

Conference Paper

An Analysis of Expressive Speech Acts Types in “The King’s Speech”

Dwi Wahyuningtyas^{1*}, Sirniawati²

¹Law Department, Faculty of Law, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur, Surabaya 60294, Indonesia

²English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Cirebon 209617, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: ABSTRACT

E-mail:
dwi.wahyun-
ingtyas.ih@upnjatim.ac.id

People often give information or utter something where the words they utter are considered as an action. That is called “speech acts”. Speech acts have some types, one of which is the illocutionary speech act. Illocutionary acts consist of assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarations. This study will focus on the use of expressive speech acts as this type of speech act is often found in some literary works such as drama and movies or films. The film that was chosen to be analyzed was “The King’s Speech”. The researchers studied the types of expressive speech acts in the movie. Descriptive qualitative was employed as the design of this study by using several approaches; mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective. The findings revealed that there were expressive congratulating, expressive attitude, expressive wishing, expressive thanking, and expressive apologizing as types of expressive speech acts found in the film “The King’s Speech”.

Keywords: Expressive speech acts, The king’s speech

Introduction

The speech act is among the aspects of English speaking skill, which is defined as “A kind of action being performed by people when they use language” (Fasold & Linton, 2006). According to Searle’s basic taxonomy (in Nastri, Pena, and Hancock, 2006), one main category of speech acts is an expressive speech act. It is the type of activity that manifest psychological states and relate to the feelings or emotions expressed to the receiver (e.g., “It’s been a sad day”). This study emphasized the use of expressive speech acts by the main character in a film titled “The King’s Speech”.

A previous study was conducted by Nurdiansyah (2018) and focused on analyzing illocutionary acts in the Heroes series. He found 6351 illocutionary acts in his study divided into some categories or types; declarations, expressive, commissives, representatives, and directives. In addition, he also found some types of the social function of speech acts; competitive, collaborative, convivial, and conflictive. The third previous study was conducted by Sirwan and Yulia (2017) who analyzed expressive speech acts used by Steve Rogers as the main character in the movie, Civil War. Their study revealed that expressive speech acts used in the movie had several purposes and functions; the expressive speech act of wishing, the expressive speech act of congratulation, the expressive speech act of condolence, the expressive speech act of thanking, the expressive speech act of attitude, the expressive speech act of apology, the expressive speech act of greeting, the expressive speech act of lamentation, the expressive speech act of agreement, and expressive speech act of exclamation. These findings showed that there were some types and functions of expressive speech acts. These three previous studies analyzed speech acts found in movies or series. It indicates movies or series are the media where expressive speech acts can be found.

How to cite:

Wahyuningtyas, D., & Sirniawati. (2023). An analysis of expressive speech acts types in “The King’s Speech”. 7st International Seminar of Research Month 2022. NST Proceedings. pages 635-642. doi: 10.11594/ nstp.2023.33103

Other than in movies or films, speech acts are often seen in human communication. This is acceptable since movies tend to interpret and imitate human life. Thus, there are some previous researchers of speech acts who analyze film as their objects.

It seems common that researchers pay more attention to the illocutionary speech act (in the first previous research, the researcher analyzes expressive and assertive which belong to the illocutionary speech act, while in the second previous study, it researched about illocutionary speech act). While the third previous study focused on expressive speech act that becomes part of illocutionary acts. It implies that the illocutionary speech act still has many other aspects to be analyzed.

Hence, the present study aims to analyze a film to identify the uttered expressive speech act. Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech* (2010) was chosen based on several reasons. First, this film consists of dialogues where expressive speech acts can be analyzed clearly. Second, this film is very famous, with the setting of Britain Kingdom, this film became one of the best films in 2010 and received many awards in some events, one of them being the 83rd Academy Awards in 2011 for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Original Screenplay.

The speech of King George VI was chosen due to its critical position as the main character. As a king, he was also involved in massive communications, both public and private. It particularly interests the researchers that the figure of King George VI was described as someone who was often stressed, frustrated, and depressed. He stammered, yet was forced to lead a kingdom as a replacement for his brother. Based on the preliminary observation, King George VI often uttered expressive speech acts, which seems to closely relate to his psychological state. Hence, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What were the main character's expressive speech acts in Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech*?
2. What were the types of the main character's expressive speech acts in Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech*?
3. What was the most dominant type of the main character's expressive speech acts in Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech*?

