

An Analysis of Speech Act in Wish Movie

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the speech acts in the dialogue of the film Wish, focusing on identifying the types of speech acts and the functions and intentions behind them. This study is based on the importance of understanding the strategic use of language in film dialogue as a reflection of social interaction and complex emotional expression. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, collecting data through the transcription and analysis of film dialogue using John Searle's speech act theory. The expected results are the classification of speech act types, such as assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Additionally, there will be an in-depth understanding of how these speech acts construct meaning, influence interactions between characters, and reinforce themes and messages in films. The research data consisted of 69 utterances taken from the film's dialogue transcripts and analyzed qualitatively and descriptively using a pragmatic approach. The results showed that assertive speech acts dominated, with 35 sentences, followed by directive speech acts with 17 sentences, expressive speech acts with 12 sentences, and commissive speech acts with 5 sentences. No declarative speech acts were found. Assertive speech acts primarily occur in situations involving conflict or leadership. They function as invitations and commands that motivate collective action. This analysis links speech act function to dialogue context, enriching our understanding of how language builds power, expresses emotion, and conveys social meaning in film narratives. The study provides pragmatic insights that can inform further research in film discourse analysis and language teaching.

Keywords: Analysis; Speech Act; Wish Movie

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of interaction or communication, that is, a means of conveying thoughts, ideas, concepts, or feelings. Language is defined as an arbitrary system of symbols that enables individuals within a specific culture or those who have learned that cultural system to communicate or interact. People all over the world speak a variety of languages. Language enables people to interact with one another verbally and in writing. Without language, it would be challenging to express desires, ideas, opinions, feelings, and other things. Language enables people to communicate, learn, and understand one another. However, to create meaningful communication, language skills alone are insufficient; situational and contextual factors must support them.

In the communication process, the linguistic aspect is not limited to grammatical structure; contextual and situational factors also influence it. Therefore, pragmatics has emerged as a branch of linguistics that deals with how listeners understand the meaning of utterances in the context of a conversation. This study emphasizes the importance of interpreting implicit meanings, as speakers often do not express their intentions literally but rather imply them through speech acts.

In his book *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin (1975) explains that speech acts are actions performed through language. When someone speaks, they are doing more than just speaking; they are performing a speech act. Speech acts are a central element of pragmatics, which encompasses various forms of verbal actions, such as statements, commands, promises, questions, and expressions of feelings. These forms are referred to as speech acts. The nature and function of speech acts are strongly influenced by social and cultural variables, as well as power relations in interactions between speakers. Understanding speech acts enhances linguistic knowledge and improves a person's ability to interpret and respond to communication in a contextual manner.

John R. Searle further developed Austin's original theory of speech acts, providing a more systematic explanation of how language is used to perform actions in communication. In his book *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969), Searle posits that speech acts comprise three fundamental elements. He divides them into locution, illocution, and perlocution. Locution is the act of saying something or producing a meaningful and understandable linguistic expression in a language. For example, it involves observing the rules of pronunciation and grammar. Locution can be described as the literal or semantic meaning of an utterance. The second element of speech acts is illocution: the action or force behind the utterance, or the intended action of the speaker.

Through the utterances we make, we may say something to make a statement, make an offer, or give an explanation, among other things. The third element of speech acts is perlocution, or the effect that an utterance has on the listener. Understanding these three basic elements of speech acts is crucial for good, comprehensive communication with others. Speech acts are found in everyday conversations, whether one-way or two-way. Additionally, speech acts can be found in literary works, particularly in films.

As an audiovisual medium with much dialogue, films are a good source for studying speech acts. Dialogue in films serves as a means of communication between characters, as well as a tool for character development and advancing the plot. The latest release, "Wish," was released in November 2023, marking the 100th anniversary of Walt Disney Studios. Set in the Kingdom of Rosas, the film tells the story of Asha, an idealistic young woman who makes a heartfelt wish to the stars as darkness descends on her kingdom. The verbal interactions between Asha and the charismatic yet authoritarian King Magnifico, as well as the other supporting characters, are rich in various types of speech acts that

reflect their motivations, conflicts, and relationship development. Analyzing the speech acts in the film's key dialogues could reveal deeper narrative dynamics. A comprehensive analysis of the main dialogues in *Wish* could reveal how the characters use language strategically to achieve their goals, express complex emotions, forge alliances, and trigger and deepen conflicts.

