal act of hate speech as regulated in statutory regulations in Indonesia. Normative legal research was chosen because this research focuses on the analysis of legal norms governing hate speech and their interpretation through a forensic linguistic perspective without involving empirical data. The statute approach is used to identify and analyze the legal provisions governing hate speech, while the conceptual approach is used to examine the concept of hate speech based on legal doctrine and linguistic theory. The forensic linguistic approach is used to analyze the meaning of the utterance, context, implicature, and communicative purpose as a basis for assessing the fulfillment of the elements of the criminal act of hate speech.

The legal materials used consist of primary legal materials in the form of the Criminal Code, Law Number 1 of 2024 on the Second Amendment to the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions, Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, Law Number 40 of 2008 on the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, and Police Chief Circular Letter Number SE/06/X/2015 on the Handling of Hate Speech. Secondary legal materials include books, scientific articles, and literature on forensic linguistics, pragmatics, hate speech, as well as the theory of Grice's cooperative principle

and Leech's politeness principle (Grice, 1989). The selection of primary legal materials is based on their relevance as regulations that directly govern the criminal act of hate speech in Indonesia. Meanwhile, secondary legal materials were selected based on their relevance to forensic linguistic theory, pragmatics, legal interpretation, and scientific studies on hate speech so as to support a comprehensive analysis.

The collection of legal materials was carried out through a literature study by examining statutory regulations, scientific literature, and documents relevant to the object of research. The process of collecting legal materials was carried out through several stages, namely identifying relevant statutory regulations and scientific literature, selecting legal materials based on relevance to the research objective, classifying primary and secondary legal materials according to the focus of the study, and documenting all legal materials that had been selected as the basis for analysis.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed qualitatively using descriptive-analytical techniques through legal interpretation and pragmatic analysis of forms of hate speech. Linguistic analysis is focused on aspects of meaning, context, implicature, word choice, and the purpose of an utterance based on Grice's and Leech's theories, while legal analysis is directed at assessing the conformity of an utterance with the elements of a criminal act as regulated in statutory provisions. This approach was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of hate speech viewed from a linguistic and legal perspective. The analysis was carried out in stages by identifying the legal elements of hate speech based on the provisions of statutory regulations, examining the concept of hate speech through legal doctrine and linguistic theory, and then analyzing the meaning, context, implicature, word choice, and purpose of the utterance using the theory of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle. The results of the linguistic analysis were then compared with the elements of the criminal act in statutory regulations to assess whether an utterance fulfills the qualification as hate speech under Indonesian criminal law.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic and Legal Analysis of Decision Number 370/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Jkt.Sel (The Ahmad Dhani Case)

Decision of the South Jakarta District Court Number 370/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Jkt.Sel is one of the hate speech cases processed under the provisions of the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE). In this case, Ahmad Dhani was charged with violating Article 45A paragraph (2) in conjunction with Article 28 paragraph (2) of Law Number 19 of 2016 on the Amendment to Law Number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions, in conjunction with Article 55 paragraph (1) point 1 of the Criminal Code. The charge was based on a post on the social media platform Twitter that was alleged to be intended to create a feeling of hatred or hostility toward a certain section of the population. The evidence presented at trial included screenshots of the Twitter post, a mobile phone, and the social media account used to spread the information. Based on the results of the examination, the panel of judges declared the

defendant legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing the criminal act as charged.

The utterance that became the object of examination in this case is:

“Whoever supports the Blasphemer of Religion is a Bastard who deserves to be spat in the face.”

The utterance was published through the defendant’s Twitter account at a time when the political and social situation in Indonesia was colored by controversy over an alleged act of religious blasphemy involving the Governor of DKI Jakarta at that time. Therefore, the meaning of the utterance cannot be understood based solely on the lexical meaning of each word, but must be analyzed by taking into account the communicative context, the speaker’s purpose, the target of the utterance, and the potential social impact. This approach is in line with forensic linguistic studies that place context as an important element in determining the legal meaning of an utterance (Kusno et al., 2022).

Viewed from Grice’s Cooperative Principle, the utterance shows a violation of several maxims. First, the utterance violates the maxim of quality because it conveys a generalization that all supporters of a certain figure are “bastards” without being based on verifiable facts. This generalization has the potential to form a negative perception of a certain group without an objective basis (Lindblom, 2001). Second, the utterance also violates the maxim of relation because a discussion that was originally related to a legal matter shifts into an attack on the group of a person’s supporters. Thus, the communication is no longer aimed at conveying relevant information, but instead directs the reader toward a hostile attitude against a certain group.

