



SEARLE'S ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS THEORY IN BEYOND THE BLACKBOARD MOVIE BY CAMILE THOMASSON

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the illocutionary speech act used by the main character in Beyond the Blackboard movie according to Searle's theory. The study is motivated by the need to understand the context of illocutionary acts and its practical implications for future linguistic research. The researcher employed descriptive qualitative method to analyze main character dialogues with other characters in Beyond the Blackboard movie. The analysis was conducted over one semester, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the types of illocutionary speech uttered by the main character of Beyond the Blackboard movie. The researcher used deductive thematic analysis for analyzing data. The findings revealed all five types of Searle's illocutionary speech act utilized by the main character in the movie namely directive, representative, commissive, expressive and declarative. The result showed there are 198 utterances containing illocutionary speech act uttered by the main character. From the total of 198, the researcher found 117 utterances containing directive, 48 utterances containing representative, 17 utterances containing commissive, 11 utterances containing expressive, and 5 utterances containing declarative. The dominantly used speech act was directive for the reason that the main character as a teacher needs to guide and direct the students. The study highlights the importance of understanding types of speech and its context in facilitating clear communication. Ultimately, this work aims to inspire further investigations in the field of linguistics and provide valuable insights for educators and researchers alike in speech acts study.

Keywords: *Speech act, Illocutionary act, Searle, Pragmatics, Movie*

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics in linguistics study various things, one of them is speech act. The speaker can influence the listener, so the listener does something without directly tell the listener to do something the speaker wants the listener do. Speech act concept was first proposed by John Langshaw Austin in 1962 and later



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developed by John R. Searle in 1969 (Cakrawati & Wijayanti, 2023). There are three elements of speech act named locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the act of saying something. Illocutionary act is what the speaker has in mind and it is represented by how the listener reacts or do what the has uttered by the speaker. Perlocutionary act is the effect of the saying. Perlocutionary act is the effect of the saying. Searle (1985) as cited in Sumedi & Rovino (2020) categorized the illocutionary act of speech acts into five categories; assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Speech acts are commonly used in everyday conversation, sometimes humans use it subconsciously. Speech act also used by teachers in their classroom or when they are conversing with their students. Sometimes teacher might say something so the students will do something (Wijaya and Helmie 2019). This also include teacher in movies when the characters have conversation. Conversation in movies mostly adapted from real-life, align with verisimilitude theory in film. Verisimilitude is the extent to which the film and its world seem authentic or genuine (Wik, 2023). The quality of a story should not be assessed by its plausibility or implausibility, but rather by the verisimilitude of events and characters derived from actual life (Sanchez-Escalonilla, 2013 cited in Wik, 2023).

Movies are supposed to be entertaining, but not only that, some movies also have educational value. Some movies present the life of a teacher and their struggle in the education field. One of them was the American movie entitled *Beyond the Blackboard* which released in 2011, directed by Jeff Bleckner and written by Camille Thomasson. *Beyond the Blackboard* movie was based on true story of the main character, Stacey Bess who teaches and shelters the homeless children in a shelter's makeshift classroom. Since speech acts are commonly used subconsciously, listener will not know what kind of speech acts the speaker used and sometimes wondering what the speaker intentions are by saying that. In order to find out types of illocutionary speech acts and its dominant type used by the main character in *Beyond the Blackboard* movie, along with explain the kind of condition which make someone uttered that type of speech act, researcher conducted this paper (Jauhar Helmie, Aminah, and Id 2023).

Movie with educational-theme that depict teacher-student interactions rich with valuable sources for analyzing speech acts. These kinds of movie have examples of language use in classroom and realistic examples of how teacher perform teaching learning process. Using movie as data source also have several benefits such as allow repeated observation of language use and provide accessible observation of classroom discourse in which may not be an easy access if its real classroom due to its ethical and practical limitation. In addition, movies reflect social perceptions of teaching practice along with the ideal communication during teaching-learning process.

The focus of this research was to investigate the kinds of illocutionary speech acts classified by Searle used in a movie entitled *Beyond the Blackboard*,
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especially uttered by the teacher in the movie and find out the dominant type of illocutionary act used by the main character of *Beyond the Blackboard* movie along with explain the kind of condition which make someone uttered that type of speech act. This research provides valuable insight into the use of language by teacher, especially through the analysis of speech acts. By analyzing how teacher uttered various types of speech acts in classroom, this study expected to showed the importance of pragmatics in teaching, especially speech acts used for effective learning. This research can help teacher raising awareness of how different speech acts can influence student engagement, motivation, and comprehension. Along with presenting teacher-student interaction, encouraging teachers to consider kinds of communication and knowledge should be given to the students.

