

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMISSIVE SPEECH ACT USED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE "KNIVES OUT" MOVIE

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Abstract

Commissive speech acts are speech acts that bind the speaker to carry out what is stated in the speech. This research aims to analyze the types and the functions of commissives speech acts used by the characters in the *Knives Out* movie. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive in which the research instrument is the researcher herself. The utterances were classified based on the theory proposed by Searle (1985) and Austin (1969). The utterances found in that movie are classified into six types of commissives speech act: the promise, guarantee, refusal, threat, volunteer, and offer. The results revealed there are 13 data found in the *Knives Out* film. The function that the characters mainly use in the film is an act of illocution. In contrast, from 13 data, the researcher found 6 types of commissive speech acts are found in the *Knives Out* movie: 2 utterances for guarantee (guarantee), 2 utterances for promises (promise), 2 utterances for offers (to offer), 3 utterances for refuse (refuse), 2 utterances for threats (threatening), and 2 utterances for volunteers (volunteers). Then, the commissive speech act that is mainly produced by the characters is rejection.

Keywords: Commissives, Speech acts, and "Knives Out" Movie

INTRODUCTION

The use of language and speech acts is not limited in number. It raises a variety of speech that varies according to the purpose and statement told. One of which methods used in communicating the information from one to another is language. To understand the purpose of the statement through the language, this paper aims to reveal the possible specific effects according to every speech using commissive speech acts. While one of which methods used in communicating the information from one to another is language. However, along with the times, humans have their way of conveying the message. Various communication tools are created to make it easier for humans to communicate, either implicitly or sample. The film is one of the ways humans convey messages by carrying the theme of entertainment. Film as an artistic work of art that can be performed with or

without sound also means that the film is a mass communication media that carries messages that contain ideas vital to the public (audience) with significant influence. That is why the film has the function of education, entertainment, information, and encouraging creative work (UUP 2009: 2).

When someone communicates, at that moment, speech acts occur. As confirmed by Austin in Wibowo (2009: 32), an analysis of language expressions or interpretation of the contents of communication messages should not be limited to the meaning utterances only. Still, it must also examine the effects that the utterances can cause. Strictly speaking, speech acts are divided into locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Searle developed Austin's speech act theory by classifying it into five categories: assertive speech acts, directive speech acts, expressive speech acts, commissive speech acts, and declarative speech acts (Leech 1983: 164).

One of the speech acts that attract attention to the writer is a commissive speech act. In discussing the commissive speech acts, the researcher chose a movie to be the object of the study entitled *Knives out*. *Knives Out* is an American drama which Ryan Johnson wrote. This film represents the mystery of the death of a famous novelist with slick. *Knives Out* movie makes the audience curious about the continuation of the story in each character scene. One mystery has not finished yet; another problem arises. This movie is difficult to guess and makes the viewer mind-blowing because the scenes in this film do not match what we think. The movie also stars famous actors and actresses from various generations.

Moreover, the utterances in this film are more dominant in daily conversation. The stories in the movie contain many mysteries and debates that make this film have rich data related to commissive speech acts. Therefore, the researcher conducts research that focuses on the commissive speech acts in the *Knives Out*.

The term pragmatics comes from <pragmatics> introduced by Moris (1938) when systematizing Pierce's teachings on semiotics (sign science). Pragmatics is the science of pragmatics, namely the relationship between sign and its users. Semiotics has three branches, namely semantics, seintaktika / <syntaktic>, not <syntax>, and pragmatics. Pragmatics is language in use, a study of the meaning of an utterance in certain situations. The properties of language can be understood through pragmatics, namely how language is used in communication (Djajasudarma, 2012).

The relationship between pragmatic and speech acts is very close because the action speech is central to pragmatics (Dijk, 1977). Firstly, Djajasudarma (2012) explained that advocating discourse studies looking at his idea that context, the situation needs to be researched by linguists because language studies and language work consider the context of the case (Djajasudarma, 2012). Pragmatics covers speech acts, deixis, presuppositions, and conversational implicature (Purwo, 1990 in Chaer and Agustina, 2010). Pragmatics is the study of meanings delivered by the speaker (or writer) and interpreted by the listener (or reader). As a result, this study has more to do with analyzing what people mean by their speeches rather than by separate meanings of words or phrases used in the speech

itself. Pragmatics is the study of the intention of speakers. Pragmatics can be practically defined as the study of the meaning of an expression in certain situations (Leech, 2011). Pragmatics is a study about meaning concerning cases said (Leech, 2011).

