



ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS IN THE FILM NORAH

ANALISIS TINDAK TUTUR ILOKUSIONER DALAM FILM NORAH

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Abstract

This study investigates the forms and functions of illocutionary acts in the film Norah (2023) using a qualitative descriptive approach. The research problem centers on how dialogic interactions and rural Saudi socio-cultural contexts shape the distribution of illocutionary types. Data were collected via observation and note-taking, then classified according to Searle's five categories (assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, declarative) and analyzed through three stages: data collection, analysis, and presentation. The findings reveal that illocutionary speech acts in the film Norah are dominated by directives in the form of commands, prohibitions, and invitations, which highlight the speaker's role in controlling actions. In addition, expressive and commissive acts appear in the form of advice, requests, and polite expressions that function to maintain harmony and interpersonal closeness. Overall, the use of illocutionary acts in the film reflects social relations and the dynamics of everyday interaction in rural Arab society.

Keywords : Pragmatic, speech acts, illocutionary.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bentuk dan fungsi tindak tutur ilokusi dalam film Norah (2023) dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Rumusan masalah berfokus pada bagaimana interaksi dialogis dan konteks sosial-budaya pedesaan Arab Saudi membentuk distribusi jenis ilokusi. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik simak-catat, diklasifikasikan menurut lima kategori Searle (asertif, direktif, komisif, ekspresif, deklaratif), dan dianalisis melalui tiga tahap: pengumpulan, analisis, dan penyajian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur ilokusi dalam film Norah didominasi oleh direktif berupa perintah, larangan, dan ajakan yang menegaskan posisi penutur sebagai pengatur tindakan. Selain itu, ditemukan pula tindak tutur ekspresif dan komisif yang berfungsi menjaga keharmonisan serta kedekatan interpersonal. Secara keseluruhan, penggunaan ilokusi dalam film ini merefleksikan relasi sosial dan dinamika interaksi masyarakat pedesaan Arab.

Kata Kunci : Pragmatik, tindak tutur, ilokusi.



1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication. Communication is the process of conveying messages between a speaker and a listener (Muliana, 2017 in Alifah et al., 2022). Good communication occurs when the speaker and listener use polite language. In the communication process, it is important for the messages conveyed by the speaker and listener to share a common meaning. This common meaning is highly dependent on the context in which the utterance occurs. If the context differs, the meaning of the utterance can change. Utterances themselves have specific goals and functions and can lead to certain impacts or consequences (Afham and Utomo, 2021 in Alifah et al., 2022). According to Wijana (1996), even though the form of utterances can vary, the intended meaning can be the same (Syahrin, 2012). Utterances or speech acts are subjects examined in the field of pragmatics. According to Tragoutt & Pratt (1980:226), the term pragmatics refers to the communicative ability possessed by a speaker. Bowen (2001) explains that pragmatics is the part of language that governs how we use language in specific social situations. This includes rules about what should be said, how to deliver it, the appropriate time to speak, and how to use language to be accepted by others. In short, pragmatics covers a person's social competence in using language.

A speech act is the result of a sentence in a specific situation that is part of linguistic communication. According to Olenti et al., 2019 (Alifah et al., 2022), a speech act is the way an individual understands and responds to an action in a particular situation, which is highly dependent on the speaker's language ability. The speech act theory of language use was put forward by John Langshaw Austin (1962) in his book *How to do things with words*. Austin was one of the leading philosophers in the group called the Oxford School of Ordinary Language Philosophy. This theory was later deepened by his student, Searle (1979). The theory emphasizes that language does not only function to convey information but also to perform actions. Speech act theory attempts to examine the meaning of language based on the relationship between an utterance and the action performed by its speaker (Searle, 2010:22). Austin divides the analysis of speech acts into three levels: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary (Rembe, Frieda Th Jansen, Jeane A. Manus, 2020). This understanding is important so that we do not miscommunicate messages and are able to construct sentences well, thereby avoiding offending the listener (Saleh, et al., 2024).