In addition, based on Leech’s Politeness Principle, the utterance is contrary to the Approbation Maxim because it uses the word “bastard” as a form of insult that directly demeans the dignity of the group targeted by the utterance (Leech, 2014). The utterance also violates the Sympathy Maxim because it encourages the emergence of feelings of hostility and hatred, rather than empathy or respect toward other parties. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the choice of demeaning diction and the call to commit an offensive act strengthen the indication that the utterance has the power to incite hatred toward a certain group.

From a legal perspective, the panel of judges assessed that the elements of Article 28 paragraph (2) of the UU ITE had been fulfilled because the defendant intentionally spread information through electronic media aimed at creating a feeling of hatred or hostility toward a certain section of the population. The element of the spreading of information was fulfilled through the use of the social media platform Twitter, which allows the information to be accessed by the wider public. Meanwhile, the use of insulting terms directed at the group of a person’s supporters in the context of a religious issue was considered to have exceeded the limits of freedom of opinion and to have fulfilled the characteristics of hate speech. In addition to the application of Article 28 paragraph (2) in conjunction with Article 45A paragraph (2) of the UU ITE, the involvement of other parties in the process of spreading the information also became the basis for the application of Article 55 paragraph (1) point 1 of the Criminal Code concerning

complicity. In a broader perspective, the substance of this case is also in line with the purpose of Law Number 40 of 2008 on the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, namely to prevent the spreading of expressions that could strengthen discrimination or hostility against a section of the population based on a certain identity.

The findings in this case show that determining an utterance as hate speech cannot be done sufficiently through a textual interpretation of the words or sentences used. The analysis must take into account the communicative context, the speaker's purpose, implicature, and the social impact produced, so that the legal meaning of an utterance can be understood as a whole. This finding is in line with Kusno et al. (2022), who affirm that forensic linguistics provides a more objective framework of analysis in assessing the meaning of an utterance as evidence in a criminal case. In addition, Putra et al. (2024) state that pragmatic analysis plays an important role in distinguishing between expression that still falls within the corridor of freedom of opinion and utterances that have fulfilled the elements of a criminal act. Rahmayantis et al. (2025) also affirm that communicative context is a factor that cannot be separated in determining whether an utterance fulfills the legal elements of hate speech. Thus, Decision Number 370/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Jkt.Sel shows that the integration of pragmatic analysis and legal analysis provides a more comprehensive basis for assessing the existence of hate speech compared to using a normative approach alone.

Linguistic and Legal Analysis of Decision Number 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN Jkt.Utr (The Basuki Tjahaja Purnama/Ahok Case)

The case in Decision of the North Jakarta District Court Number 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN Jkt.Utr originated from a speech by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) on 27 September 2016 at the Fish Auction Site (TPI) on Pulau Pramuka, Kepulauan Seribu, in the context of a working visit as Governor of DKI Jakarta. The speech subsequently became the object of reports by a number of community organizations that considered it to contain an element of religious blasphemy. After going through the trial process, the Panel of Judges of the North Jakarta District Court declared the defendant legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing the criminal act as regulated in Article 156a letter a of the Criminal Code and sentenced him to two years of imprisonment. This decision became one of the cases that received the widest public attention because it related to freedom of expression, the interpretation of an utterance, and the relationship between language and criminal law.

The utterance that became the object of examination in this case is:

"...So do not believe people, because it could be that in your heart of hearts you cannot vote for me. Right? You are being deceived by using Surah Al-Maidah 51 and so on. That is your right. So if you feel you cannot vote for me because you are afraid of going to hell, being fooled like that, that is fine..."

The utterance was delivered in a forum for the socialization of a government program to the community of the Kepulauan Seribu ahead of the 2017 DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Election. At that time, the social and political conditions in Indonesia were in a situation sensitive to issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA). After the recording of the speech circulated widely on social media, various

interpretations of the meaning of the utterance emerged, giving rise to public debate over whether the statement was directed at parties who used verses of the Qur'an for political interests, or was instead directed at the content of the Qur'an itself. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the context in which the utterance was delivered becomes an important element in determining meaning, because an utterance cannot be separated from the communicative situation, the speaker's purpose, and the interpretation that develops in society (Kusno et al., 2022).