Literature Review

Film

Stam and Raengo (2004), state the film is not only entertainment but also a kind of industrial and political culture. It is a type of mediated communication where the world's countries develop films with their specific values following their regions. It appears that Hollywood has been the biggest movie industry, and the styles of Hollywood films can be found in any movie in the world (Ibbi, 2013). Later, Widayanti and Kustinah (2018) asserted that film is a piece of literary work that contains dialogues spoken among its characters. These definitions summarize that film is a series of moving images or pictures that reflect the life of people in certain communities and function as entertainment and communication.

Speech act

Kearns (1994) defines a speech act as "An intentional, meaningful act performed with an expression or expressions is called speech act". It is also stated by Searle (1979 in Aslinda and Syafyahya, 2010), that speech act is the product or result of a sentence in certain conditions and is the smallest unity from lingual interaction. Speech act also refers to the theory that emphasizes more on examining the meaning and intention of a sentence, not the theory which tries to examine sentence structure. Chaer and Agustina (2010) add that a speech act can be identified when the utterance also states an action. Thus, a speech act can occur when the speaker utters a sentence while performing.

Accordingly, a speech event is notably similar to a speech act. It is the existence of linguistic interaction in one or more types of utterance that involves two parties, namely, the speaker and

interlocutor, with one main discourse, in certain times, places, and situations (Chaer & Agustina, 2010). However, there are several differences between speech events and speech acts.

Among the differences is that the speech event emphasizes more the event goal, while the speech act emphasizes more the meaning or significance of the act in a speech but all of them exist in the communication process. Different from a speech event as a social sign, a speech act is more personal, characterized by an individual's psychological state, and its existence is determined by the speaker's communication ability in facing certain situations. Aslinda and Syafyaha, (2010) stated that all lingual interactions involve speech acts. The forms of speech act themselves can be also statements, questions, and commands.

Austin (1962) asserted that speech acts can be divided into three based on their acts; locutionary (the act of saying something), illocutionary (the act of performing when saying something), and perlocutionary (the act performed as the result of saying something). Different perspectives on speech acts shown by Austin and Searle influence the categories of speech. Austin's speech act perspective lies heavily on the speakers, while Searle's is from the listener. According to Chaer and Agustina (2010), such differences are due to the difficulties in examining the intention of the speakers, while the interpretation of the interlocutor (listener) is easier to examine by looking at the listeners' reactions.

Gars and Neu (1995) describe that "Speakers and hearers are successful speech act users when they have control over the speech act sets for a given speech act in the language in which they converse". It is also stated that the control itself must be socioculturally and sociolinguistically appropriate behavior. In this case, the sociocultural ability is the respondents' skill at choosing speech act strategies suitable given consisting of (1) the culture involved, (2) the age and sex of the speakers, (3) their social class and occupations, and (4) their roles and status in the interaction. Meanwhile, sociolinguistic ability refers to respondents' skill at choosing suitable linguistic types to express certain strategies to realize the speech act, such as the expression of regret in an apology or registration of a gripe in a complaint.

Kinds of Speech act

Trask and Stockwell (1998), define "Austin originally distinguished three aspects of a speech act: the locutionary act (saying something), the illocutionary act (what you're trying to do by speaking), and the perlocutionary act (the effect of what you say)".

- *Locutionary Act*

One of the locutionary act definitions is given by Sadock (1974), who defines locutionary as acts that communicate, meaning that in saying locutionary act, one is truly intentionally saying something. For example, "*I am thirsty*" means that the speaker only wants to announce that she wants to drink without any intention to ask other people to take a glass of water for her.

According to Chaer and Agustina (2010), a locutionary act is presented in the form of a meaningful sentence that is easy to understand. Thus, Chaer and Agustina (2010) highlight the locutionary act as a prepositional because it only relates to meaning.

- *Perlocutionary act*

According to Chaer and Agustina (2010), a perlocutionary act reflects the reaction or utterance toward the listener. Björgvinsson (2011) adds that "Perlocutionary utterances are utterances that are supposed to affect the hearer". One example is when a doctor says, "Maybe, you suffer from diabetes mellitus", which potentially makes the patient sad and panicked. Vanderveken and Kubo (2001) describe that perlocutionary acts can convince, please, influence, amuse, or embarrass the hearer.

- *Illocutionary Act*

Trask and Stockwell (1999) define an illocutionary act as an act that tries to do something by speaking. Björgvinsson (2011) adds that an illocutionary act is done by communicating the intent

to accomplish something. This speech act is mostly concerned with behavior and permission-giving, saying thank you, ordering, offering, and promising (Chaer & Agustina, 2010). For example, "Thank you for believing in me". When an illocutionary act ties to meaning, the meaning of the illocutionary act relates to the value brought by its preposition.

a. *The Categories of Illocutionary Acts*

Searle (1979), divides five general categories of the illocutionary act, they are, assertive, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarations.