The author chose the film *Wish* as the object of this study because he is interested in analyzing this topic, which has received limited attention from previous studies that address it from a linguistic perspective. The author will conduct a pragmatic analysis of the film's dialogue, which encompasses various types of speech acts that reflect social relationships, motivations, and character development. To establish a theoretical basis for investigating speech acts in “*Wish*,” it is important to refer to previous studies. Most studies of speech acts in films still only analyze general types of speech acts, failing to examine how social and cultural contexts, as well as power relations, influence their interpretation. Previous film studies have primarily focused on a single type of speech act, such as directive speech acts (e.g., commands and requests; example: the film *A Man Called Otto* by Rohanda et al., 2025), while other types of speech acts (e.g., expressive, commissive, and declarative) receive less attention. These speech acts are particularly relevant in animated films, which are rich in symbolism and convey moral values.

This research gap provides a crucial foundation for a more comprehensive examination of the form and function of speech acts in character development and the transmission of cultural messages. This study analyzes the dialogues in the film *Wish* by examining how characters exchange utterances with specific pragmatic functions, including requests, statements, promises, prohibitions, and emotional expressions. The study identifies the types of speech acts that occur, examines their relationship to the characters' personalities, motivations, and goals, and determines how these verbal interactions influence the development of the story and conflicts.

Based on the problem statement above, the research questions for this study are as follows: What types of speech acts do the main characters use in the film *Wish*? What functions do these speech acts serve in the film's dialogue?

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research methods constitute a pivotal component of research, serving as a framework for conducting research in a systematic and structured manner. Research methodologies empower researchers to articulate the sequential steps they undertake, from data collection to data processing and analysis, in order to address the research questions they have formulated. The selection of an appropriate method is pivotal in determining the validity and reliability of research results, thereby ensuring the achievement of research objectives. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, which is considered the most suitable design for investigating speech acts in film dialogues since it emphasizes interpretation, context, and meaning rather than numerical generalization.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and classify the types of speech acts present in the film *Wish* by applying Searle's theory of speech acts. The study not only focuses on identifying the categories of speech acts—assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives—but also examines the function and intention underlying each utterance. By doing so, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how speech acts in the film reflect communicative intentions and shape interactions among characters, thus contributing to broader discussions in pragmatics and discourse

analysis.

This research was conducted online with the film *Wish* serving as the main source of primary data. The use of digital media provided flexibility in data collection while eliminating spatial constraints. The study was carried out over a three-month period, from April to June 2025. In the first month, the researcher focused on viewing the film and transcribing the dialogues meticulously. The second month was dedicated to analyzing the transcribed data, while the third month emphasized the identification and classification of speech acts. This structured timeframe ensured that each stage of the study, from data collection to analysis, was executed in a methodical and comprehensive manner.

The rationale behind choosing *Wish* as the research subject lies in its communicative richness and representational value. Cinema is not merely a form of entertainment but also a reflection of social and cultural life, embodying layers of meaning and communication. Dialogues in films often serve as mirrors of real-life interactions, representing emotions, intentions, and interpersonal dynamics. *Wish* was selected because its narrative contains a diverse range of speech acts that lend themselves to systematic analysis, allowing the researcher to explore the pragmatic dimensions of language use in film as a social artifact.

The procedures followed in this research are aligned with the principles of qualitative inquiry. According to Sugiyono (2020), research methods are defined as scientific procedures to obtain data for specific purposes, encompassing both techniques and strategies. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method was employed to interpret the meaning of utterances rather than quantifying them. The approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of how speech acts operate within the context of film dialogue, in line with Searle's (1969) theory, which frames language as action rather than a mere conveyer of meaning.

The data collection process involved three principal techniques: listening and note-taking, literature review, and transcription. First, the researcher repeatedly listened to the film dialogues to ensure the authenticity and completeness of the data, carefully noting down utterances identified as speech acts. Second, a literature review was conducted by examining books, journals, and prior studies relevant to speech act theory, particularly those based on Searle's taxonomy. This review provided a theoretical foundation and helped situate the study within broader scholarly discourse. Finally, transcription was carried out to convert spoken dialogues into written form, enabling systematic classification and analysis of speech acts in accordance with qualitative research conventions.