Viewed from Grice's Cooperative Principle, the utterance shows the presence of an implicature that opens up room for various interpretations. The use of the phrase "*being deceived by using Surah Al-Maidah 51*" contains a meaning that is not entirely explicit, so that the recipient of the message can give different interpretations according to their social context, knowledge, and beliefs. From a pragmatic perspective, the utterance is primarily related to the maxim of manner, because the choice of words and sentence structure create ambiguity regarding the actual target of the utterance, whether it is directed at parties who use verses of the Qur'an as a political tool, or at the verses of the Qur'an themselves (Lindblom, 2001). This ambiguity became one of the aspects considered in the evidentiary process at trial.

Based on Leech's Politeness Principle, the use of the phrases "*being deceived*" and "*being fooled*" in relation to a religious issue is considered to have the potential to violate the Approbation Maxim, because it can be perceived as a form of expression that demeans a certain party. In addition, in the context of a plural society, the choice of diction related to religious symbols or teachings requires a high degree of care so as not to give rise to misunderstanding or social conflict (Leech, 1983; Leech, 2014). Therefore, linguistic analysis does not focus solely on the lexical meaning of words, but also on the relationship between the utterance, context, and implicature that arises in public communication.

From a legal perspective, the panel of judges assessed that the utterance fulfilled the elements of the criminal act regulated in Article 156a letter a of the Criminal Code, namely an act that is essentially of a hostile, abusive, or blasphemous nature toward a religion adhered to in Indonesia. In its considerations, the judges assessed the use of the phrase "*being deceived by using Surah Al-Maidah 51*" in connection with the overall context of the speech, so that it was considered to contain content demeaning the teachings of the Islamic religion. This assessment was based on the entirety of the evidence, including expert testimony, witness testimony, and the context in which the utterance was delivered. This case shows that the assessment of an utterance in criminal law does not rest solely on textual meaning, but also takes into account the communicative context and the impact produced in society.

The findings in this case show that forensic linguistic analysis plays an important role in helping to understand the relationship between the form of language, communicative context, and its legal consequences. The interpretation of an utterance cannot be carried out sufficiently through lexical meaning, but must take into account implicature, communicative purpose, and public perception of the utterance. This finding is in line with Kusno et al. (2022), who state that forensic linguistics provides a more

comprehensive framework of analysis in interpreting language as evidence. In addition, Putra et al. (2024) affirm that pragmatic analysis plays an important role in distinguishing literal meaning from the meaning understood by the public in a certain context. Rahmayantis et al. (2025) also show that social and cultural context is a determining factor in identifying whether an utterance fulfills the elements of a criminal act under applicable law.

Comparative Analysis of Hate Speech from a Forensic Linguistic and Indonesian Criminal Law Perspective

The analysis of Decision Number 370/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Jkt.Sel and Decision Number 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN Jkt.Utr shows that the assessment of an utterance in criminal law is based not only on lexical meaning, but also takes into account communicative context, the speaker's purpose, implicature, and the social impact produced. Although the two cases have different legal bases, both show that forensic linguistic analysis makes an important contribution to explaining the relationship between the form of language and the fulfillment of the elements of a criminal act.

In the Ahmad Dhani case, the utterance was assessed as containing an expression that explicitly leads to insult and a call that has the potential to incite hatred toward a certain group through the use of diction such as *"bastard"* and *"deserves to be spat in the face."* In contrast, in the Basuki Tjahaja Purnama case, the main issue did not lie in the use of offensive words, but in the emergence of various interpretations of the phrase *"being deceived by using Surah Al-Maidah 51,"* which then became the object of legal assessment. This difference shows that an utterance can give rise to legal consequences either because of the use of language that is explicitly attacking, or because of pragmatic ambiguity that gives rise to various interpretations.

From a pragmatic perspective, the two cases show different characteristics of violation. In the Ahmad Dhani case, the violation is more dominantly seen in Grice's maxim of quality and maxim of relation, as well as Leech's Approbation Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. In contrast, in the Ahok case, the analysis focuses more on the maxim of manner, because of the structure of the utterance that opens up room for different interpretations. This finding shows that pragmatic theory is useful not only for identifying utterances that are direct in nature, but also for explaining how implicature and context influence the interpretation of an utterance in the legal evidentiary process.

