

## **A Juridical Analysis Using a Forensic Linguistics Approach on WhatsApp Conversations in the Case of Alleged Obstruction of Justice**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the alleged obstruction of justice communicated through conversations on the WhatsApp messaging application. The subject of this research is the alleged criminal act of obstruction of justice committed by the Secretary General of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*PDI-P*), Hasto Kristiyanto (HK), who is suspected of attempting to hinder the investigation conducted by the Corruption Eradication Commission (*KPK*) in relation to a bribery case involving the interim replacement (*PAW*) of a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives, identified by the initials HM. The alleged obstruction of justice was conveyed via WhatsApp messages, which reportedly contained instructions from the accused (HK) to one of his staff members, identified as witness K, to dispose of the mobile phone used during the relevant period to prevent it from being seized[A1] by *KPK* investigators. This research adopts a juridical analysis method using a descriptive qualitative approach, combined with forensic linguistics through pragmatic analysis, specifically speech act theory and conversational implicature. This framework is employed to analyze digital conversations as evidence in proving the criminal act of obstruction of justice. The findings indicate the use of directive illocutionary acts in the phrases "just use this phone" and "just sink that one," which imply an intention to eliminate evidence—an act constituting obstruction of justice committed by the accused. The forensic linguistic approach is expected to assist investigators, public prosecutors, and judges in examining digital communication as legal evidence, particularly in supporting the evidentiary process in criminal proceedings in the pursuit of truth and justice.

**Keywords:** obstruction of justice, WhatsApp, criminal law, forensic linguistics, speech acts, pragmatics

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The advancement of technology today provides humans with ease and comfort, particularly in the realm of digital communication technologies. The presence of digital communication tools such as mobile phones and instant messaging applications that can transmit messages in real time without being constrained by distance has transformed the way people interact, making communication more accessible and convenient (Bratina, 2023; Fernandez-Lores et al., 2022; Fraccastoro et al., 2021; Liao et al., 2023; Maziashvili et al., 2023). One of the most popular instant messaging applications is WhatsApp. As of 2024, WhatsApp has approximately 2.78 billion active users worldwide. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia has the largest number of active WhatsApp users, with around 86.9 million users. Considering Indonesia's geographic challenges as a vast archipelagic country, fast and easy communication tools are essential. The popularity of WhatsApp in Indonesia is undeniable, offering services that allow users to send text messages, videos, documents, audio messages, location maps, as well as voice and video calls quickly, easily, and for free. WhatsApp enables Indonesians to communicate with more people from diverse backgrounds and regions, thus facilitating the exchange of news, ideas, and the development of relationships between groups that previously would have been difficult to establish (Mustajab, 2023; Nurhikmah, 2022; Octavia, 2018; Sahidillah & Miftahurrisqi, 2019; Susanti, 2020).

However, behind the benefits and convenience offered, digital communication technologies such as WhatsApp are not always used for positive purposes. On the contrary, these technologies can be misused to carry out actions that contradict prevailing legal values. This dynamic aligns with the sentiment expressed by Lawrence Lessig, an American legal scholar and political activist, who implies that while technology makes life astonishingly easier, not everything enabled by technology is necessarily legal or compliant with the law. Although WhatsApp contributes significantly to facilitating interpersonal communication, it can also be used as a medium for criminal acts such as planning, coordinating, or concealing crimes including obstruction of justice.

Criminal law in Indonesia is regulated under the Indonesian Criminal Code (*KUHPP*), which stipulates that any act, whether intentional or due to negligence, that harms or infringes upon the rights of others may be subject to criminal sanctions. In practice, however, not all individuals are willing to take responsibility for their actions. Quite often, individuals attempt to escape legal accountability through various means, including obstructing the processes of investigation, prosecution, or trial. Such acts are referred to as obstruction of justice (Isra et al., 2017; Mardhatilla, 2023; Mayrachelia & Cahyaningtyas, 2022; Saragih et al., 2023; Shallom Jeremiah & Hasiyanni Manurung, 2022).