This research will focus on illocutionary speech acts. According to Megawati 2016 (An Nisa, 2021), an illocutionary speech act is an action performed by the speaker when saying something, which contains a specific purpose or meaning. These utterances can take the form of agreements, statements, or requests. Searle (1976) classifies illocutionary speech acts into five types: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

- a. Assertive: commits the speaker to the truth of the proposition, such as stating, claiming, or suggesting.
- b. Directive: aims to influence the listener's action, such as commanding, asking, and advising.
- c. Commissive: commits the speaker to some future action, such as promising or offering.



- d. Expressive: expresses the speaker's psychological state, such as praising, thanking, or apologizing.
- e. Declarative: brings about a change in status or state through the utterance, such as inaugurating or deciding.

Studies on illocutionary speech acts have been conducted across various types of media, including lectures, social platforms, dramas, novels, and art forms. First, research by Viridian (2024) entitled “Illocutionary Speech Acts in the YouTube Video of the Islamic Cultural Performance | Cak Nun & Kiai Kanjeng.” This study examined five types of illocutionary speech acts based on Searle's theory: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The results showed that assertive speech acts were the most dominant, with a percentage of 41.06%. This dominance was influenced by the context of a religious lecture, which generally involves the delivery of information, explanations, and advice to the audience. The similarity between Viridian's research and this study is that both use Searle's speech act theory (1976) and identify the five types of illocutionary speech acts. Both also use a qualitative descriptive method as the analytical approach. The difference is that Viridian's research object is a lecture and is monologic, while this research uses the film *Norah*, which is dialogic and features more complex social relational dynamics between the characters. Additionally, the context of a lecture is more informative, whereas the film presents dramatic elements and conflict that affect the emergence of illocutionary acts.

Second, research by Simamora (2024) entitled “Illocutionary Speech Acts in the Instagram Account Caption @jokowi.” This study examined speech acts in social media captions and found all five types of illocutionary speech acts. Directive was the most frequently used category because the president's captions often contained appeals, invitations, and calls to the public. Meanwhile, expressive speech acts appeared when the speaker gave appreciation or emotional responses to an event. The similarity between Simamora's research and this study is that both identify the five types of speech acts and analyze them using Searle's theory within a qualitative descriptive framework. The difference is that Simamora's research uses social media as an object, which is written and concise, while this research uses a film, which is audio-visual and rich in situational context. Furthermore, political communication in captions tends to focus on public persuasion, whereas the film *Norah* predominantly shows power relations and the social dynamics of a Saudi Arabian village.

Third, research by An Nisa (2021) entitled “Illocutionary Speech Acts in the Virtual Drama Performance *Monumen* by Indra Tranggono.” This study found all five types of illocutionary speech acts in the drama's dialogue. The variation in speech acts was influenced by the dramatic plot, character conflicts, and the relationships between characters. Directives were used to encourage action, expressives reflected the characters' inner conflicts, and declaratives appeared when a character made a key decision in the story. The similarity between An Nisa's research and this study is that both use a dramatic work as a data source and both identify the five types of speech acts according to Searle's theory. The difference is that An Nisa's research object is a virtual drama entirely oriented to the performance script, while



this research uses a cinematic film that involves visual elements, intonation, and nonverbal interaction. The complexity of the social context in the film *Norah* is also higher because it relates to the culture of the rural community and a strong patriarchal system.

Fourth, research by Indah Fitriya (2021) entitled “Illocutionary Speech Acts in the Novel *Zainy Barakat*.” This study found all five types of illocutionary speech acts, with a dominance of directives. This was because the novel addresses a socio-political context full of instructions, reprimands, and commands. Utterances in the novel do not only function as dialogue but also reflect the power structure in society. The similarity between Indah Fitriya's research and this study is that both analyze illocutionary speech acts in literary or fictional works and both found all five types of speech acts based on Searle's theory. The difference is that a novel relies solely on written text, whereas the film *Norah* combines language, gesture, facial expression, and visual atmosphere, making the interpretation of illocutionary acts more contextual. Furthermore, the dominance of directives in the novel is due to the political context, whereas in this study, the dominance of directives stems from the social structure of the Saudi Arabian village and the authority of characters like Munifa and Abu Salim.