Transcription played a critical role in ensuring the accuracy and objectivity of the analysis. It allowed the researcher to scrutinize dialogues in written form, reducing the reliance on repeated film viewing and enhancing the precision of data coding. Following transcription, utterances were categorized based on Searle's classification of speech acts. Attention was given not only to the literal meaning but also to the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects of each utterance. This stage culminated in a comprehensive analysis that revealed how different types of speech acts function within the film to express intentions, construct relationships, and advance the storyline. Thus, the methodology ensured that the findings were both scientifically rigorous and contextually grounded.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings based on a pragmatic analysis of the speech acts performed by the main characters in the animated film *Wish*. As the sole researcher, I conducted this study with close attention to both linguistic form and narrative context, aiming to capture not only what was said but also how and why it was said. The data was examined using Searle's theory of

speech acts, which allowed me to categorize and interpret utterances according to their illocutionary force and communicative function.

To guide the discussion, this chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section provides a general overview of the research focus, describing how the data was selected and what aspects of the film were analysed. The second section outlines the research findings, including representative examples of speech acts, a detailed analysis of their functions, and a reflection on the patterns that emerged throughout the film. This structure was intended to ensure clarity and coherence in presenting both the process and the results of the analysis.

This research focuses on the analysis of speech acts performed by the main characters in the animated movie *Wish* (2023). As mentioned in previous chapters, the film presents a rich array of dialogues that reflect various intentions, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics between characters—especially between Asha, the idealistic protagonist, and King Magnifico, the powerful and ambitious ruler of Rosas.’

Using Searle’s classification of speech acts—assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives—the researcher attempted to identify the illocutionary functions behind key utterances in the film. Each speech act is interpreted based on its linguistic structure and the narrative or emotional context in which it appears. This chapter provides a detailed account of the findings and reflects the patterns, frequencies, and functions of these speech acts within the storyline.

It is important to note that this research does not aim to quantify language usage but to explore meaning and intention through qualitative interpretation. As the researcher personally conducted every step—from transcription to categorization and analysis—the findings are presented with interpretive insights drawn from a combination of theoretical grounding and contextual reading of the movie.

Research Findings

This study identifies and analyzes the types of speech acts employed by the primary characters in *Wish*. These acts are categorized according to Searle's theory as affirmative, directive, commissive, expressive, or declarative. The analysis involves identifying 69 types of speech acts in the dialogue and evaluating the function and intention of each act within a given scene. This approach provides a deeper understanding of language's role in establishing power, expressing emotions, and conveying social meaning in the film's narrative.

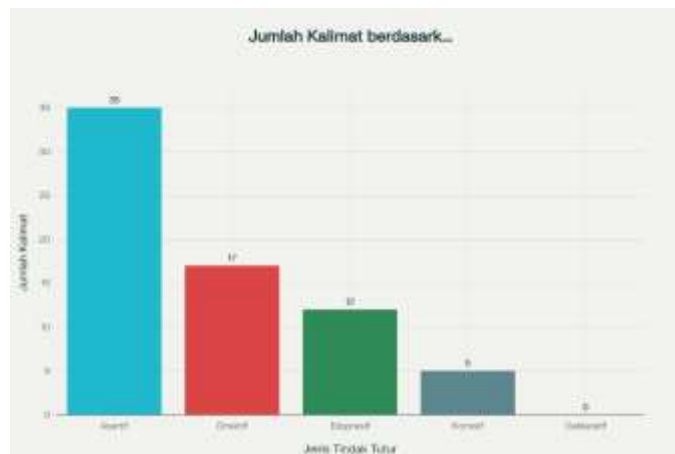


Figure 1. Speech act distribution

Overall, the analysis revealed that Assertive speech acts were the most prevalent, comprising a total of **35 sentences**. Directive speech acts followed with 17 sentences, and Expressive speech acts were the least prevalent with 12 sentences. 5 sentences contained Commissive speech acts, while none of the main character's utterances analyzed contained Declarative speech acts.

Non-verbal elements such as tone and body language also shape the illocutionary impact of speech acts. For example, Magnifico's smirk during "That book is forbidden" adds an intimidating layer, while Asha's wide-eyed plea "Help me!" gains power from her facial expression and vocal tremble.

In analysing these utterances, the researcher also considered the functions and intentions behind each speech act. For instance, assertive acts were not merely factual statements, but served to affirm beliefs, challenge power, or inspire others. Asha's directive acts were frequently intended to encourage collective action or express urgency, while King Magnifico's were aimed at silencing opposition or asserting dominance.