Table 1. Comparison of Linguistic and Legal Analysis in Two Decisions

Aspect of Analysis	Decision No. 370/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Jkt.Sel (Ahmad Dhani)	Decision No. 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN Jkt.Utr (Ahok)
Object of the utterance	Twitter post	Speech on the Kepulauan Seribu
Utterance at issue	"Whoever supports the Blasphemer of Religion is a Bastard who deserves to be spat in the face."	"...So do not believe people, because it could be that in your heart of hearts you cannot vote for me. Right? You are being deceived by using Surah Al-Maidah 51 and so on. That is your right. So if you feel you cannot vote for me because you are afraid of going to hell, being fooled like that, that is fine..."
Context	Controversy over religious blasphemy and social media	Working visit ahead of the DKI Jakarta regional election
Grice's analysis	Violation of the maxim of quality and relation	Violation of the maxim of manner (ambiguity of the utterance)
Leech's analysis	Violation of the Approbation Maxim and Sympathy Maxim	Violation of the Approbation Maxim in the context of public communication
Focus of linguistic analysis	Offensive diction, implicature, and purpose of the utterance	Ambiguity of meaning, context, and implicature
Legal basis	Article 28 paragraph (2) in conjunction with Article 45A paragraph (2) of the UU ITE and Article 55 paragraph (1) point 1 of the Criminal Code	Article 156a letter a of the Criminal Code
Judges' consideration	The utterance was assessed as inciting hatred toward a certain group	The utterance was assessed as fulfilling the element of religious blasphemy based on context and the entirety of the evidence

The results of the comparison of the two decisions show that the relationship between language and law in hate speech cases is complementary in nature. Language becomes the main instrument in conveying ideas, opinions, and public expression, while law functions to set limits on the use of language that has the potential to give rise to harmful social impacts, such as insult, provocation, discrimination, or hostility toward a certain group. Thus, the assessment of hate speech cannot be carried out solely through a textual approach to the words or sentences used, but must take into account the communicative context, the meaning contained, the speaker's purpose, and the social consequences of the utterance.

In this context, forensic linguistics plays an important role as a scientific approach that bridges language analysis and the legal process. Forensic linguistics enables researchers and law enforcement officers to identify the meaning, implicature, pragmatic context, and intent contained in an utterance. This is relevant because perpetrators of hate speech often use certain linguistic strategies, such as metaphor, sarcasm, irony, or other forms of figurative language, to disguise the negative intent they wish to convey. Through linguistic analysis, the hidden meaning in an utterance can be unpacked,

thereby helping to determine whether a statement fulfills the elements of insult, provocation, or the spreading of hatred as regulated in law.

The findings of this research reinforce the view of Kusno et al. (2022) that forensic linguistics is an important instrument in the evidentiary process of legal cases that make language a form of evidence. In line with this, Putra et al. (2024) explain that a pragmatic approach is able to reveal the relationship between the form of language, communicative intent, and the legal consequences of an utterance. Hadiwijaya and Yahmun, (2025), Halid (2022), Hamidi (2024), as well as Sari et al. (2025) also affirm that communicative context is the main factor in distinguishing between expression that still falls within the space of freedom of opinion and utterances that have fulfilled the elements of a criminal act.

In the Indonesian legal system, the boundary between freedom of expression and unlawful utterances is regulated through several legal instruments, such as the Criminal Code, particularly the provisions concerning insult toward a certain group and SARA-based hostility; the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE), particularly Article 28 paragraph (2) concerning the spreading of information that creates a feeling of hatred or hostility based on SARA; and Law Number 40 of 2008 on the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination. These provisions show that the use of language in the public sphere, particularly digital media, carries legal consequences if it has exceeded the limits of freedom of expression and caused social harm or discrimination against a certain group (Yuniarto et al., 2025).

Based on the results of the analysis of the Ahmad Dhani and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama cases, it was found that linguistic aspects make an important contribution in determining the legal construction of an utterance. In the Ahmad Dhani case, the use of attacking diction containing an element of hostility became the basis for assessing the potential for insult and provocation toward a certain group. Meanwhile, in the Basuki Tjahaja Purnama case, the difference in interpretation of the utterance related to a religious issue shows that the meaning of a statement cannot be separated from its social context, communicative situation, and public perception of the utterance.

Both cases show that hate speech has an impact that extends beyond the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim on an individual level. The spreading of an utterance through digital media can broaden the reach of a message, strengthen social prejudice, increase societal polarization, and has the potential to trigger identity-based conflict. Therefore, in deciding hate speech cases, judges do not consider only the textual aspect of a statement, but also pay attention to the social context, the speaker's purpose, the target of the utterance, the impact produced, and the possibility of the emergence of discrimination or violence.