Pragmatics is one of the fields of linguistics, specializing in the assessment of the relationship between language and speech context. Pragmatics is concerned with certain aspects of meaning (Levinson, 1983). Yule (1996) argued that pragmatics is the study of the meaning conveyed by the speaker (or writer) and interpreted by the listener (or reader). As a result of this study, it is related to analysing what is meant by the utterances rather than with separate meanings of words or phrases used in the speech itself. Linguists have established speech act theory in pragmatic analysis, but literary texts are also applied. Austin (1969) observed that not all sayings have "truth values."

Speech is a form of action and not just something about the world of action. A word or expression (speech act) is a function of language as a means of work. Actual speakers speak all sentences or utterances that contain certain communicative functions. Based on this opinion, it can be said that expressing something can be called an activity or action. It is possible because every speech has a specific purpose that affects others. According to Chair and Leonie (2010: 50), speech acts are symptoms individual, psychological, and sustainability is determined by the speaker's language ability in dealing with specific situations. The law is seen more in the meaning or meaning of the action in the speech. The responses in the speech will be seen from the purpose of the expression. Based on the opinion above, it can be said that speech acts are activity by saying something. Speech acts that have a purpose-specific cannot be separated from the concept of the speech situation. According to Austin in Fujibayashi (2005: 5), speech acts are classified into three types, namely locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and acts perlocution acts.

Commissive speech acts are speech acts that bind the speaker to carry out what is stated in his speech (Rustono 1999: 40). Promise, swear, threaten, declare ability, vow, and offer are speech which is included in the type of commissive act. Commissive is speech acts that the speaker uses to commit himself to some future action. They express their intention. They are promises, threats, and refusals. In using commissive, the speaker undertakes to make the world fit the words (via the speaker)" (Yule, 1996: 54). When people perform commissive, they may say their speech using performative verbs such as promise, swear, guarantee, and vow. As stated previously, commissives are differentiated into some types; those are a promise, guarantee, refusal, threat, volunteer, and offer.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses qualitative research because it describes the commissive speech act in the movie. Nevertheless, this paper focuses on pointing out the types and function of commissive speech acts using Austin's theory (1969). The data are utterances produced

by the movie characters, scripted into several classifications and containing commissive speech acts. The data source is the movie *Knives Out* (2019) by Ryan Johnson.

In this paper, the researchers were the main instrument in data collection. According to the utterances, the techniques used were listening and taking notes to identify the kinds of commissive speech acts. In collecting the data, the researchers are concerned about several characteristics of the commissive speech act, such as; locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

The data analysis technique used in this paper was descriptive techniques. The commissive speech act in movies entitled *Knives Out* (2019) is described by following some steps. The first is the identification of the data. It is applied to find out the character's utterances in the movie of *Knives Out*, which belongs to the commissive speech act. The second is data classification, collected speeches grouped into three kinds of commissive speech act. The third is data investigation, in which the speeches were grouped into several functions, including promise, guarantee, refusal, threat, volunteer, and offer. Fourth is data application of theories related to the purpose and functions of the utterances of the commissive speech acts. Lastly, making a conclusion based on the analyzed data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this discussion, the author discussed two main points related to the problems of this research. Firstly, this section is about the types of commissives speech act used by the main characters in the *Knives Out* movie by using Austin's theory (1969). Secondly, it is about the functions of commissive speech act used by the main characters in the *Knives Out* movie based on Searle's theory (1985).

The Types of Commissive Speech Act

Based on the data, the type of commissive speech act that mostly found in *Knives Out* movie is assertive illocution. The reason is this film tells each of the individuals who have given testimony and confirms if his actions are not wrong. The examples of rejection produced by the characters are the rejection performed by Harlan to refusal Walter, rejection utterance performed by Harlan to refuse Joni, and the rejection utterance produced by Blanc to refuse Thrombey family. Austin's theory of locution, is used to analyse the functions of commissive speech acts.

The first is the illocutionary act which can be in the form of commands, requests, suggestions, statements, promises, threats (Wolfram, Norrick 380). Sometimes the speaker commits informative speech acts. The purpose or meaning of the utterance does not match the precise meaning of the sentence. It can be found in data utterances 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Some of the data are presented below:

Table 1: Movie Scripted from *Knives Out*

D1	Joni: <i>You solved the tennis champion case. You're famous!</i> (With an expression of amazement at Blanc)
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	<p>Elliot: Mr. Blanc is not from the police and is officially not involved in the case; he is here as a consultant. I bet his existence.</p>
D2	<p>Blanc: Excuse me, I'm Sorry Ladies and gentleman, I would like to request that you all stay in town until the investigation is completed.</p> <p>Elliot: Well, he's gently requesting, but I'm going to have to make that in order no one move until we figure this all out.</p> <p>Joni: What? Can we ask why? Has something changed?</p> <p>Blanc: No</p> <p>Joni: No, it hasn't changed, or No, we can't ask?</p>
D3	<p>Harlan : Listen to me! If what you say is true. I'm finished, there's no way I survived. We have six minutes. We have to get you out of this. Think about your mother.</p> <p>Harlan : Your mother is still illegal in America, and if you become a suspect, the government will know about your mother. She was deported, and your family will be destroyed. But we won't let that happen, right? But you have to do what I say. Will you do it Marta? One last wish, for me, for your family.</p> <p>Marta : What do you want me to do?</p> <p>Harlan : Get down as noisy as possible, say goodbye. Talk about time. If you can get out of the gate, avoid the surveillance camera; pull over before the elephant statue. Parking and return home on foot. Take the hip way through the small gate. Pet dogs will recognize you, so there are no barks. You have to go up to the third floor without getting caught, and the only way is to climb the wall and enter through a secret window.</p> <p>Marta : Are you kidding?</p> <p>Harlan : No, do it.</p> <p>Harlan : And for God's sake, don't be noisy, the hardest part when you're inside.</p> <p>Marta : Is this the hard part?</p> <p>Harlan : Wear the robe and hat that is in my room</p> <p>Marta : Harlan, you are crazy. I can not</p> <p>Harlan : Our plan must be perfect so that the police can cross you off the suspect list. It sounds crazy, but it works. Walt is smoking outside, and he will see you faintly through the window. There was a witness when you got home, and the surveillance camera also recorded. And 20 minutes later, my son saw that I was still alive. See? Your rank dropped from suspect number one, so it's not at all. Get out of your way in, and don't show it.</p> <p>Marta : (do everything that Harlan says)</p>
D4	<p>Ransom : I am confused</p> <p>Martha : I'm also confused about why Harlan gave The Will to me</p> <p>Ransom : Calm down, are you hungry? Do you want to eat? Tell me everything about it when you finish.</p> <p>Martha : Ya</p> <p>Ransom : Hi Miss, Bring us food and please bring one empty bowl too</p> <p>Waiter : OK wait a minute</p>
D5	<p>Linda : Mr. Blanc, I know who you are</p> <p>Blanc : Let me be sure my presence will not interfere. I will be calm and respectful and be an observer of the truth.</p> <p>Richard : Fine. Are we close to the truth?</p> <p>Blanc : Almost, Harlan's nurse was in her position to work on a birthday celebration?</p> <p>Richard : Marta? I guess. Harlan hired him as a nurse if there is a medical need.</p>
D6	<p>Ransom : That is weird, but I understand now. The victory is meaningful.</p> <p>Ransom : I will not tell my family anything. You won't go to jail, and that detective won't catch you. And don't return the wealth. This is grandfather's heritage for us. Think about the things he has been through. This is Martha's heritage, the best for the family.</p>
D7	<p>Marta : (frantically calling for an ambulance)</p>

	<p>Harlan : suddenly closed the telephone connection</p> <p>Marta : <i>What happened to you?</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Marta, listen to me.</i></p> <p>Marta : <i>Harlan, I have to ...</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Never mind! Stop Marta! There's no time, you have to listen!</i></p> <p>Marta : <i>I'm going to call a family</i> (Run and fall immediately because the telephone cable stumbles)</p>
D8	<p>Elliot : <i>Hugh Drysdale?</i></p> <p>Ransom : <i>Ransom. Just call Ransom. My middle name, only the maid called me Hugh.</i></p> <p>Elliot : <i>OK, this is Wagner officer, I'm Lieutenant Elliot. We have a few questions.</i></p> <p>Wagner : <i>Sorry, sir? We are from the Police.</i></p> <p>Ransom : <i>Do you want to chase me? I don't want to talk.</i> <i>I'm upset.</i></p> <p>Elliot : <i>Hey, Benny, do you want to ask him? (Elliot points to Blanc)</i></p> <p>Blanc : <i>OK, what's up?</i></p> <p>Blanc : <i>Mr. Drysdale.</i></p> <p>Ransom : <i>CSI KFC? (Mocking tone and ignored)</i></p>
D9	<p>Harlan : <i>Walt!</i></p> <p>Walter : <i>Dad ... dad! You appointed me in charge. Let me do this! Please.</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Not "ours" book, son. That is my book.</i> <i>And this is not how we should talk. But it's unfair for you to be burdened.</i></p> <p>Walter : <i>You're firing me, dad?</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Yes, I fired you walt ...</i></p>
D10	<p>Harlan : (showed Richard a photograph of proof that he was having an affair)</p> <p>Richard : (close the laptop that contains a picture of him and his matter) <i>That is none of your business. Don't mind my marriage!</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>I know my daughter. And she certainly wants to know. I already wrote her a letter. Tomorrow she will read.</i></p> <p>Richard: <i>Harlan, I'm warning you. Do not interfere!</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>She has the right to know, and you will tell her.</i></p> <p>Richard : <i>Hell!</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Tell, or I'll tell!</i></p>
D11	<p>Harlan : <i>As you requested, send payment directly to the school. But the Phylis who handles your annual funds has sent you school fees as well. You doubled Meg's school fees and stole from me. One hundred thousand dollars per year, four years in a row.</i></p> <p>Joni : <i>Harlan, for some reason it got like this</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>But you should know that this is the last money for Meg and you received from me.</i></p> <p>Joni : <i>Come on, you misunderstood me.</i></p> <p>Harlan : <i>Joni, I know it hurts, but this is the best way. My decision cannot be contested.</i></p>