Research about investigating kinds of speech acts used in movies has been conducted by many researchers. Among them, Marlina et al. (2023) The result of the research showed that the most dominate illocutionary act proposed was directive speech acts as three out of five characters, used mostly directive speech acts. Yanti et al. (2021) conducted a study and the the result can be concluded that the most frequently used speech act was illocutionary act and there were four kinds illocutionary act performed by the teacher, namely, directive, representative, expressive and commissive. The most frequently used speech acts were directives (70%), while the least frequent speech acts went to commissive (3%). The study to investigate kinds of speech act used in movie also conducted by Marbun & Handayani (2020). The result can be concluded the most used speech act found in this data was illocutionary act.

This research conducted to investigate the kinds illocutionary speech act and its frequently used by the teacher in *Beyond the Blackboard* movie. Along with explaining the kind of condition which make someone uttered that type of speech act. The data source was collected from the dialogue in the movie using observation. This study is important to help classified kinds of illocutionary act. To help figured out what is the speaker want the listener do by uttered such speech acts, so the listener will not have a hard time understanding the speaker's intention as well as avoid misunderstanding.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that investigates language usage in context and how speakers communicate meaning that transcends the literal interpretation of words. This encompasses social, cultural, and cognitive elements that influence language utilization, including the roles of the speaker and listener, the intent of the communication, and the contextual framework in which it occurs (Ramdhani & Amalia, 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that pragmatics is the branch of linguistic which study about meaning in context. The field of pragmatics



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study how human interpret meaning not with its literal meaning, but in certain situation or according to context.

Speech Acts

Austin (1962) cited in (Yanti, et al., 2021) states that speech acts are an act which refers to the action that is performed in making an utterance. Through speech acts, people can perform a single utterance with more than one act. People can perform requests, commands, apologies, and promises. (Cakrawati & Wijayanti, 2023) stated that the terms and theories regarding speech acts were originally introduced in 1959 by a philosopher named J. L. Austin. In his book *How to Do Things With Words*, Austin stated that by saying something we do something. Then, Austin's theory of speech acts was developed by his student, J. R. Searle and later published in his book entitled "Speech Act an Essay in the Philosophy of Language." He believes that all verbal communication contains a speech act. In simple word, speech acts are the act of saying something to make someone or the listener do something.

Austin divided speech acts into three basic acts named locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the act of saying something or utterance. Illocutionary act the what the speaker intention by saying those utterance. Perlocutionary act is the is the effect of those utterance saying. Beyond the types of speech acts stated, Austin and Searle divided the illocutionary acts by their own classification (Jauhar Helmie and Ismiati 2024). However, even though the classification may seem different from one another, those classification was kind of the same. Austin made the base of the theory while Searle completed and refined it.

Illocutionary Speech Acts

Illocutionary act or illocution refers to the words or sentence that carried force (Austin, 1962 cited in Yanti et al., (2021). The force here refers to the power to make someone do something just by words or sentence. The function of the illocutionary act is to convey the intended meaning of a statement. Consequently, the illocutionary act influences the particular actions undertaken by the listeners (Yulian & Mandarani, 2023).

In other words, illocutionary act is what the speaker intended by saying something or saying those utterances. Understanding illocutionary act is crucial to avoid misunderstanding and to effectively communicate with other people. This day, there are many saying or slang in which the utterance and its intended meaning is far from its literal meaning.

Types of Illocutionary Speech Acts

John R. Searle expanded upon the concept of speech acts, establishing his taxonomy as a reference framework for speech act classification utilized by other



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researchers in the field (Santosa & Kurniadi, 2020). Searle classified illocutionary speech acts into five types: directive, representative, expressive, declarative and commissive.

1. Directive illocutionary speech acts is a spoken act used by speaker to convince or direct someone to do some action. In this type of directive speech, the words, orders, pleas, demands, suggestions, commands, requests, questions and challenges are included (Yulian & Mandarani, 2023).
2. Representative illocutionary speech acts are the act of linking the speaker (or other influential members of the class) to the veracity of the thought

being conveyed, to the reality of the transmitted idea. The representative speech acts classes are state, claim, believe, remind, suggest, report, assure, agree, predict, insist, hypothesize, boast, complain, conclude or deduce (Yulian & Mandarani, 2023).