Thus, the results of this research show that the analysis of hate speech requires the integration of a linguistic approach and a legal approach. Forensic linguistic analysis functions to explain how an utterance is formed, given meaning, and understood within a communicative context, while legal analysis determines whether the utterance fulfills the elements of a criminal act based on statutory regulations. The integration of these two approaches provides a more comprehensive framework of analysis in handling hate

speech cases in the digital space, so that law enforcement can be carried out objectively and proportionally while maintaining a balance between legal protection and the right to freedom of expression.

Analysis from a Legal Perspective

In the context of Indonesian law, hate speech on social media can have legal consequences if it fulfills certain elements of a criminal act, such as the spreading of information that creates hatred based on SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, intergroup relations), insult or defamation under certain conditions, and incitement that can trigger discrimination, hostility, or violence. Pragmatic analysis using Grice's and Leech's theories can be used to explain how the meaning of an utterance is constructed, whether the utterance deviates from the principles of good communication, and how a violation of politeness occurs. However, the determination of whether a post constitutes a criminal act still depends on the fulfillment of the elements in statutory regulations and the assessment of evidence by law enforcement officers.

The results of the analysis show that not all rudely worded utterances can be directly categorized as hate speech from a legal perspective. An utterance can only be processed as a criminal act if it fulfills the elements of the offense set out in the Criminal Code or the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions, including the element of intent, a protected object, and the potential to cause discrimination, hostility, or violence. Therefore, linguistic analysis and legal analysis must be used together so that the assessment of an utterance is more objective.

In Indonesia, hate speech is regulated in several regulations, including the Criminal Code, which addresses insult, slander, defamation, and incitement. In a legal sense, hate speech is speech, behavior, writing, or a performance that is prohibited because it can trigger acts of violence and prejudicial attitudes, whether from the perpetrator, the statement itself, or the victim of such an act. A website that uses or applies hate speech is called a hate site, and most of these sites use internet forums and news to reinforce a certain point of view (Salsabila et al., 2026).

Until now, there has been no legal understanding or definition of what is called hate speech and defamation in the Indonesian language. In English, defamation is defined as defamation, libel, and slander, which when translated into Indonesian are *fitnah* (defamation), oral slander, and written libel. In Indonesian, there is no established term to distinguish these three words. Almost all countries in the world have laws regulating hate speech.

In Indonesia, R. Soesilo explains that what is meant by "insulting" is attacking a person's honor and good name, and a person affected by hate speech usually feels ashamed. According to him, there are six types of insult against an individual, namely oral defamation (*smaad*), written defamation (*smaadschrift*), slander (*laster*), minor insult (*eenvoudige belediging*), filing a slanderous complaint (*lasterlijke aanklacht*), and slanderous accusation (*lasterlijke verdachtmaking*). All such insults can only be prosecuted if there is a complaint from the individual affected by the insult.

The articles regulating acts of hate speech against a person are all found in Book I of the Criminal Code, Chapter XVI, particularly Articles 310, 311, 315, 317, and 318 of the

Criminal Code. Meanwhile, insult or defamation against the government, an organization, or a group is regulated in specific articles, namely:

- A. Insult against the head of a foreign state (Articles 142 and 143 of the Criminal Code).
- B. Insult against a section of the population/group/organization (Articles 156 and 157 of the Criminal Code).
- C. Insult against religious officials/adherents of a religion (Article 177 of the Criminal Code).
- D. Insult against the authorities in Indonesia (Articles 207 and 208 of the Criminal Code).
- E. Insult against a person willing to duel (Article 183).

From a legal standpoint, hate speech is any form of statement, writing, image, video, or communicative act that contains insult, incitement, provocation, or a call to hate a person or group of people based on a certain identity, so that it has the potential to cause discrimination, hostility, violence, or social conflict. In Indonesia, hate speech is regulated under the following legal provisions.

- A. Law Number 1 of 2024 (UU ITE)

Hate speech under Law Number 1 of 2024 on the New Criminal Code is constructed as a criminal act in the form of insult or a statement of hostility toward a section of the population based on certain characteristics. Its regulation emphasizes protection for groups vulnerable to being targeted by discrimination, while also maintaining public order.

- 1) Regulates the prohibition of spreading electronic information containing hatred based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA), as well as forms of insult or defamation through electronic media.
- 2) Violations can be subject to criminal sanctions in the form of imprisonment and/or fines according to applicable provisions.