✓ **Assertives**

An assertive act is used to tell people how things are, in his publication before he used the term "representative" (Searle, 1979). The assertive act is used to describe fact where "The point or purpose of the members of the assertive class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition" (Searle, 1979) defines. This kind of illocutionary act is also used to express the indirect request and also order, but not in the form of these both utterances

Searle (1979) also defines assertiveness can mean indirect directive. For example, "Excuse me, Miss, you sit on my chair". More than the speaker's intention to indicate that the "miss" sits on the speaker's chair, but it also indicates that the speaker wants the lady to leave the chair. According to Leech (1980), the utterances such as affirm, allege, assert, forecast, predict, announce, and insist belong to this kind of illocutionary act.

✓ **Directives**

Searle (1979) denotes that directives are the speech act used by the speaker to get the listener to do something, such as ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, and advise. Björgvinsson (2011) defines that directives have a word-to-word fit because they are connected with the *want* that the listener should do with *what* is proposed. Orders and requests that belong to directives cannot be true or false, but they can be obeyed, disobeyed, complied with, granted, denied, and so on.

✓ **Commissives**

Qadir and Riloff (2011) state that "A commissive speech act occurs when the speaker commits to a future course of action". Björgvinsson (2011) describes that it comprises utterances like promises, vows, pledges, or verbal contracts. It is similar to directives, but commissive is not subject to truth conditions. This is because a commitment is neither true nor false, rather it is kept, broken, or accomplished. According to Searle's perspective, Austin's definition of commissives appeared unexceptionable, and the verbs listed as commissive do not actually belong to that class at all, such as "shall", "intend", "favour", and the others.

✓ **Declarations**

Based on Searle (1979), declarations aim to change the world through utterances. Björgvinsson (2011) confirms that in certain conditions, a declaration can create a situation in the world that did not exist before, like in the wedding declaration. Declaration also causes several changes in the status or condition of something (Searle, 1979), which makes the declaration different from the other categories. Because of it, declaration becomes the strongest type of illocutionary act.

✓ **Expressives**

It is defined by Qadir and Riloff (2011) that expressives is "An expressive speech act that occurs in conversation when a speaker expresses his or her psychological state to the listener". It states the feelings and attitudes of the speaker (Searle, 1979). While Yule (1996a) explains that an expressive act tends to state the speaker's feeling, and functions to show his/ her psychological attitude toward the condition being

experienced. They can be caused by something the speaker or the hearer does, and also by the speaker's experience (Yule, 1996b). The expressive act also reflects statements of happiness, difficulty, pleasure, hate, or misery.

According to Vanderveken and Kubo (2001), among expressive verbs are "thank" (to express gratitude), "congratulate" (to express pleasure), and "apologies" (to express sorrow or regret some state of affairs that the speaker is responsible for), "condole" (to express sympathy), "praise" (to express approbation), "complain" (to express discontent), "lament" (to express sadness or sorrow), "protest" (to express disapproval), "boast" (to express pride that what is boasted about is good for the speaker), "compliment" (to express approval of the hearer for something), "deplore" (to express strong sorrow), "welcome" (to welcome somebody), and "greet" (to show recognition courteously). "Deprecate" or insult, as uttered by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2008), and "wish" as uttered by Wahyuni (2008). According to Searle (1976), and Yule (1996b), there are six types of expressive speech acts, they are:

✓ ***Expressives for Thanking***

Searle (1976) defines thankfulness as an utterance to show one's gratefulness for others' service. Expressives for thanking can also be defined as an expression of gratitude on the part of the speaker to the addressee. In addition, Vanderveken and Kubo (2001) also defines that *to thank* is *to express gratitude* (sincerity condition). Also, there is a preparatory condition to the effect that the hearer is responsible for a state of affairs that is good for the speaker. An example of thanking is: "*Thank you so much for helping me*".

✓ ***Expressives for Apologizing***

Apologizing is an expression of regret. Based on Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary, "apologise" means "say that you are sorry". Other terms related to apologies are alibi out of, apologies for, ask forgiveness, beg pardon, express regret, plead guilty, and do penance. An example of apologizing is "*I'm sorry, I cannot go with you*".

✓ ***Expressives for Congratulating***

Searle (1976) explains that expressives for congratulating show the speaker's sympathy toward the events experienced by the hearers, including the feeling of pleasure toward their luck, the feeling of honour toward their ability, and the feeling of compassion toward their sadness. Congratulating also expresses the feeling of pleasure toward the hearer's luck, applauding expresses the feeling of honour toward the hearer's ability, while condoling expresses the feeling of compassion toward the hearer's sadness. Examples of congratulation are: "*Congratulations on your success*" or "*How poor you are*".