Although studies on illocutionary speech acts have been numerous, research focusing on film is still relatively scarce compared to other media. Yet, film is a multimodal medium that combines dialogue, visuals, atmosphere, and character expressions, making it a rich ground for examining communicative intentions.

Research on illocutionary speech acts in Saudi Arabian films, particularly *Norah* (2023), has yet to be found in Indonesian academic publications. This presents a critical research gap, given that the film raises social and cultural issues in Saudi Arabia fraught with power dynamics, limitations on expression, and social relations between male and female characters. The dialogues in the film *Norah* are highly potential to contain diverse speech acts, especially those related to directives, assertives, and declaratives, due to its strong social context concerning authority and tradition.

Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, particularly in the context of utterances in film as a medium of social and cultural representation and as an expansion of previous studies that predominantly used local media objects.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The data source for this study is the film *Norah*, a social drama film rich in the representation of cultural values, power relations, and gender construction through the dialogue between its characters. This film was chosen because it presents diverse forms of speech acts relevant to pragmatic studies, particularly within the context of a Saudi Arabian society that still strongly adheres to patriarchal norms and social structures.

The data collection technique in this research consists of three stages: (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) presentation of the analysis results. Data collection was performed using the listening and note-taking method (*metode simak dan catat*). According to Sudaryanto (in Jing, 2023), the listening method (*metode simak*) is a data collection technique carried out



by observing the use of language carefully and systematically. In this stage, the researcher listened to the conversations between characters in the film, then noted, interpreted, and classified the utterances relevant to illocutionary speech acts, politeness strategies, and gender relations. The recording was done manually and systematically, allowing every emerging utterance to be identified according to the context of the scene and the social relationship between the characters.

Data analysis in this research also employed the listening method (*metode simak*). In the context of analysis, the listening method was performed through in-depth observation of the previously collected utterances. The listening method allows the researcher to intercept the use of language in the characters' dialogue, thereby not only identifying the linguistic structure but also understanding the meaning, context, and pragmatic purpose behind each utterance. This approach considers aspects of power, ideology, and social relationships reflected in the discourse, as asserted by Ruang Jurnal (2020) that discourse analysis focuses not only on linguistic form but also on the relationship between language and social structure. Therefore, the researcher examined each utterance by considering the context of the situation, the speaker-listener relationship, and the ideological content embedded within the dialogue.

Following the data collection and analysis processes, the next stage is data presentation. Data is presented descriptively through the exposition of the analysis results in the form of a detailed description explaining the function of the speech acts, the politeness strategies, and the gender relations that emerged in the characters' utterances. Every analyzed datum is presented within the context of the scene to demonstrate the relationship between language and the surrounding social situation. This data presentation is systematically structured, starting from the identification of the speech act form, the interpretation of the illocutionary meaning, up to the interpretation of the gender and power relations manifested through language use. Thus, the data presentation in this research is not only textual but also interpretive, providing a comprehensive overview of the pragmatic function of language in the film *Norah*.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The speech acts in the film *Norah* illustrate how language is not merely a tool for communication but also serves as a medium for negotiating power, identity, gender relations, and social values in rural Saudi Arabian society. Based on Searle's theory (1976), the speech acts found include assertives, directives, expressives, and commissives. Declarative acts, however, did not appear because the film does not present a formal institutional context that would allow for a change in social status through language. The interpretation of speech acts in the film *Norah* demonstrates how language functions as a representation of social relations, gender hierarchy, and the cultural values of the rural Arab community.