- B. The Criminal Code

In the new Criminal Code, hate speech is placed as part of a criminal act against public order. Its forms cover two main areas. First, a statement of hostility, hatred, or insult toward a section or group of the population based on characteristics explicitly stated in the law. This act is qualified as the criminal act of insulting a section of the population. Second, the broadcasting or dissemination of a statement of hostility that is not only expressive in nature, but also results in violence against people or property.

Doctrinally, this construction continues the regulation in the old Criminal Code, particularly Articles 156 and 157 of the *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, which recognized a prohibition on expressing feelings of hostility, hatred, or insult toward a section of the Indonesian people. However, the new Criminal Code clarifies the discriminatory basis, such as race, nationality, and ethnicity, and adjusts the criminal threat to the context of modern criminal law and human rights standards.

- C. Article 242 of Law 1/2023

Determines that anyone who, in public, expresses feelings of hostility, hatred, or insult toward one or more sections or groups of the Indonesian population based on race, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, gender, mental disability, or physical disability, is

punished with imprisonment of at most three years or a fine of at most category IV. Thus, criminal punishment can only be imposed if all elements of the offense are fulfilled. From the formulation of this article, several important elements can be described. Among them, the subject of the offense is “any person,” which includes citizens as well as foreigners as long as they are within the jurisdiction of Indonesian criminal law.

- 1) The Criminal Code regulates criminal acts related to insult, slander, incitement, and acts that disturb public order.
- 2) In certain contexts, hate speech can fulfill the elements of a criminal act if it causes harm or incites others to commit an unlawful act.

D. Law Number 40 of 2008

Prohibits acts showing hatred or discrimination based on race and ethnicity, including the spreading of hatred through various media.

E. The Indonesian National Police through Police Chief Circular Letter Number SE/06/X/2015

This circular letter provides guidance to law enforcement officers regarding the forms of hate speech and procedures for handling it. Although not a law, this circular letter serves as an operational guideline for the police.

Elements of Hate Speech

Legally, a statement can be categorized as hate speech if it fulfills several elements, including containing insult, incitement, provocation, or the spreading of hatred; being directed at an individual or group based on a certain identity, such as ethnicity, religion, race, ethnic group, skin color, gender, or a certain social group; and having the potential to or aiming to cause discrimination, hostility, violence, or conflict. For example, a person may post on social media the sentence: *“Don’t associate with group X because they deserve to be cast out.”*

If the post is aimed at arousing hatred toward a certain group based on its identity and fulfills the elements in statutory regulations, it can be processed as the criminal act of hate speech. Hate speech is an expression, writing, or act that incites, discriminates, or creates hostility toward a certain group. In Indonesia, the elements of hate speech are regulated through legal instruments such as the Criminal Code and the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE).

According to applicable regulations, an act is categorized as hate speech if it fulfills several elements. The first is the distinguishing object or identity target, meaning the utterance is directed at an individual or community group based on an inherent and difficult-to-change identity characteristic, such as ethnicity and race, religion or belief, nationality and skin color, and other categories including gender, disability, and certain sections of the population. The second is the form of action, or the objective element, in which there is an active act by the perpetrator delivered in public, either directly or indirectly, taking the form of a statement conveyed through writing, speech, image, or video, incitement that persuades, influences, or moves others to hate one another, or dissemination through the broadcasting of provocative content or information.

The third element is the perpetrator's intent, or the subjective element, since this criminal act requires intent or deliberateness (*dolus*) on the part of the perpetrator, meaning the perpetrator intentionally spreads information or a statement, the information is indeed intended to create a feeling of hatred or hostility, and it is carried out without right or unlawfully. The fourth is the resulting impact, since hate speech is not merely about a difference of opinion or an ordinary individual insult, but focuses on the harm caused to a group, namely triggering acts of discrimination and encouraging the occurrence of violence or social conflict.

Legal and Human Rights Perspective

In a state governed by law, freedom of opinion is a protected right. However, that right is not absolute. Freedom of expression is limited by the rights of others, public order, morality, and the prohibition of spreading hatred that can trigger discrimination or violence. Therefore, criticism of a policy, opinion, or action by a person is generally protected, as long as it does not turn into incitement of hatred toward an individual or group based on its identity.

