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A Study of Illocutionary Acts in the Main Character of the movie *A Fall From Grace*

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Abstract

Speech acts, as a fundamental aspect of pragmatics, are crucial in demonstrating how language can be used to perform actions rather than merely convey information. They are categorized into three types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. This research specifically focuses on illocutionary acts, which reveal the speaker's intentions through their words. Understanding these acts is vital for grasping the underlying meaning of someone's utterances, particularly in complex communication where misunderstandings may arise. The study examines the types and functions of illocutionary acts used by the main character, Grace Waters, in the film *A Fall from Grace*. Data was collected from Grace's dialogue in the movie, which was identified and analyzed using John Searle's (1979) theory, categorizing illocutionary acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Employing Spradley's (1980) analytical model, the study reveals a strong connection between the types and functions of these acts in Grace's statements. The assertive act is the most dominant, as she frequently uses it to convey facts and information clearly. Additionally, the requesting function is prominent, reflecting Grace's need for help and support in her pursuit of justice. These findings underscore the importance of illocutionary acts in reducing misunderstandings and constructing an effective narrative within the film.

Keywords: The movie A Fall from Grace, Illocutionary Acts, Main Character

Introduction

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, delves into how language shapes human communication, focusing on the intended meaning behind words. Yule (1996) explains that pragmatics examines the meaning conveyed by a speaker or writer and how it is interpreted by a listener or reader. This field explores the relationship between linguistic forms and their users, making it a valuable tool for discussing people's intended meanings, assumptions, goals, and the actions they perform through language. Within pragmatics, several subfields, such as deixis and distance, reference and inference, presupposition and entailment, politeness and interactions, and speech acts, offer insights into the various ways language is used in different contexts. This research specifically centers on speech acts, a fundamental aspect of communication. Speech acts illustrate how language is used not just to convey information but to perform actions. Understanding these acts involves analyzing how utterances function within their context and how they influence the listener or reader.

Speech acts are essentially actions performed through language, where the speaker's goal is to create an effect on the listener. We engage in speech acts in everyday communication, constantly using words to perform various actions. Yule (1969) highlights that whenever people talk, they are performing actions with their words. This concept is prominently showcased in movie dialogues, where characters' interactions provide complex examples of how speech acts work. These dialogues are significant because they reveal how characters achieve different effects and actions through their words.This study aims to explore the pragmatic aspects of speech acts, particularly focusing on illocutionary acts—one of the three types of speech acts identified by Yule (1996). Illocutionary acts involve performing an action through an utterance with a specific intended meaning. For example, when someone makes a request, promises, or apologizes, they are engaging in an illocutionary act that reflects their intention. This study is motivated by the complexity of communication and the potential for misunderstandings in everyday interactions, making it essential to understand the purpose behind utterances.

The research is set in the context of the movie A Fall from Grace (2020), directed by Tyler Perry and distributed by Netflix. The film follows Grace Waters, a gentle, law-abiding middle-aged woman accused of murdering her husband, Shannon DeLong. As Grace faces the death penalty, she is defended by a novice lawyer, Jasmine Bryant, who uncovers inconsistencies in the case, such as the missing body of Shannon. Through her investigation, Jasmine begins to question those close to Grace and eventually concludes that Grace is not

responsible for Shannon's death. The study examines how illocutionary acts are used in the film's dialogues to convey various intentions and emotions, and how these acts contribute to the development of the plot and characters. By analyzing these acts, the research seeks to gain insights into the complexity of communication and its role in resolving misunderstandings and advancing the narrative.

The researcher reviewed several previous studies on illocutionary acts, each focusing on different objects but with similar topics. The first study by Sophia et al. (2021) titled "Illocutionary Acts Found on Character Arthur Fleck in Joker Movie," analyzed the illocutionary acts in the dialogues of Arthur Fleck in the film *Joker* (2019). The study aimed to identify the types of illocutionary acts used by Arthur and their meanings, employing Searle's theory of illocutionary acts. The researchers used a qualitative design, focusing on descriptive analysis through words rather than numerical data. The second study by Dianty (2017), titled "An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts Performed by the Main Character in Divergent Movie by Neil Burger (2014)," employed content analysis to examine the illocutionary acts performed by the main character in *Divergent*. The research aimed to identify and describe the types of illocutionary acts and their dominance within the film, using a descriptive qualitative method that involved watching the movie and classifying the illocutionary acts according to John R. Searle's framework.