3. Expressive illocutionary speech acts reveal the speaker's psychological disposition towards a presumed condition of affairs. Its function is to understand the speaker's. Expressive includes actions such as thanking, apologizing, welcoming, condoling, pleasuring, congratulating and condolences (R. A. Putri et al., 2020).
4. Declarative illocutionary speech acts are an act that intended by the speaker to create new things or change a condition or status. The successful implementation of this illocution will lead to conformity between the contents of proportion and reality, such as surrender, dismiss, release, baptize, exclude, appoint, and determine (R. A. Putri et al., 2020).
5. Commissive illocutionary speech acts are an act in which the speaker commits to a future action. Commissive speech act can take the form of promises, threat, refusals, or pledges (Devi & Degaf, 2021).

Movie

Movie is a collection of moving images and sound that tells a story and is exhibited in a cinema or theatre (Hornby, 2006 cited in Ramadhani & Mustikawati, 2023). Movies are social representation for the reason of movies derive its images and sounds, themes, and stories ultimately from their social environment (Allen & Gomery, 1993 cited in Trifani & Rohana, 2023). Movies are supposed to be entertained and enjoyable. Numerous people love to watch movies cause its function to entertain audiences. In other word, movie is images that is moving with sound and has some stories for people to view.

Beyond the Blackboard which released in 2011 is a biography, drama, and family movie that directed by Jeff Bleckner. This movie was written by Camile Thomasson based on true story of the main character, Stacey Bess. The story followed a first-time teacher named Stacey Bess to overcome the hardship of teaching homeless children in a shelter's makeshift classroom. It is not an easy task

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for Stacey to be a teacher of many homeless children (J. Helmie 2015). Not only because the homeless children are having difficulty to follow their teacher's instruction, but also because the so-called school was not a proper school for these homeless children. One more problem lies within the family of these homeless children who did not give support for their children's education.

METHOD

This research was conducted to investigate kinds of speech act used by main character in *Beyond the Blackboard* movie and it is dominant type along with the condition that make someone uttered the speech act. In this research, researcher used descriptive qualitative design. Descriptive qualitative was developed by Sandelowski (2000), it is a methodological framework that offers an extensive synthesis of events or experiences (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). Researcher used descriptive qualitative to analyze language and verbal conversation between humans.

The data source was from movie's script in addition to the dialogues between the main character and other characters. To collect the data, researcher used non-participant observation and document analysis. To analyze the data, researcher used deductive thematic analysis. Deductive thematic analysis allows researchers to use existing theory to examine meanings, processes, and narratives of interpersonal and intrapersonal phenomena (Fife & Gossner, 2024). To analyze the data, researcher first identifying the speech acts found in the movie, selecting the speech acts, classifying the speech acts into three main types, classifying the illocutionary act using Searle's theory, and then drawing the conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data, researcher found all of the illocutionary speech acts appeared are directive, representative, commissive, expressive and declarative. The dominantly used illocutionary speech acts was directive which reaches 117 (one hundred and seventeen) out of 198 (one hundred and ninety-eight) illocutionary act uttered. In the second place there are 48 (forty-eight) utterances contained representative act. Next is commissive speech act with 17 (seventeen) utterances. Then, expressive speech act with 11 (eleven) utterances and the last is declarative speech act with and 5 (five) utterances.

Directive speech act mostly used for the reason that the main character is a teacher which needs to direct or command the students to do something, especially in the education related activity. As a teacher, one must possess the ability to command or direct other people to do as instructed for the sake of education. The researcher also shows the illocutionary speech act used by the main character of *Beyond the Blackboard* movie along with their types after a table.

Table 1 Findings of Illocutionary Speech Acts Types



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NO	Types of Searle's Illocutionary Speech Acts	Result
1	Directive	117
2	Representative	48
3	Commissive	17
4	Expressive	11
5	Declarative	5
Total		198

1. Directive Illocutionary Speech Acts

Directive illocutionary speech acts are those kinds of illocutionary acts that direct or guide someone to do something. Directive illocutionary speech acts is a spoken act used by a speaker to convince or direct someone to do some action. In this type of directive speech, the words, orders, pleas, demands, suggestions, commands, requests, questions and challenges are included (Yulian & Mandarani, 2023).

Directive has characteristics which differs from another illocutionary speech acts. According to Yardha & Ambalegin (2022), directive speech act has imperative construction. There is somewhat a sense of urgency which makes the interlocutor instinctive do what the speaker said. In addition, the tones used to say directive illocutionary acts usually really imperative or coerce. When heard, interlocutor will immediately aware that this utterance is somewhat imperative and needs to be done.

Researcher found 117 (one hundred and seventeen) utterances containing directive illocutionary acts. This makes directive as the most frequently used illocutionary speech acts by the main character of Beyond the Blackboard movie for the reason that as a teacher the main character needs to guide or instruct the students to execute some act. The researcher takes one utterance containing directives for further discussion. [00:13:12] Stacey: Okay, come to class everybody. Ding-ding-ding-ding, that is the sound of the magic bell.