Criminal Law Perspective

In criminal law, hate speech is an act that can be criminally punished if it fulfills the elements of a criminal act as regulated in statutory regulations, and not every rude or offensive utterance constitutes hate speech. An utterance can be criminally punished if it fulfills several elements, namely there is an act of spreading or conveying the utterance, it contains incitement, provocation, insult, or a call to hate, it is directed at an individual or a certain group based on identity such as ethnicity, religion, race, intergroup relations (SARA), ethnic group, or other legally protected characteristics, and it causes or has the potential to cause discrimination, hostility, violence, or disturbance of public order. In criminal law, the principle of legality applies, so that a person can only be criminally punished if their act fulfills the elements set out in the law.

Cyber Law Perspective (UU ITE)

The development of social media has made the spreading of hate speech increasingly easy and fast. Therefore, cyber law provides special regulation for the spreading of electronic information containing hatred. Through Law Number 1 of 2024, the state regulates that the spreading of electronic content containing incitement or hatred based on SARA can be subject to criminal sanctions if it fulfills the elements set out in the law. In practice, electronic evidence such as social media posts, screenshots, video recordings, comments, and electronic messages, can be used as valid evidence in accordance with the provisions of criminal procedural law and provisions on electronic evidence.

Hate speech under Law Number 1 of 2023 on the New Criminal Code is constructed as a criminal act in the form of insult or a statement of hostility toward a section of the population based on certain characteristics. Its regulation emphasizes protection for groups vulnerable to being targeted by discrimination, while also maintaining public order. In the new Criminal Code, hate speech is placed as part of a criminal act against public order. Its forms cover two main areas. First, a statement of hostility, hatred, or insult toward a section or group of the population based on characteristics explicitly

stated in the law. This act is qualified as the criminal act of insulting a section of the population. Second, the broadcasting or dissemination of a statement of hostility that is not only expressive in nature, but also results in violence against people or property.

Doctrinally, this construction continues the regulation in the old Criminal Code, particularly Articles 156 and 157 of the *Wetboek van Strafrecht*, which recognized a prohibition on expressing feelings of hostility, hatred, or insult toward a section of the Indonesian people. However, the new Criminal Code clarifies the discriminatory basis, such as race, nationality, and ethnicity, and adjusts the criminal threat to the context of modern criminal law and human rights standards. Article 242 of Law 1/2023 also determines that anyone who, in public, expresses feelings of hostility, hatred, or insult toward one or more sections or groups of the Indonesian population based on race, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, gender, mental disability, or physical disability, is punished with imprisonment of at most three years or a fine of at most category IV.

Thus, criminal punishment can only be imposed if all elements of the offense are fulfilled. From the formulation of this article, several important elements can be described. Among them, the subject of the offense is “any person,” which includes citizens as well as foreigners as long as they are within the jurisdiction of Indonesian criminal law. The act in question is a statement of hostility, hatred, or insult conveyed orally, in writing, through symbols, or other forms of expression that fundamentally attack the dignity of a section of the population. In the context of criminal law, the act must be carried out in public, that is, a statement that can be accessed or known by the public, so it is not limited to a closed private forum.

The object attacked is one or more sections or groups of the Indonesian population, not merely an individual, with the main distinguishing feature being a protected characteristic, namely race, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, gender, mental disability, or physical disability. This characteristic-based element positions Article 242 as a form of criminalization of hate speech against groups with protected characteristics, in line with international human rights standards.

The maximum criminal threat of three years imprisonment or a category IV fine shows that this act is qualified as a crime, although the threat is lighter compared to Article 156 of the old Criminal Code, which carried a threat of up to four years imprisonment. In academic interpretation, Article 242 is intended to suppress expressions of hatred that have the potential to trigger discrimination and violence based on SARA or similar characteristics. Therefore, harsh criticism or opinion that is not based on systemic hatred toward a certain section of the population should be distinguished from this offense.

Further, Article 243 paragraph (1) of Law 1/2023 regulates a more serious form of hate speech. Anyone who broadcasts, displays, posts writing or an image, plays a recording, or disseminates through information technology means a statement of hostility toward a section or group of the Indonesian population based on certain characteristics, with the intent that it be known by the public, and the act results in violence against people or property, is punished with imprisonment of at most four years or a fine of at most category IV.

The main difference from Article 242 lies in the presence of an element of consequence, namely violence. The form of the act reflects an expansion of media, including electronic and internet media. The content must be a statement of hostility toward a group, not merely a harsh opinion of an individual nature. The element of intent is also clarified, because the perpetrator must have the intent that the content of the statement be known or more widely known by the public. In addition, there must be proof of a causal relationship between the hostile utterance and the violence that occurred.