✓ ***Expressives for Greeting***

According to Searle (1976), a greeting is a welcoming expression and an act of greeting by the speaker to the hearer or for welcoming visitors. An example of a greeting is: "*Hello, good morning*".

✓ ***Expressives for Wishing***

- ✓ It is explained by Searle (1976) that a wish is an expression of the speaker's desire or wants to expect it becomes reality. The speaker wants to express what he hopes to come true as what he expected. An example of wishes is: "*I wish you all the best*".

✓ **Expressives for Attitude**

This type of expressive speech act expresses the feeling of disagreement or dislike with the hearer's attitude (Yule, 1996). Those expect the hearer to mull over the speaker's utterance. Examples of expressions for attitude such as: "*You are so weird*", "*It's so bad*", "*I'm not here to do that*", etc.

According to Tsohatzidis (1994), expressive is the weakest illocutionary act. Vanderveken and Kubo (2001) confirm that expressive is caused by the null direction of fit which is owned by this kind of illocutionary act. It means that the purpose of an expressive speech act is just to express (or make clear) the speaker's mental state about a represented fact.

In addition, as stated by Vanderveken and Kubo (2001), "Discourses with the empty direction of fit have the expressive point: they serve to express common attitudes of their speakers. Such is the exchange of greetings, eulogies, verbal protestations, and public lamentations". Thus, speakers of expressive utterances neither do try to represent how things are nor they want to change things. They just want to manifest what they feel about them. Thus, "There is no question here of success or failure of fit. This is why these acts do not have conditions of satisfaction" Vanderveken and Kubo (2001). Expressives of attitude are either appropriate or not. They are only inappropriate when the fact spoken of does not exist in the world, or when the mode of the mental state expressed is not at all appropriate for this fact.

Material and Methods

Research design

Ary et al. (2006) define qualitative research as a tool to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables. In this study, the expressive speech act was investigated by emphasizing the total picture and small scope. In turn, it generates a depth of understanding of the expressive speech act.

The object of the study

The object of this study is the expressive speech act of King George VI, as the main character in the film *The King's Speech* directed by Tom Hooper and written by David Seidler.

Data collection

Documents were mainly employed in this study as the data collection method. Ary et al. (2006) state that "The term *documents* here refers to a wide range of written, physical, and visual materials, including what other authors may term artifacts". Hence, the film was employed as the data collection method.

The data were collected through the following steps:

1. Choosing the media fit for data collection. This study used a notebook and a sound speaker.
2. Watching the film and understanding the story.
3. Listening to and recognizing the expressive speech acts of King George VI throughout the film.
4. Matching the utterances containing expressive speech act from the film with the film script.
5. Listing the expressive speech acts found in the film.

Data Analysis

Data analysis influences the validity of the study result. Therefore, it must be conducted accurately and specifically. The steps of data analysis in this study are as follows:

1. Identifying the types of expressive speech act found in the film.

2. Elaborating the data and grouping them.
3. Classifying the expressive speech acts found in the film based on the problems of the study.
4. Calculating the percentage of the total expressive speech acts found in the film.
5. Concluding research findings.

Results and Discussion

From the data above, it can be obtained that there were twenty and five types (expressives for attitude, expressives for thanking, expressives for apologizing, expressives for wishing, and expressives for congratulating) of King George VI in *The King's Speech*. Five types of expressive speech acts were also found, and it can be inferred that there were many emotional scenes. From those types of expressive speech acts, several kinds of expressive verbs as explained by Vanderveken and Kubo (1985), were also found, they were thanked, apologies, protest, insult, wish, and compliment.

Among the differences is that the speech event emphasizes more the event goal, while the speech act emphasizes more the meaning or significance of the act in a speech but all of them exist in the communication process. Different from a speech event as a social sign, a speech act is more personal, characterized by an individual's psychological state, and its existence is determined by the speaker's communication ability in facing certain situations. Aslinda and Syafyahya, (2010) stated that all lingual interactions involve speech acts. The forms of speech act themselves can be also statements, questions, and commands.

Austin (1962) asserted that speech acts can be divided into three based on their acts; locutionary (the act of saying something), illocutionary (the act of performing when saying something), and perlocutionary (the act performed as the result of saying something). Different perspectives on speech acts shown by Austin and Searle influence the categories of speech. Austin's speech act perspective lies heavily on the speakers, while Searle's is from the listener. According to Chaer and Agustina (2010), such differences are due to the difficulties in examining the intention of the speakers, while the interpretation of the interlocutor (listener) is easier to examine by looking at the listeners' reactions.