Stacey's utterance represents the illocutionary acts of convincing or directing someone to take some action, thus making this utterance a directive act. Searle cited in Bindiya et al. (2023) stated that directives are expressions that instruct, request, or encourage the listener to act. In this utterance, Stacey was a little enraged since the children initially did not obey her then she added, "Ding-ding-ding-ding" to catch their attention. After that sound, the children finally listen to her. She also makes sure every student comes to class first before then she comes to the classroom too.



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There is a condition that makes directive speech acts uttered by someone. In this case, it is the condition that someone did not do something they are supposed to do or else someone did not in the place they are supposed to be. For example, in this scene the students should be in class studying, yet they are still playing outside, thus Stacey as teacher commands or instructs them to enter the classroom.

2. Representative Speech Acts

Representative illocutionary speech acts are the act of linking the speaker (or other influential members of the class) to the veracity of the thought being conveyed, to the reality of the transmitted idea. The representative speech acts classes are state, claim, believe, remind, suggest, report, assure, agree, predict, insist, hypothesize, boast, complain, conclude or deduce (Yulian & Mandarani, 2023).

When uttered, representative illocutionary does not perceive as imperative sentence unlike the directive. The speaker stating fact, idea or a belief in which makes the interlocutor doing some act regarding the utterance. The tones or intonation used also not as coerce as directive, rather flat or without much sentiment. In addition, Rinandi et al. (2024) also state that the representative speech act in the form of a statement tends to be subjective, as it explains information or something that exist in speaker's mind.

Researcher found 48 (forty-eight) utterances containing representative illocutionary acts. This placed the representative speech act in the second most often used speech act by the main character in *Beyond the Blackboard* movie. Representative illocutionary speech acts may not be as significant a directive, therefore as a teacher, the main character sometimes needs to uttered an idea, thought or statement to the students during the learning process using representative act. Researcher takes one utterance containing representative for further discussion. [00:19:44] Stacey: Excuse me, Sir. Class has already started

The representative emphasizes articulating what the speaker perceives as the truth, facts, and actual events (Hartono et al., 2022). In this utterance, Stacey uttered those for the other person to know that she is in the middle of a lesson and does not want to be interrupted. Representative uttered because the speaker wants the listener to know what the speaker believes to be the case or what happens at that time.

Stacey gives statements to an intruder in the classroom. Someone unauthorized entered the classroom during the teaching learning process, thus Stacey uttered the utterance above to state the situation they are in. The unauthorized person respectfully answered that he just wanted to give a coat to his daughter, because his daughter forgot to wear her coat.



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3. Commissive Illocutionary Speech Acts

Commissive illocutionary speech acts are an act in which the speaker commits to a future action. Commissive speech act can take the form of promises, threat, refusals, or pledges (Devi & Degaf, 2021). The specialty of commissive lies on the one who act, if other illocutionary act's purpose is to influence others to do something, the commissive illocutionary speech act's purpose tends to bind the speaker to act later. The actions can be performed by speaker to self or acted as a part of a social group (Desica & Ambalegin, 2021). While uttered, commissive has somewhat urgency tones to reassure the listener that the speaker will do the thing uttered.

The main character did not use commissive as often as directive, hence the main character sometimes said utterance containing commissive as the main character cannot do some act at that time and can only do it at other times. The main character used commissive speech acts to reassure the interlocutor. Researcher found 17 (seventeen) utterances containing a commissive speech act, then took one utterance for further discussion. [00:10:34] Stacey: I will call you back, okay.

In this utterance, Stacey said something she will do in the near future. In the theory of illocutionary speech acts this kind of utterance is classified as a commissive speech act. Commissive acts are actions undertaken by speakers to pledge themselves to specific future courses of action (Desica & Ambalegin, 2021). Stacey was in the middle of speaking through telephone then again someone called her, in consequence, she abruptly finished the telephone and uttered the utterance above. One of many conditions for someone to utter a commissive speech act can be seen from the utterance above in which someone binds themselves into future action by saying something.

4. Expressive Illocutionary Speech Acts

Expressive illocutionary speech acts reveal the speaker's psychological disposition towards a presumed condition of affairs. Its function is to understand the speaker's. Expressive includes actions such as thanking, apologizing, welcoming, condoling, pleasuring, congratulating and condolences (R. A. Putri et al., 2020). One can easily recognized expressive illocutionary speech acts as it is tending to possess words containing human's expression such as happy, sorry, sad, sorry, *etc.* When meeting new people, expressive speech acts functions to express a person's psychological state. Therefore, when speakers meet other people, they will express their feelings and attitudes by saying words (J. O. M. Putri & Ariyaningsih, 2023).