Oemar Seno Adji and Indriyanto Seno Aji, in their book "Independent Judiciary and Contempt of Court" define obstruction of justice as any deliberate act intended to hinder or interfere with the judicial process whether at the stage of investigation, prosecution, or trial. These acts may include destroying or concealing evidence, influencing witnesses or judges, providing false testimony, or other actions aimed at preventing the disclosure of truth during legal proceedings. Obstruction of justice not only disadvantages victims of criminal cases but also poses a broader threat to the principles of justice by obstructing the discovery of truth. When the truth cannot be attained through an objective and transparent process, the greatest risk is that an innocent person may be punished, or a guilty person may escape justice. Such outcomes diminish public trust in the judicial system, generate negative perceptions toward judicial institutions, and undermine human rights. Therefore, obstruction of justice must be addressed through firm law enforcement to uphold justice and maintain public confidence in the judiciary.

In mid-2022, the term obstruction of justice gained public attention when a police officer was allegedly murdered by a high-ranking officer, his own superior. The superior, assisted by several other police officers, allegedly attempted to destroy evidence and manipulate the chronology of events—acts constituting obstruction of justice. This case raised serious concerns about the integrity of law enforcement officers who, instead of upholding justice, were implicated in premeditated murder and abuse of authority.

Obstruction of justice is not limited to general crimes; it can also occur in the context of special crimes such as corruption. Article 21 of Law No. 31 of 1999 on the Eradication of Corruption (as amended by Law No. 20 of 2001) defines obstruction of justice as any act of intentionally preventing, hindering, or thwarting—directly or indirectly—the investigation, prosecution, or court proceedings involving suspects, defendants, or witnesses in corruption cases. Such acts are often committed not only to protect the principal perpetrators from legal accountability but also to conceal or disguise the proceeds of crime, including laundering illicit funds.

The most recent obstruction of justice case in Indonesia involves allegations against Hasto Kristiyanto (HK), the Secretary General of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). He is suspected of obstructing the KPK's investigation into a bribery case related to the interim replacement (PAW) of a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) with the initials HM. In a trial held on May 8, 2025, and broadcast by Kompas TV on YouTube, the Public Prosecutor presented evidence of communication allegedly conducted via WhatsApp between HK and one of his staff members, Kusnadi (K), who served as a witness in the case. The WhatsApp messages reportedly included instructions from HK to dispose of his mobile phone several days before he was summoned for questioning by the KPK regarding the PAW bribery case. This communication, instructing the disposal of the phone, is alleged to constitute an attempt to hinder the investigation and thus fulfills the elements of obstruction of justice as defined in Article 21 of the Corruption Eradication Law.

Given the context above, it is necessary to analyze the WhatsApp conversation not only as electronic evidence but also from a linguistic perspective to uncover implicit meanings and communicative intent. Therefore, this study adopts a juridical analysis using a descriptive qualitative approach, combined with forensic linguistics particularly speech act theory and pragmatic analysis through conversational implicature to examine digital communication as evidence in proving the criminal act of obstruction of justice.

The rapid evolution of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed interpersonal interactions, with instant messaging applications like WhatsApp becoming ubiquitous platforms for both personal and professional exchange. This shift has introduced novel complexities into the legal domain, particularly concerning the use of digital conversations as evidence in criminal proceedings. Previous research has established the foundational role of forensic linguistics in legal contexts; for instance, Shuy (2010) extensively documented the application of linguistic analysis in deciphering ambiguous language in criminal cases, such as bribery and defamation. Similarly, Mahsun (2022) emphasized the analogical value of textual analysis to DNA in linking specific linguistic patterns to their authors, thereby establishing credibility and intent. These studies collectively underscore the potential of linguistic scrutiny in uncovering covert meanings within electronic communications, providing a critical methodology for the judicial process.