Assertive speech acts appear when a character states, "حياة الناس في المجلات مختلفة" ("Orang-orang di majalah punya kehidupan yang berbeda," which means: "The lives of people in magazines are different,") a statement that describes the contrast between city and village life and shows how the speaker positions themselves as someone who understands the broader



social structure and conveys that knowledge to the listener. This speech act then develops into a form of personal information when the statement emerges, "من بعد ما مات أبوك وأمك، ما بقي لك" ("Sejak ayah dan ibumu meninggal, kau tak punya siapa pun," which means: "Since your father and mother died, you have no one left,") which not only conveys a fact but also asserts the speaker's epistemic dominance over the life of the person they are addressing. In another conversation, when someone asks "هذه قرية ساهو صح" ("Ini desa Sahu, benar?" which means: "This is Sahu village, right?") or "أنت يجي من المدينة صح" ("Kau datang dari kota, bukan?" which means: "You came from the city, right?") it is evident that assertives do not always appear as statements but also as questions that contain assumptions. This question shows another social function: the speaker wants to confirm information but still maintains a position of control in the conversation. Assertive acts also appear as an identity statement through the utterance "أنا مدرس" ("Aku seorang guru," which means: "I am a teacher,") which indicates how a profession is used as social legitimacy and a tool to establish one's position in a social structure that values profession-based authority.

In addition to assertives, directive speech acts in this film clearly reveal how power and social structure operate in daily interactions. Utterances such as "ما عليك إلا الديرة تعيشي فيها" ("Kau tak bisa ke mana pun kecuali hidup di desa ini," which means: "You can't go anywhere but live in this village,") function as a harsh command that limits the listener's movement according to prevailing social rules. Another command, like "تعال أوريك وين مكاتك" ("Akan kutunjukkan tempatmu tinggal," which means: "Come, I will show you where you live,") demonstrates how the speaker determines the direction of the listener's action, even if it is packaged as an invitation. Power relations are even more evident in the utterance "خذّه ووده لببيت المدرسة القديم" ("Bawa dia ke rumah guru sebelumnya," which means: "Take him and bring him to the former teacher's house,") which is direct and leaves no room for negotiation. In different situations, directives can appear in a more polite form, such as "مممكن أنا سؤالك؟" ("Boleh kutanya?" which means: "May I ask you a question?"), which uses a politeness strategy to save the listener's face, especially when the speaker is in an interaction with a closer social distance. However, power reappears in the prohibition "لا تخلي فلاح يضربك مرة ثانية" ("Jangan biarkan Falah memukulmu lagi," which means: "Don't let Falah hit you again,") which contains a protective yet authoritative tone. This prohibition, while seemingly protective, still shows the speaker's dominant position as a figure who has the authority to determine what the listener may or may not do.

Furthermore, expressive speech acts in the film *Norah* reveal another side of social interaction: the effort to create closeness, harmony, and appreciation. The expression "السلام عليكم" ("Assalamu'alaikum," which means: "Peace be upon you,") demonstrates the use of a greeting as a cultural ritual that not only opens a conversation but also signals the religious values held by the community. Expressive acts are also present in the form of appreciation, such as "شكراً" ("Terima kasih," which means: "Thank you,") which shows gratitude while maintaining positive interpersonal relations. In an educational context, a character says "أنت شاطر" ("Kau pintar," which means: "You are smart,") which functions as praise and a form of



emotional support. Through such expressives, it is evident how language is used to strengthen social connections and affirm harmony within the community, especially in pedagogical or familial relationships.

Commissive speech acts in this film enrich the conversational dynamics by introducing elements of commitment and promise. When a character says, "ترى عشاك عندي الليلة" ("Kau akan makan malam denganku nanti," which means: "You will have dinner with me tonight,") they are not just stating a plan but also demonstrating relational closeness and social responsibility toward the listener. In another context, the utterance "اللي يجاوب صح راح أعطيه جائزة" ("Siapa pun yang menjawab benar, dapat hadiah," which means: "Whoever answers correctly will get a prize,") functions as a promise that motivates and guides behavior, especially in a learning situation. These commissives illustrate how language is used not only for present actions but also to build stronger social bonds in the future.