The illocutionary acts perform an act to do something. It means that the illocutionary act is a performance transferred by a communicative utterance. The illocutionary power from each type of speech act is used to classify the utterances. A directive is a speech act in which the speaker requests the hearer to do something that the speaker intends (Vinsensius, 2017).

The second is the perlocutionary act, which is an action or circumstance thoughts caused by or, consequently, saying something. In this study, the most perlocutionary act is deeply related to the story of Harlan's death, Blanc and the police give an investigation

of the entire Thrombey family to get answers related to questions raised around the night of Harlan's birthday until he died.

Searle (1993: 162) suggested the speech act function, which is a different situation according to the different types and degrees of courtesy. Functions can be classified into four classes: competitive, pleasant (Convivial), working together (collaborative), and conflictive. This study found two types of Illocutionary act functions.

The Functions of Commissive Speech Act

After analyzing the utterances produced by the main characters in the Knives Out movie using Searle's theory, there are six functions of commissives speech act: guarantee, offer, promise, refuse, threat, and volunteer. The researcher found 2 guarantee, 2 offer, 2 promise, 3 refuse, 3 threat, and 2 volunteer.

a. Guarantee

Guarantee, the speaker attempts to convince the hearer by several guarantee words. These guarantee terms such as I bet, I bet you, I guarantee, and so on. It is found in "**I bet his existence**" (data 1) and "**I would like to request**" (data 2) gently. The types of guarantees in this sub-chapter are not much different from previous studies, namely in the thesis by Husain (2018). The researcher found the same kind of guarantee that is two data with almost the same utterances.

b. Offer

The speaker tries to give an offer to the interlocutor. The offer sentences are found in question form. It is located in "**Will you do it, Marta?**" (data 3) and "**You want to eat**" (data 4).

c. Promise

A promise is a statement telling someone that you will do something or not to do something. This is a form of verbal commitment by one person to another to do something in the future (Searle, 1975). The speaker attempts to commit himself to do what the speaker said. The word is to convince the interlocutor that the speaker will do it sincerely. The promise words such as I swear, I'll, and so on. It is found in "**I will be calm and respectful and be an observer of the truth**" (data 5) and "**I will not tell my family anything**" (data 6).

d. Refuses

The speaker has a target or opinion. Therefore, the speaker refuses the interlocutor's mind. Most of the sentences are in negative forms. It is found in "**Stop Marta! There's no time**" (data 7), and I don't want to talk (data 8) and "**Not 'ours' book, but my book**" (data 9).

e. Threat

The speaker tries to persuade the interlocutor by giving an impact word in one of the sentences. It is found in "**Tell, or I'll tell!**" (data 10) and "**you should know that this is the last money**" (data 11).

f. Volunteer

The speaker attempts to help the interlocutor by turning him down. The researcher only found data which is located in "**Let me help you escape**" (data 12) and "**I'm gonna call an ambulance**" (data 13). Data 12 and 13 are presented below.