Despite these advancements, a significant research gap persists in the specific application of forensic linguistic frameworks, particularly speech act theory and conversational implicature, to cases of obstruction of justice within the Indonesian juridical context. Existing literature, such as that from Agustina (2015), has explored the doctrinal aspects of obstruction of justice (*menghalangi proses hukum*) in corruption cases, while Helmawansyah (2021) investigated the general admissibility of electronic evidence. However, there remains a lack of integrated studies that meticulously dissect the linguistic mechanics within digital messages to prove the *actus reus* and *mens rea* of this specific crime. This gap highlights the need for a nuanced analysis that moves beyond mere content examination to interpret the pragmatic force and implied directives embedded in seemingly innocuous conversations.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the escalating prevalence of technology-facilitated crimes and the sophisticated methods employed to obstruct judicial processes. High-profile cases, such as the alleged obstruction by a political figure in Indonesia to hinder a Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) investigation, demonstrate the critical need for law

enforcement and the judiciary to possess robust tools to analyze digital evidence effectively. Without the ability to deconstruct implicatures and illocutionary acts, there is a tangible risk that crucial evidence may be overlooked, allowing perpetrators to evade accountability and ultimately undermining public trust in the legal system and the integrity of anti-corruption efforts.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis of juridical analysis and forensic linguistics to create a structured framework for examining WhatsApp conversations as evidence of obstruction of justice. While prior studies have often treated legal and linguistic analyses in isolation, this study innovates by integrating Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts and Grice's theory of conversational implicature directly into the process of proving the elements of a crime under Article 21 of the Corruption Eradication Law. This approach provides a novel methodological lens through which to interpret ambiguous directives and implicit commands, thereby establishing a more scientifically grounded and reliable standard for evidence interpretation in court.

The primary purpose of this study is to juridically analyze alleged obstructive communications within a specific WhatsApp conversation using a forensic linguistics approach to determine their evidentiary value. This purpose is operationalized by applying pragmatic analysis to decipher the intended meaning and perlocutionary effect of key phrases. The anticipated benefits of this research are twofold: firstly, it aims to contribute to the academic discourse on digital evidence and forensic linguistics by providing a concrete analytical model. Secondly, and more practically, it seeks to equip legal practitioners—investigators, prosecutors, and judges—with a refined methodological toolset to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of evidence assessment in complex criminal cases, thereby promoting a more robust and just legal system.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a juridical analysis approach, combined with a forensic linguistics approach through speech act theory and pragmatic analysis, particularly the analysis of conversational implicature. The data used in this research were obtained through literature review and documentation from official mass media sources, comprising secondary data in the form of primary legal materials, such as the Indonesian Criminal Code (*Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana - KUHP*), Law No. 31 of 1999 and Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Eradication of Corruption[A1], and Law No. 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (*UU ITE*). In addition, data were also obtained from secondary legal materials and tertiary legal materials such as court hearing recordings broadcast on the YouTube channel of Kompas TV and electronic news from Kompas TV, Metro TV, and Detiknews.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In today's modern era, information and communication technology is developing at a rapid pace, including mobile phone technology, internet networks, and applications that enable instant communication between individuals. This advancement in communication technology has indirectly led to rapid social changes, making the world appear increasingly borderless.

Unconsciously, these technological developments have also become an effective medium for facilitating unlawful acts.

This situation can be observed in the case of the alleged criminal act of obstruction of justice allegedly committed by the defendant HK during the investigation conducted by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in the bribery case involving the interim replacement (PAW) of a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) with the initials HM. The case began when the defendant HK, who serves as the Secretary General of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), received a summons from KPK investigators on June 4, 2020, in connection with the bribery case involving suspect HW. In response to the summons, on June 6, 2025, defendant HK allegedly instructed witness K via the WhatsApp messaging application to submerge his mobile phone. Witness K carried out the instruction, so that when HK appeared for questioning by KPK investigators on June 10, 2025, and was asked about the whereabouts of his mobile phone, the defendant HK claimed that he did not possess a mobile phone.