The last study by Nugroho (2011), titled "An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Sherlock Holmes Movie," focused on the types of illocutionary acts predominantly presented by the character Sherlock Holmes in the *Sherlock Holmes* movie. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach and Searle's speech acts theory to classify and analyze the utterances made by Sherlock Holmes. These previous studies provide a valuable foundation for understanding how illocutionary acts function in different films, demonstrating how Searle's theory helps analyze character interactions and intentions. The current research extends this by examining illocutionary acts in the movie *A Fall from Grace* (2020), aiming to explore how these acts influence the story and character development in the film. Compared to the earlier studies, which focused on various aspects of illocutionary acts in films, this research is distinct in its focus on a murder case. The goal is to analyze how illocutionary acts are used in Grace's dialogues in *A Fall from Grace* and to understand their types and functions in the context of the murder. This focus is intended to deepen our understanding of how language operates within the dramatic setting of the film's murder plot.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the field of pragmatics and speech act theory. By analyzing the illocutionary acts in Grace Waters' dialogues, the study

offers practical examples of how theoretical concepts can be applied in analyzing film dialogues. This research serves as a valuable reference for future studies in pragmatics, providing insights for students, educators, and anyone interested in language and communication. Through this analysis, the study demonstrates the dynamic nature of language and its impact on interpersonal interactions within a cinematic narrative.

Riview of Literature

Pragmatics studies how language functions in communication and how meaning is created and understood in specific contexts. According to Cutting & Joan (2002), the use of language greatly influences the scope of pragmatics, emphasizing that understanding language goes beyond the words spoken. It involves understanding the context in which those words are used, which helps clarify the speaker's intent. Sometimes, without additional information, we might not fully grasp what others are saying. Pragmatics helps address this by analyzing the intended meaning behind utterances, facilitating clearer communication between speakers and listeners.

Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of how meaning is communicated by speakers or writers and understood by listeners or readers. Pragmatics emphasizes the relationship between linguistic forms (structure and use of language) and the people who use them. Studying pragmatics helps us understand the intended meaning, underlying assumptions, goals or objectives, and the types of actions they perform through language. Essentially, pragmatics explores how humans use language to convey meaning, achieve communication goals, and navigate social interactions. It provides a framework for understanding how meaning is not only encoded in words but also shaped by context, intention, and interpretive processes. This understanding aids in improving communication by addressing potential misunderstandings and ensuring that messages are conveyed and received accurately.

In communication, context plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning behind what is said. Context includes various factors that influence why someone expresses themselves in a certain way in a specific situation. According to Richards (2010), communication occurs within contexts that assist understanding through elements such as the situation and setting, signals and actions, and visual cues. Leech, as cited in Taufik (2016), provides a detailed explanation of how context affects communication by focusing on key

aspects: the speaker and listener, the speech context, the speaker's goals, speech as a form of action or activity, and speech as a result of verbal actions.

Speech acts are verbal actions in communication and are also a subdivision of pragmatics. Austin (1962) defined speech acts as a series of utterances that function like actions. He also noted that when someone utters a series of words, the speaker often aims to achieve a certain effect. Hickey in Sembiring (2019) states that speech acts are utterances that function in communication. These acts themselves are a form of verbal communication. This refers to the idea that people must explain the meaning of communication or language through speech acts. In conversation, people often do not just say something but also aim to get the listener to do something. Mey (2006) explains that the language used by a speaker in conveying something depends on the situational context in which the act is produced.

According to Austin's (1962) theory, speech acts are divided into three main types: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act is the act of saying something or producing a linguistic expression with a particular meaning. It is equivalent to the literal meaning of the utterance. Locutionary acts can be considered actions of uttering something with a specific meaning, akin to traditional meaning. Illocutionary acts, on the other hand, are actions performed by saying something, with a specific goal or function within the utterance. Illocutionary acts are more complex than locutionary acts because illocutionary power is tied to the utterance and shows how the expression should be interpreted. Perlocutionary acts, on the other hand, are the effects on the listener as a result of the utterance, including all effects generated, whether intended or not.