Table 2: Movie Scripted from Knives Out

D12	<p>Ransom : <i>That is weird, but I understand now. The victory is meaningful</i></p> <p>Ransom : <i>I will not tell my family anything. You won't go to jail, and that detective won't catch you. And don't return the wealth. This is grandfather's heritage for us. Think about the things he has been through. This is her heritage, the best for the family—the best for you. You've arrived at this point. Let me help you escape.</i></p> <p>Marta : <i>What's going on? This is not you. You could have handed me over to the police and still got his wealth. So what?</i></p> <p>Ransom : <i>Fuck my family. I can help you escape, and then you will give me my share of the wealth. Happy ending. Everything's lucky. You, me, Harlan.</i></p> <p>Marta : <i>Ya</i></p>
D13	<p>Martha : <i>Hello (by looking around and finding Harlan medical equipment)</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>(see people sitting) Listen, I don't know what you want. Whatever it is, we can work it out, but we've to figure it out right now, and I'm living with that report. (Martha approached someone)</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>Hello</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>Oh (surprised it was Fran)</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>Fran</i></p> <p>Fran : <i>(Fainting and Pain)</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>Can you hear me? Fran give me a sign if you can listen to me</i></p> <p>Fran : <i>You</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>Yes, it's me; it's Martha. You call me here, and you send me an email that's why I'm here. Did you take something? Oh, I'm going to call an ambulance now you're going to be OK. You're going to be okay, OK. Stay with me</i></p> <p>Fran : <i>Josh</i></p> <p>Martha : <i>What are you saying?</i></p> <p>Fran : <i>(dying and Martha provides medical assistance while waiting for an ambulance to arrive.).</i></p>

The function of the commissive speech act that mostly found in this research is refusal. The reason is that this film shows many of the Thrombey's family who are targeting the treasure of Harlan Thrombey. When detectives are asked at the time of the investigation, each individual's scene becomes a flashback while Harlan was still alive. During the study, many of Harlan's families do not claim that they are after Harlan's treasure. For example, the character Walter, when he is asked by the detective whether he had debated with Harlan or not, the answer is no. In fact, Walter had been arguing with Harlan. Another example is when Elliot asks Richard whether Harlan knew about Richard's affair or not, the answer is no. But the fact, Harlan already knew that Richard has a relationship. When remembering these things with Harlan, each member of the Thrombey family requests Harlan, but Harlan rejected all of their demands.

From the six functions of commissive speech acts, the comparison between the functions of commissive speech acts used in this thesis and the functions of commissive speech act in the previous studies are also seen in this part. A previous study conducted by Pandu (2017) showed four functions of speech acts. However, the researchers found six functions of commissives speech acts in the *Knives Out* movie. It can be stated that this research has rich data about the commissives speech act.

This current research had a different result from the previous studies, which had been done by Husain on *Commissive Speech Acts in Death of Salesman* by Arthur Miller in function of speech act. The functions of the utterances were guarantee, promise, and threat whereas the felicity condition mostly used by the characters. While the other research had been done by Putra on *A Study of Mr. Keating's Speech Act in Dead Poet's Society Movie* in types of speech act. The results show four types; directives, assertives, expressives, and commissives of speech act were found in movie script. Comparing the previous researches to this paper, direct and indirect speech are added according to types and functions of commissive speech act. The results show there are seven direct speeches and six direct speeches also found 13 data of functions of commissive speech acts: guarantee, offer, promise, refuses, threat, and voluntary.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the speech act found in the *Knives Out* movie, the researcher found the functions of commissive speech acts that characters use when they communicate in a variety of settings. There are guarantees, promises, offers, rejections, threats, and voluntary. The researcher found 13 data that guarantee speech acts found in two data, offer speech acts found in two data, a promise of speech acts found in two data, refused speech acts found in three data, threat speech acts found in two data, and voluntary speech act found in two data. The most dominant commissives speech act used by the main characters in the *Knives Out* movie is the refusal speech act.

Moreover, the researcher also found two main types of speech acts. Firstly, it is the illocutionary act. It can be found in data 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Secondly, it is a perlocutionary act, action, or state of mind caused by, or as a consequence of, saying something. According to Austin, the act of perlocution is 'what we produce or achieve by saying something such as convincing, persuading, obstructing, saying, shocking or misleading. It can be found in data 6, 12, and 13. Its functions can be classified into four types, namely: competitive, pleasant (Convivial), working together (collaborative), and conflict. The researcher found two types of illocutionary action functions. Some are competitive and friendly.

In general, the findings showed the types of commissive speech acts produced mainly by the characters in "*Knives Out*" are rejections. In contrast, the condition of authenticity used primarily by characters in "*Knives Out*" is an illocutionary act. Furthermore, seven utterances were performed directly from the 13 commissives speech acts, and six utterances were performed indirectly. The detective mostly uses direct speech acts during the

investigation. Meanwhile, indirect speech acts are used mainly by the member of Thrombey's family in their daily conversation.

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