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The main character rarely showed or expressed psychological disposition towards others, thus making the main character rarely used expressive speech acts. Researcher found 11 (eleven) utterances containing expressive speech act, then takes one utterance for further discussion. [00:20:56] Stacey: I am sorry sweetie, I can understand okay, I am sorry.

This utterance may seem as apology while based in the context, the utterance was classified as condole. Condoling or consoling classified as expressive speech act. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985) cited in Aritionang & Ambalegin (2023) stated the expressive speech act "condole" is an expressive speech act in which the speaker expresses sympathy, comfort, and condolences to someone who has experienced a loss or suffering. This utterance stated by Stacey while consoling on of the students which felt hungry during class for the reason that the students did not consume early meal. Someone can utter expressive speech act when they need to express their feelings, the very same case with the utterance above.

5. Declarative Illocutionary Speech Acts

Declarative illocutionary speech acts is an act intended by the speaker to create new things or change a condition or status. The successful implementation of this illocution will lead to conformity between the contents of proportion and reality, such as surrender, dismiss, release, baptize, exclude, appoint, and determine (R. A. Putri et al., 2020). Declarative illocutionary speech acts have a power to change something between the speaker and interlocutor, for instance, condition, status or atmosphere around. Directive uttered with somewhat tones that has a bit of proud and determination. This type of speech acts is mostly found in special occasion, even if it is not special occasion, the vibes around this illocutionary speech acts feel special. This speech acts include excommunication, declaration of war, baptism and dismissal (Malau et al., 2022). All the events stated are special or rare occasion.

Researcher found 5 (five) utterances containing declarative speech acts. This makes declarative as the least used illocutionary act by the main character of beyond the blackboard movie. The main character infrequently used declarative since this speech act is only used when the speaker wants to change a condition of status, therefore the main character did not wish to do so. The main character only used declarative in some special moments like when the main character needs to shift the shelter residence's behavior and thought. Researcher then takes one the utterance containing declarative speech acts for further discussion.

[00:30:28] Stacey: You would be the leader.

In the theory of speech act, the utterance in Data 1 is classified as declarative speech act for the reason that such utterance declares someone or something along



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with slight changes after it is uttered. One type of declarative speech acts is an act of appointing. Searle & Vanderveken (1985) cited in Murtini & Ambalegin (2022) stated that appointing is a declarative speech act where one assigns a person to take on a position or status.

In this utterance, Stacey appoints one student as the unofficial leader of the class. This may seem unusual however the student Stacey appointed was neither a model student nor the goodie two shoes, apparently it can be considered as the most mischievous student, yet a natural born leader as he has some charisma that makes other students comply to this student. Declarative speech acts can be uttered in conditions which make someone or some situation change akin to the utterance above.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions above, the researchers finally concluded that the main character in *Beyond the Blackboard* movie uttered all types of Searle's illocutionary speech acts namely directive, representative, commissive, expressive and declarative. In addition, the most dominantly used type of speech act is directive speech act. Directive speech acts are frequently used in the education field both in movies and real-life, especially with teachers for the reason that as an educator, teachers additionally must become other figures beside the teacher figure such as authoritative figure and instructor. Teachers need to guide the students to do as the learning process needs the students to do for the sake of the students' education, thus this makes teachers often use directive illocutionary speech acts.

Representative speech acts are not as significant as directive, hence this type of speech acts still is often used by teachers. While teaching, a teacher occasionally states an idea or fact to the students. Teacher also needs to represent the idea or fact to students, thus making the teacher also often used as a representative. Commissive speech used by the speaker to reassure the interlocutor that the speaker will do something they currently cannot do. By saying a commissive speech act, the speaker is bound to do as said. This kind of utterance is sometimes used by teachers for the exact condition. For expressive speech, it is frequent in accordance with the person itself. There are kinds of humans which rarely express their psychological disposition, while there are kinds that always express their feelings honestly. The main character in the movie researcher observe are the kind that rarely express psychological disposition. Declarative illocutionary speech acts are scarcely used by teachers as when uttered, declarative can change situation or status, teachers only used this type of speech on rare occasions or special moments.

Searle's illocutionary act theory helped to find and classify the utterances in the movie. The classification has defined types and characteristics, compelling the analysis to be directed and uncomplicated. Thus, assist the researcher find the needed data. The dominance of directive illocutionary speech acts used by the main



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character as a teacher underscores teacher's critical role in classroom management and student engagement. By facilitating clear instruction and guidance, these speech acts enhance communication, promote active learning and empower students to participate effectively in real-life learning process.

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