According to Searle's (1979) theory, illocutionary acts are categorized into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Assertives are actions where the speaker conveys information or states something about the world. Directives are actions where the speaker aims to get the listener to do something. Commissives involve the speaker's commitment to perform a certain action in the future or express future intentions. Expressives are actions to convey the speaker's feelings or psychological state related to a particular situation. Declaratives are actions where the speaker uses language to change the state of the world through their utterances. The functions of illocutionary acts include various forms of communication such as asserting, describing, claiming, complaining, informing, commanding, forbidding, requesting, suggesting, asking, promising, threatening, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, praising, christening or baptizing, naming, and dismissing. For example, asserting involves stating something as a fact with conviction and authority. Complaining involves expressing dissatisfaction or anger about a particular

situation. Requesting involves asking for something politely, while threatening involves a commitment to a negative action if certain conditions are not met. Each of these functions has a specific purpose in communication and affects how messages are conveyed and received in social interactions.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on textual rather than numerical analysis. As noted by Dianty (2017), qualitative research prioritizes the examination of non-numerical data such as text, images, and narratives. In this research, the qualitative method is used to analyze the dialogues of the main character, Grace Waters, in the film A Fall from Grace. The objective is to categorize the illocutionary acts within the film's conversations into five distinct types: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The study will further classify these acts into twenty-nine specific functions, such as asserting, commanding, requesting, and apologizing, to understand how they are utilized in character interactions and how they influence the film's narrative.

The data for this research is drawn from the movie A Fall from Grace, focusing on Grace Waters' utterances which include various illocutionary acts. As Dianty (2017) highlights, qualitative research involves analyzing discourse, sentences, and phrases. The study emphasizes identifying and classifying these illocutionary acts within Grace Waters' speech to explore how these verbal actions contribute to her communication strategies and the overall storytelling in the film. By closely examining these dialogues, the research aims to offer a deeper understanding of character interactions and narrative development.

Data collection for this research involves several steps: downloading the film from Netflix, watching it to grasp the plot and character dynamics, reading and analyzing the dialogues, and finally selecting utterances containing illocutionary acts for detailed examination. The data analysis follows Spradley's (1980) framework, which includes domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. This structured approach helps categorize and interpret the illocutionary acts based on their types and functions, providing comprehensive insights into their role within the film's cultural and narrative context.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

1. Assertives

At 00:09:01, Grace says, "I want to move to a prison close to here." This statement reflects Grace's wish to be relocated to a prison nearer to her family. Here, Grace is expressing a personal desire or hope, which qualifies as an assertive illocutionary act. Her utterance is an assertion of her preferred reality, indicating that the primary function of this illocutionary act is to assert her personal wish.

2. Directive

At 00:15:32, Grace instructs, "Okay, do it." Here, Grace is directing the lawyer to undertake a particular task that has already been agreed upon. This directive clearly demands the lawyer to perform a specific action, categorizing it as a commanding illocutionary act. Grace's utterance serves to direct or influence the listener's behavior, making it an example of a directive aimed at ensuring the listener acts in accordance with the speaker's wishes.

3. Expressive

At 00:44:14, Grace says, "Oh, Shannon, that's beautiful." This statement is an expressive illocutionary act because Grace is conveying her admiration and appreciation for Shannon's presentation. Her words reflect an emotional response, demonstrating awe and wonder at what she has observed. In this instance, the illocutionary act serves to praise Shannon, recognizing and valuing her actions and expressing gratitude for her kindness.

4. Commissive

At 00:31:17, Grace says, "Okay, okay, I will." In this scenario, Grace is responding to Sarah's suggestion to contact Shannon immediately. By stating "I will," Grace is committing to the action suggested by Sarah. This utterance reflects a commissive illocutionary act, specifically a promise. Grace's statement indicates her intention to fulfill the suggested action, showing her willingness to act in accordance with Sarah's advice. Thus, the function of this statement is to promise, as Grace pledges to follow through with the contact.

In this study, we analyzed the illocutionary acts present in A Fall from Grace using Searle's (1979) theory to categorize them into four primary types: assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive. The research identified a total of 79 instances of illocutionary acts within Grace Waters' dialogues. The breakdown revealed that assertives and directives were the most prevalent, each appearing 26 times, which represents 32.91% of the total data.

Assertive acts were mostly used for informing and asserting, while directive acts frequently involved asking and commanding. Commissives and expressives were less common, with commissive acts occurring only twice and expressive acts appearing 15 times.