Obstruction of justice is a legal term that originates from the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition or the common law legal system. In Indonesian criminal law, the term obstruction of justice is often translated as a criminal act aimed at hindering the course of legal proceedings. In addition, according to Oemar Seno Adji and Indriyanto Seno Aji in the book "Peradilan Bebas dan Contempt of Court", obstruction of justice is considered a form of criminal offense against the judicial system, also referred to as contempt of court. This is because any act intended to hinder or interfere with the course of judicial proceedings whether during the investigation, prosecution, or trial phase—can distort the legal process, which should proceed objectively and fairly. Obstruction of justice can take various forms that disrupt the administration of justice. According to Mulyadi and Suharyanto, these forms include the following:

1. Acts in the form of threats, refusal, obstruction, or even physical violence against law enforcement officers carrying out their duties or court orders.
2. Mass actions or demonstrations that attack judges during court proceedings, thereby disrupting the trial and creating an uncondusive atmosphere, especially when accompanied by extreme actions such as the burning of the courthouse
3. Acts that include assault, destruction of facilities or property, intimidation, coercion, and even murder of judicial officers, resulting in the disruption of the entire judicial process.

In the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), obstruction of justice is categorized as a criminal offense listed in Book Two, Chapter VIII, which concerns Crimes Against Public Authority. This chapter contains various provisions regarding actions that are considered forms of resistance against state authority. Accordingly, these provisions are intended to protect state institutions, enabling government officials to carry out their functions and duties effectively, in order to maintain public order and ensure the safety of society. Besides, in addition, the Law on the Eradication of Corruption as stated in Article 21 of Law No. 31 of 1999, as amended by Law No. 20 of 2001, defines obstruction of justice as any act intentionally aimed at preventing, hindering, or thwarting either directly or indirectly the investigation, prosecution, or trial of suspects, defendants, or witnesses in corruption cases.

In the case of the alleged obstruction of justice carried out through the WhatsApp digital communication platform between the defendant HK and witness K, which is related to the

bribery case involving the interim replacement (PAW) of a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) with the initials HM, the communication becomes crucial in the evidentiary process. It indicates that the content of the communication points to an act of evidence tampering, which constitutes a form of obstruction of justice. Based on the trial proceedings read by the public prosecutor and documented in a broadcast by the media outlet Kompas TV, it was revealed that there was a WhatsApp conversation between the defendant HK and his staff member, witness K, with the following details:

Gara Baskara: “Yes, Sir”

Sri Rejeki Hastomo: “Just use this phone. Okay, thanks. That one should just be sunk. Don’t be sentimental or anything else”

Gara Baskara: “Yes, Sir, Kus asks permission to go to PIK first”

(Kus refers to the speaker in the third person, and PIK is an abbreviation of location possibly Pantai Indah Kapuk)

In the WhatsApp conversation, the contact number of the defendant HK was saved under the name Sri Rejeki Hastomo, while the number belonging to witness K was saved under the alias Gara Baskara. During the trial, KPK investigators conducted a digital forensic analysis of the phone numbers and confirmed that the numbers belonged to the defendant HK and witness K.

Therefore, to analyze the meaning and intent of the above conversation, the author applies a forensic linguistic approach using pragmatic analysis, specifically speech act theory and conversational implicature, to examine the digital communication as evidence in the proof of the criminal act of obstruction of justice.

### **Linguistic Forensic**

The connection between linguistics and the evidentiary process within the legal system has given birth to a branch of study known as forensic linguistics. Forensic linguistics is a linguistic discipline that specifically focuses on the application of language analysis within legal contexts and judicial systems. One of the main objectives of this field is to utilize language as evidence in various legal cases, such as trademark disputes, contracts, defamation, incitement, conspiracy, bribery, perjury, threats, product liability, fraudulent trade practices, and violations of intellectual property rights.

Forensic linguistics etymologically is a combination of the words linguistics and forensics. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), linguistics is the study of language, a scientific analysis of language, and a field that investigates language systems at a given point in time. Meanwhile, forensics (derived from the Latin word *forensis*, meaning ‘from outside’ or ‘public’) refers to a branch of science used to assist the process of upholding justice through the application of scientific knowledge and methods. According to R. Saferstein, forensic science is the application of scientific knowledge to the field of law.