The heavier criminal threat reflects a higher level of danger due to the actual occurrence of violence. Article 243 paragraph (2) also opens the possibility of an additional penalty in the form of revocation of certain rights if the act is committed in the course of a profession and repeated within less than two years since the previous ruling. This provision is relevant, for example, for perpetrators who work as journalists, public figures, or other professions related to the use of media. The elucidation of this article affirms that the term “disability” includes physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations of a long-term nature that hinder full and effective participation in society. Thus, protection for people with disabilities is explicitly integrated into the regulation of hate speech. (Alybroudi & Nassar, 2025; Musthofa & Irwansyah, 2025)

Beyond the regulation of SARA-based hate speech, the new Criminal Code also contains provisions on insult against the government or state institutions in Article 241 of Law 1/2023. This article regulates the act of spreading or broadcasting content insulting the government or state institutions with the intent that it be known by the public, with a criminal threat of at most three years imprisonment or a category IV fine. Although structurally similar to Articles 242 and 243, there is a fundamental difference. The object protected in Article 241 is the government or state institutions, not a section of the population based on race, ethnicity, or other characteristics. In addition, Article 241 is a complaint offense, because prosecution can only be carried out based on a written complaint from the leadership of the government or state institution that was insulted. Thus, for SARA-based hate speech against a section of the population, Articles 242 and 243 are the main reference, while Article 241 is used for insult against state institutions with a different legal object.

In practice and doctrinal explanation, hate speech is understood as a communicative act, such as provocation, incitement, or insult directed at an individual or group based on race, skin color, gender, disability, nationality, religion, and similar characteristics. Articles 242 and 243 of Law 1/2023 are seen as a manifestation of criminal regulation of these forms in the new Criminal Code. Other forms of insult, such as defamation of good name or slander, remain separately regulated and can only be qualified as hate speech in a narrow sense if directed at a section of the population based on a protected characteristic. In law enforcement, this provision must also be read in harmony with special laws outside the Criminal Code, applying the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* where more specific regulation exists.

Simply put, expression in the public sphere can be directed at an individual, the government or state institutions, or a section of the population. If the target is a section

of the population based on a certain characteristic and the act takes the form of a statement of hostility or insult in public without a resulting act of violence, then Article 242 of Law 1/2023 becomes the reference. If the broadcasting of the statement results in violence against people or property, then the act falls within the scope of Article 243 of Law 1/2023. Thus, the new Criminal Code expressly constructs hate speech as the criminal act of insult or hostility toward a section of the population based on certain characteristics as regulated in Article 242, and increases the penalty in Article 243 if the act is broadcast to the point of causing violence. This regulation still distinguishes hate speech from ordinary insult and from insult against the government or state institutions, which is separately regulated in Article 241 of Law 1/2023.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that hate speech is a complex phenomenon situated at the intersection of language and law. The findings show that the identification of hate speech cannot be carried out based solely on the presence of offensive words or expressions, but must take into account the context of the utterance, the speaker's communicative purpose, implicature, and the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the application of Grice's Cooperative Principle shows that hate speech is often marked by violations of the maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. Meanwhile, Leech's Politeness Principle shows that violations of the principles of politeness can be an indicator of the emergence of communicative acts that damage social relationships and create negative impacts in society. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of forensic linguistic studies by showing the importance of a pragmatic approach in understanding the meaning of hate speech within a legal context. The integration of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle broadens the understanding that the meaning of hate speech is not formed solely through explicit language structure, but also through the speaker's intent, implied meaning, and the surrounding social and legal context. Thus, linguistic analysis can serve as a supporting instrument in uncovering how an utterance can carry legal consequences.

Practically, this research has implications for law enforcement officers, legal practitioners, and forensic linguistic experts in conducting a more comprehensive analysis of hate speech cases. A linguistic approach can help identify pragmatic elements such as communicative purpose, implicit meaning, and the context of language use needed to determine whether an utterance fulfills the elements of a criminal act as regulated in statutory regulations in Indonesia. Therefore, collaboration between language analysis and a legal approach is important to produce a more objective and proportional assessment of hate speech cases. Nevertheless, this research has limitations because the study was conducted through a normative and conceptual approach without involving a large-scale empirical data analysis of actual hate speech cases or a digital language corpus. Future research can develop this study through corpus-based analysis of hate speech data on social media, comparative studies across legal systems, and the use of computational linguistic approaches to improve accuracy in the identification and interpretation of hate speech.

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