In this research, expressive attitude was the most dominant type dominated by "protest" with six utterances. Because this film was about a struggling stammerer king, it was often shown that King George VI was frustrated, stressed, and dissatisfied with his condition and the situation around him. He often protested and disagreed with what happened.

Conclusion

From the findings, it could be concluded that: 1) expressive speech acts were mostly used by King George VI in *The King's Speech* and some examples are "Thank you", "Only my family uses that", "I'm not...here to discuss personal matters", "Thank you, Doctor", "Thanks for your time", "I don't wish to intrude", "I'm not going to sit here warbling", "Because you're peculiar", "Thank you", "I am not an alternative to my brother", "You're the disappointing son of a brewer", "A jumped-up jackeroo from the outback", "You're a nobody", "Waiting for a King to apologize, one can wait rather a long wait", "Logue, we can't stay here all day", "I'm not here to rehearse, Dr. Logue", "I don't know how to thank you...for what you've done", "I expect I shall have to...do a great deal more", "Thank you, Logue", and "Well done. My friend", with total of 20 expressive speech acts; 2) The types of expressive speech acts were expressive for attitude (10) Expressives for thanking (6) 3) Expressives for apologizing (2) 4) Expressives for wishing (1), and 5) Expressives for congratulating (1); and 3) The most dominant type of expressive speech act was expressive for attitude with 10 expressive speech acts.

Acknowledgment

This work was financially supported by Research Institutions and Community Service (LPPM) of UPN “Veteran” Jawa Timur through “UBER PUBLIKASI BATCH 1 2022”. Therefore, we are grateful for this funding and support of this research.

References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, S. (2006). *Introduction to Research in Education*. Canada: Thomson.
- Aslinda & Syafyahya, L. (2010). *Pengantar linguistik*. PT Refika Aditama.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Björqvinnsson, L. A. (2011). *Speech act theory: A Critical Overview*.
- Chaer, A., & Agustina, L. (2010). *Sosiolinguistik pengenalan awal: Edisi revisi*. Rineka Cipta.
- Fasold, R. & Connor-Linton, J. (2006). *An introduction to language and linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gars, S. M., & Neu, J. (1995). *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language*. Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Ibbi, A. A. (2014). Hollywood, the American image and the Global Film Industry. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 3(1), 93–106. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2013.81>
- Jucker, A. H., & Taavitsainen, I. (2008). *Speech acts in the history of English*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Retrieved from: gen.lib.rus.ec. on 22nd May 2013.
- Leech, G. N. (1980). *Explorations in semantics and pragmatics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Nurdiansyah, A. (2018). A study of illocutionary acts in Heroes series. *Language Horizon*, 06(01), 1–10.
- Qadir, A., & Riloff, E. (2011). *Classifying sentences as speech acts in message board posts*. Retrieved from <http://www.cs.utah.edu/~riloff/pdfs/emnlp11-speechacts.pdf> on 20th May 2013.
- Sadock, J. M. 1974. *Toward a Linguistic theory of speech acts*. New York.
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sirwan, L.B., & Yulia, Y. (2017). An analysis of expressive speech acts used by Steve Rogers as the main character in Civil War Movie. *Journal of English Language and Language Teaching (JELLT)*, 1(2), 61–66. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36597/jellt.v1i2.1873>
- Stam, R., & Raengo, A. (2004). *A companion to film and literature*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Hooper, D. T. (2010). *The King's Speech*. The Weinstein Company, 2010.
- The King's Speech*. Retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_King's_Speech on 20th October 2013.
- Trask, R. L. and Stockwell, P. (1999). *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from: gen.lib.rus.ec. on 28th May 2013.
- Tsohatzidis, S. L. (1994). *Foundations of speech act theory: Philosophical and linguistic perspectives*. Taylor & Francis Routledge.
- Vanderveken, D., & Kubo, S. (2001). *Essays in speech act theory (pragmatics and beyond new series)*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Wahyuni, N. (2008). *Expressive illocutionary acts in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park: A pragmatic analysis*. Unpublished Thesis. Medan: University of Sumatera Utara.
- Widayanti, S. R., & Kustinah, K. (2018). *Speech act analysis on walt disney film Entitled "Frozen" (A Pragmatic Study)*. 166(Prasasti), 429–433. <https://doi.org/10.2991/prasasti-18.2018.79>
- Yule, G. (1996a). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (1996b). *The study of language*. Cambridge University Press.