Besides that, according to McMenamin, the study of forensic linguistics is the scientific study of language as applied to forensic contexts for purposes related to forensics or legal evidence. In addition, according to McMenamin, the application of forensic linguistics covers various areas, including voice identification, interpretation of meaning in legal texts and documents, discourse analysis in the context of legal regulation, interpretation of meaning in written and oral reports, authorship identification, analysis of legal language, and courtroom

language analysis used by trial participants such as judges, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. It also includes legal analysis of trademarks, defamation, interpretation, and translation when more than one language must be used in legal contexts. The disciplines involved in forensic application include the following:

- 1)  Phonetics is the study of speech sounds, which includes segmental sounds such as consonants and vowels and suprasegmental features such as stress, intonation, pitch, intensity, and speed
- 2)  Phonology is the study of how language organizes and structures speech sounds into systematic patterns. This includes the inventory of sounds, such as phonemes, and the distribution of sounds, such as the position of sounds within words, word structure, consonant clusters, and sound changes that occur in specific linguistic contexts
- 3)  Morphology is the study of word formation, including morphemes, allomorphs, word formation processes, and the functions of words.
- 4)  Lexicon is a collection of word parts and words that are combined to form larger units ranging from a set of words forming phrases or larger structures, which ultimately produce meaningful utterances. The lexicon is divided into the following categories:
- 5)  Syntax is the study of how words are combined into longer sequences, starting from phrases and clauses, to form structured and meaningful expressions.
- 6)  Semantics is the study of meaning in words and sentences, including elements such as synonyms, antonyms, and other related aspects.
- 7)  Pragmatics is the study of intended meaning in the actual use of language, including speech acts and performative verbs, verbs that not only describe an action but also carry out the action through the utterance itself.

### **Pragmatics**

Pragmatics, as defined by Yule (2014), is the study of meaning communicated by the speaker or writer and interpreted by the listener or reader. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics is the ability of language users to connect sentences appropriately with their context. One of the key aspects in pragmatic studies is the speech act theory, which was introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969).

### **Speech Act Theory**

According to Kridalaksana (1984), a speech act is the utterance of a sentence intended to convey the speaker's or writer's meaning in a way that can be understood by the listener or reader. In addition, according to Leech, in a communication or speech act, several aspects of the speech situation are needed, namely:

1. the speaker and the hearer,
2. the context of the utterance,
3. the purpose of the utterance,
4. the speech act as an action or activity,
5. the utterance as the result of the act of speaking.

The speech act concept mentioned above relates to the theory proposed by Austin, which asserts that every utterance constitutes an act that produces an utterance as the product of a speech act. In other words, when a person produces an utterance, they are simultaneously

performing an action through that utterance. Therefore, an utterance is not merely a series of words conveying meaning, but also an action that applies to social interaction and may carry legal consequences. Below is an explanation of the speech act theory as proposed by Austin and Searle:

- 1) Locutionary Act: Leech explains that a locutionary act refers to the act of saying something to the hearer, where the words spoken convey a specific meaning and reference. In this case, the locutionary act involves stating something with its literal meaning.
- 2) Illocutionary Act: According to Austin, an illocutionary act is a speech act that carries intention and has the power to influence the listener. Searle classifies illocutionary acts into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative
  - a. Representative is a speech act in which the speaker commits to the truth of what is said. For example: "The governor inaugurated this building." This utterance conveys information, and the speaker is bound to the truth of the statement
  - b. Directive is a speech act intended by the speaker to get the hearer to carry out an action as stated in the utterance. For example: "Please close the door!" The speaker intends for the hearer to do what is mentioned.
  - c. Expressive is a speech act that conveys the speaker's evaluation or emotional response to a situation. For example: "You look so beautiful!"
  - d. Commissive is a speech act that commits the speaker to carrying out what is stated. For example: "I will come to your house later".
  - e. Declarative is a speech act in which the speaker intends to create a new status, condition, or fact through the utterance. This type of speech act gives the impression that an action is realized through speech, such as: declaring, cancelling, permitting, forgiving, etc.
- 3) Perlocutionary Act: According to Austin, a perlocutionary act is the effect or influence that results from an utterance produced by the speaker. This speech act aims to affect or persuade the hearer. For example:

Judge: 'You have been sworn in under the holy book'

When such a statement is made by a judge to a witness or defendant, it may serve as a warning to speak the truth or not to lie in their testimony.