If all the speech acts in this film are examined from a pragmatic viewpoint, a consistent pattern in the use of illocutionary speech acts is visible. The characters most frequently use directive illocutions in the form of determining statements, direct commands, and prohibitions that establish the boundaries of the listener's behavior. This directive illocution serves to regulate actions, restrict movement, and affirm the speaker's position as the controller of the interaction. Meanwhile, expressives and commissives show that despite the presence of dominance, there is also an effort to maintain harmony and interpersonal closeness through language. All these speech acts demonstrate that the film *Norah* does not just present a story but also captures the reality of culture, gender, and power interwoven in the everyday linguistic practices of the rural Arab community.

4. CONCLUSION

The illocutionary speech acts in the film *Norah* indicate that language in this cinematic work does not merely function as a medium for communication between characters, but also serves as a strong representation of the social structure, ideology, and power relations within conservative Saudi Arabian society. Through qualitative analysis based on the listening method (*metode simak*), it was found that the speech acts appearing in this film reflect communication patterns rich in meaning, both at the linguistic and social levels.

Assertive illocutionary acts in the film are presented through statements, information, and questions containing assumptions, such as when a character states that "حياة الناس في المجلات" ("The lives of people in magazines are different,") or when the speaker informs that "من بعد ما مات أبوك وأمك، ما بقي لك أحد" ("Since your father and mother died, you have no one left."). Such utterances show how knowledge, identity, and social perceptions are constructed through language. Assertives also appear in the form of identity confirmation like "أنا مدرس" ("I am a teacher,") which demonstrates how profession is used as social legitimacy in a hierarchical society.

Directive illocutionary acts used by the characters in the film demonstrate the inherent social hierarchy and power structure. Commands such as "ما عليك إلا الديرة تعيشي فيها" ("You can't



go anywhere but live in this village,”), “تعال أوريك وين مكانك” (“Come, I will show you where you live,”), “خذْهُ ووده لبيت المدرسة القديم” (“Take him and bring him to the former teacher’s house,”), and the prohibition “لا تخلي فلاح يضربك مرة ثانية” (“Don’t let Falah hit you again,”) show how the speaker assumes the position of regulating actions, setting boundaries, and making decisions. Meanwhile, the use of polite directives such as “ممکن أنا سؤالك” (“May I ask you a question?”) provides a contrast that affirms the flexibility of politeness strategies according to the context and social relationship between characters.

Expressive speech acts appear through greetings, expressions of thanks, and praise, such as “السلام عليكم” (“Assalamu’alaikum,”), “شكراً” (“Thank you,”), and “أنت شاطر” (“You are smart,”). These utterances function to maintain social harmony, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and serve as a positive politeness strategy that refines the dynamics of interaction amidst a hierarchical social structure. Furthermore, commissive speech acts such as “تري عشاك” (“You will have dinner with me tonight,”) and “اللي يجاوب صح راح أعطيه جائزة” (“Whoever answers correctly will get a prize,”) show the speaker’s commitment to future actions and serve as a medium for building trust and motivation.

From all the findings, it can be concluded that language in the film *Norah* plays a dual role: as a tool for the reproduction of patriarchal social norms and as a space for female resistance. Through the speech acts they utter, the female characters, especially *Norah*, negotiate their identity, freedom, and desires within a limiting cultural framework. Language becomes a means for women to voice their aspirations carefully, using politeness strategies such as the rhetorical question “أريد أن أرسم وجهًا... هل هذا خطأ؟” (“I want to draw a face... is that wrong?”) as a form of illocution that conveys disagreement without violating the demands of politeness. Thus, the film *Norah* demonstrates that speech acts are not only linguistically significant but also ideological, reflecting the clash between tradition, power, and the search for a space for women’s expression.

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