Componential Analysis (Types And Function Of Illocutionary Acts)

Function / Types	F1	F5	F6	F8	F10	F11	F12	F13	F15	F17	Total
T1	16	20									26
T2			2	2	22						26
T3						1	1				2
T4								3	2	10	15
T5											
Total	16	20	2	2	22	1	1	3	2	10	79

Notes:

T: Types

F: Function

T1: Assertive

T2: Directive

T3: Commisive

T4: Exspressive

T5: Declarative

F1: Asserting

F2: Describing

F3: Claiming

F4: Complaining

F5: Informing

F6: Commanding

F7: Forbidding

F8: Requesting

F9: Suggesting

F10: Asking

F11: Promising

F12: Threatening

F13: Thanking

F14: Congratulating

F15: Apologizing

F16: Condoling

F17: Praising

F18: Chritening or Baptizing

F19: Naming

F20: Dismissing

Discussion

In A Fall from Grace (2020), Grace predominantly utilizes assertive speech acts (T1), with a total of 36 occurrences. Among these assertive acts, the function of informing (F5) is the most frequent, appearing 20 times. This indicates that Grace often provides essential information to clarify her circumstances. Additionally, she employs the requesting function (F8) 16 times, demonstrating that she not only shares information but also seeks actions or

responses from others. In contrast, commissive acts (T3) are the least frequent in Grace's dialogue, occurring only twice. Both promising (F11) and threatening (F12) appear just once, suggesting that Grace rarely makes promises or threats. Furthermore, declarative acts (T5), which involve changing the state or context of a conversation, are entirely absent from her dialogue.

Overall, Grace's communication style is characterized by a predominance of assertive acts, particularly for the functions of informing and requesting. This reflects her role in the narrative as someone who needs to explain her situation and seek cooperation from others. The limited use of commissive acts and the absence of declarative acts highlight Grace's focus on communication and explanation rather than on exercising power or making commitments. Comparing these findings with previous research, Saptiko et al.'s study on Joker analyzed Arthur Fleck's illocutionary acts. Out of 52 utterances, assertives were eight, directives 27, commissives four, expressives nine, and declaratives four. Arthur's predominant use of directive acts underscores his confrontational and controlling nature, contrasting with Grace's emphasis on assertive acts, which highlights her need to explain and justify her actions.

Lavenia Dianty (2017) analyzed illocutionary acts in Divergent, focusing on Beatrice (Tris). This study revealed that Tris used a variety of illocutionary acts, with a notable focus on assertive acts like asserting, denying, and informing. Both Tris and Grace predominantly use assertive or representative acts, emphasizing their roles in explanation and justification within their narratives. Agung Surya Nugroho (2011) examined illocutionary acts in Sherlock Holmes, finding that Sherlock Holmes predominantly used directive acts, with a total of 18 out of 37 utterances. In contrast, Grace's predominant use of assertive acts highlights a difference in communication focus. While Sherlock Holmes guides and influences others through directive acts, Grace concentrates on explanation and justification.

These comparisons illustrate how different characters' use of illocutionary acts aligns with their narrative roles and communication goals. The analysis reveals the impact of these acts on character development and story progression, showcasing how various types of illocutionary acts influence the portrayal and development of characters in film narratives.

Conclusion and Suggestion

After analyzing Grace Waters' dialogue in A Fall from Grace (2020) using Searle's theory of speech acts, it is clear that Grace predominantly uses assertive illocutionary acts. These acts are primarily employed to convey information or beliefs and often function as

requests in Grace's interactions. This indicates that Grace's communication is centered around providing information and asking others to take specific actions, aiming to clarify her needs and influence those around her.

Grace's heavy reliance on assertive acts demonstrates her intent to control her situation. Her statements go beyond mere information sharing and are designed to persuade and elicit responses from others. This style of communication aligns with her role in the film, highlighting her need to justify her actions and seek cooperation, thus reflecting her narrative position and objectives.

For future research, it is recommended to extend studies on illocutionary acts beyond films to include other media forms such as TV shows, theater, or real-life conversations. This broader approach could uncover a wider variety of illocutionary acts and how different contexts impact their usage. Additionally, exploring locutionary and perlocutionary acts, which focus on the actual words spoken and their effects on the listener, respectively, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of speech acts. Finally, applying alternative theories or frameworks might offer fresh perspectives and insights, enhancing the overall understanding of illocutionary acts across different communication scenarios.

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