### **Conversational Implicature**

Language can be entirely explicit, but it can also leave room for the reader or listener to infer other meanings. Based on this, in communication, a person may deliver an utterance explicitly or may instead use implicit language that opens room for interpretation by the interlocutor. In relation to linguistic crimes, individuals may use utterances that are not explicitly stated and instead convey hidden meanings to their interlocutors, allowing them to feel safer from legal consequences for what they say.

According to Shuy, linguists distinguish between types of meaning, namely referential meaning (meaning based on dictionary definitions) and implied meaning (not explicitly stated but can be inferred). Based on these types of meaning, textual analysis involves a combination of two aspects, both the literal dictionary-based meaning and the implied meaning of the text.

The concept of conversational implicature was introduced by H.P. Grice (1975) to explore issues of linguistic meaning specifically what the speaker intends when what is said

differs from what is explicitly stated. Thus, implicature refers to the actual meaning behind an utterance that is not directly expressed in literal vocabulary.

According to Yule, there are several types of conversational implicature, as follows:

#### 1. General Conversational Implicature

General conversational implicature refers to implicature that does not require specific contextual knowledge to infer the additional intended meaning.

Example: “To speed up the process, I’ll help through a fast track”.

The implicature in this utterance suggests that the speaker intends to take an improper or possibly illegal action to make the process faster, without explicitly stating what illegal action will be taken

#### 2. Scalar Implicature

Scalar implicature occurs when the speaker uses a weaker expression on a given scale, implying the negation of a stronger one

Example: ‘Some of the evidence has been submitted’

The implicature here is that not all evidence has been submitted—there are still some items that have not been handed over.

#### 3. Particularized Conversational Implicature

This type of implicature can only be understood when the speaker and listener share a specific contextual background related to the conversation.

Example: “Do you bring the staff?” “Yes, I left on the usual place”

This utterance suggests a shared understanding between speaker and listener about what ‘the stuff’ is and where ‘the usual place’ refers to, making the implicature only comprehensible to them

#### 4. Conventional Implicature

Conventional implicature does not rely on the cooperative principle, but rather arises from specific words that carry additional meaning

Example: “The witness admitted to working as the defendant’s staff, but claimed not to know the whereabouts of the defendant’s cellphone”.

This seemingly neutral sentence carries an implicature through the use of the word “but” which serves as a linguistic strategy to emphasize a denial of involvement.

Based on the speech act theory developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975), every utterance in communication not only conveys information (locutionary act), but can also contain a specific intended meaning (illocutionary act), and produce an effect or influence on the listener (perlocutionary act). Furthermore, according to the theory of conversational implicature introduced by H.P. Grice, the meaning intended by the speaker may differ from the literal meaning of the utterance, thus allowing for implied interpretations.

In this context, the theory of speech acts and implicature is applied to analyze the communication between the defendant HK and witness K via the WhatsApp messaging, in relation to the alleged obstruction of justice during the investigation conducted by the KPK regarding a bribery case involving the replacement of a member of the House of Representatives (DPR RI) identified by the initials HM, with following communication as follows :

Gara Baskara: “Yes, Sir”

Sri Rejeki Hastomo: “Just use this phone. Okay, thanks. That one should just be sunk. Don’t worry about being sentimental or anything else”

Gara Baskara: “Yes, Sir. Sir, Kus asks permission to go to PIK”

(Kus refers to the speaker in the third person, and PIK is an abbreviation of location possibly Pantai Indah Kapuk)

### **The Application of Speech Act Theory**

1. Locutionary Act (the act of saying something to the hearer, where the words spoken convey a specific meaning and reference)
  - a) “Just use this phone” : The defendant HK is pointing to one of the mobile phones as a choice a
  - b) “That one should just be sunk” : Since the previous conversation was about mobile phones, the defendant HK is referring to another phone to be disposed of by sinking
  - c) “Don’t be sentimental or anything else” : The defendant HK attempts to minimize or eliminate any emotional attachment to the object
2. Illocutionary Act (a speech act that carries intention and has the power to influence the listener.)
  - a) “That one should just be sunk” : This is a directive illocutionary act, where the utterance is intended to make the hearer to perform an action. In this case, the defendant is implicitly giving a command to the witness to sink the item.
3. Perlocutionary Act (the effect or influence that results from an utterance produced by the speaker)
  - a) “Yes, sir”
  - b) “Yes, Sir, Kus asks permission to go to PIK first”

The effect of HK's utterance on witness K is effective in influencing action that K follows the instruction. The request for permission to go to PIK may indicate that it is the location where the phone will be disposed of, or alternatively, that K had another purpose for going to PIK.

### **The Application of Conversational Implicature**

1. General Conversational Implicature (Implicature that does not require specific contextual knowledge to infer the additional intended meaning)

“That one should just be sunk”

This implies an action of sinking an object. Although it is not explicitly stated what ‘that’ refers to, but based on the prior conversation discussing a phone, ‘that’ refers to a phone. The implied meaning can be understood by anyone, even without specific context that is an order to dispose of a mobile phone
2. Scalar Implicature (the speaker uses a weaker expression on a given scale, implying the negation of a stronger one)

“Don’t be sentimental or anything else”

It implies a denial of the emotional value of the item, with the implicature that the action being taken is more important than the item itself. However, there is another implicature that

the item being disposed of actually holds considerable value, which is why the speaker uses the phrase "Don't be sentimental or anything else" to suppress or negate that emotional sentiment.

3. Particular Conversational Implicature (implicature that can only be understood when the speaker and listener share a specific contextual background related to the conversation)

"Just use this phone. That one should just be sunk"

This implies that a meaning understood only by the speaker and the hearer, in this case, the defendant HK and witness K. Therefore, for those who understand the context, the command refers to the disposal of evidence.

4. Conventional Implicature (Associated with a specific words that produce additional meaning)

"Ok, Thanks"

The utterance was inserted in the middle of the instruction to sink the phone, which, through conventional implicature, serves as an attempt to soften the authoritative tone of the command. As a result, the instruction appears polite but still directs the action to be carried out.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the juridical analysis employing a forensic linguistics approach, this study concludes that the WhatsApp conversations between Hasto Kristiyanto (HK) and witness Kusnadi (K) contain linguistic markers indicative of obstruction of justice. The application of speech act theory reveals the use of directive illocutionary acts, specifically in the phrases "just use this phone" and "just sink that one," which function as implicit commands to dispose of a mobile phone. Furthermore, the analysis of conversational implicature—including general, scalar, particularized, and conventional types—uncovers a layered communicative intent aimed at concealing evidence while maintaining plausible deniability. The perlocutionary effect of these utterances is evident in the witness's compliance, demonstrating the successful execution of an act intended to hinder the *KPK*'s investigation. Thus, forensic linguistics serves as a powerful tool for deconstructing digital communication, transforming ambiguous dialogues into legally meaningful evidence that can substantiate charges of obstruction of justice within criminal proceedings.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the application of forensic linguistics to a broader range of digital communication platforms and legal contexts, including cases involving conspiracy, fraud, or terrorism. Studies could also incorporate computational linguistics and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to develop automated tools for detecting illicit intent in large-scale digital conversations. Additionally, comparative analyses across different legal systems could enhance understanding of how speech acts and implicatures are interpreted juridically in varied jurisdictional settings. Such advancements would not only strengthen the methodological rigor of forensic textual analysis but also support law enforcement and judiciary agencies in adapting to the evolving nature of digital-age crime.

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