The intention behind commissive acts often reflected responsibility and self-sacrifice, while expressive acts aimed to build emotional connection or reveal internal conflict. Declaratives were used to perform high-stakes actions, such as forbidding or granting wishes, which carried transformative effects within the narrative.

Finally, audience interpretation plays a vital role. Lines like "*I have to finish it—for everyone*" may be heard as heroic, while sarcastic utterances like "*You're welcome to stay and watch*" depend heavily on delivery and context. This reinforces the idea that meaning in film is co-constructed through dialogue, performance, and perception.

In conclusion, the study shows that speech acts in *Wish* are not just about what is said but also about why and how it's said. They drive the plot, reveal emotions, and highlight conflicts. Compared to other *Disney films*, *Wish* uses a similar range of speech acts but tailors them to its themes of hope and resistance. Tone and body language deepen their impact, while audience reactions show how layered these moments are. This study reveals how animated films use speech acts multimodally, blending linguistic and visual cues to construct meaning—a paradigm that challenges text-centric speech act theories.

Discussion

The analysis of dialogue in *Wish* identifies 22 utterances that map onto Searle's five illocutionary types—assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Each utterance was examined through its conversational context, communicative goals, and the function–intention pairing that gives it pragmatic force. Overall, assertives, directives, and expressives dominate the dataset, while commissives and declaratives appear more selectively yet meaningfully.

In one exchange, Asha blends an assertive ("there is a wish ceremony tonight") with an expressive ("you're in luck") and a gentle directive ("you're welcome to stay and watch"). The sequence simultaneously informs, builds rapport, and invites participation, illustrating how a single turn can layer multiple illocutionary forces to manage information flow and interpersonal stance.

Another scene shows Asha's plea to Dahlia, where "Help me!" functions as a direct directive, her explanation about the impending interview constitutes an assertive, and her confession of nervousness serves as an expressive. The clustering of request, fact-stating, and affective disclosure demonstrates how everyday support among friends is negotiated through complementary speech acts.

Dialogues with King Magnifico foreground contrasts in authority and epistemic stance. The King relies on assertives to state prohibitions and explain dangers, while Asha counters with directive questions

and assertive opinions born of curiosity and moral concern. Here, speech acts do double duty: they propel plot while revealing ideological and relational fault lines between characters.

Asha's challenge to the practice of withholding people's wishes interweaves directives (seeking clarification and proposing alternatives), assertives (evaluations of the policy's effects), and expressives (frustration and care). The co-occurrence of these forces underscores that the film's talk is not merely transactional; it is ethically charged and socially oriented.

In intimate family dialogue, Asha signals a delicate topic with a soft directive to secure attention, then delivers assertive content about Saba's wish likely not being granted, grounding it in further assertives that cite the King's rationale. The sequence models sensitive bad-news delivery that balances clarity with empathy and politeness norms.

Elsewhere, Asha questions the King's legitimacy in deciding others' futures, using a directive framed as a reflective question. She bolsters this with assertives drawn from personal experience, widening the issue from one person's disappointment to a collective pattern. Language thus becomes a vehicle for social critique and ethical positioning.

In emotionally climactic moments, Asha's utterances lean on expressive and commissive forces. Declarations of hope and resolve articulate inner states, while "I make this wish" carries a forward-looking commitment, aligning intention with prospective action. These acts scaffold character motivation and mark turning points in the narrative arc.

Introspective lines highlight assertive statements of self-knowledge alongside expressive coloring—Asha recognizes her need for "room to grow" and navigates the tension between newfound freedom and self-restraint. Such talk enriches the character's psychological depth by coupling factual self-report with felt experience.

Taken together, the film's conversations distribute communicative labor across illocutionary types: assertives present facts and viewpoints, directives elicit action or information, expressives reveal emotion, commissives bind the speaker to future courses, and declaratives—though rarer—still punctuate key shifts. The findings affirm that speech acts in *Wish* are not mere vehicles of plot; they are instruments for character development, moral framing, and the staging of social relationships and emotions.

CONCLUSION

After conducting the analysis, the researcher identified 22 speech acts produced by Asha, the main character in the film *Wish*. Using Searle's (1975) theory of speech acts, these utterances were classified into 69 illocutionary acts, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The findings also revealed that a single speech act may simultaneously contain more than one illocutionary force. Among these, assertive speech acts were the most frequent, appearing 35 times. Their primary function is to state, explain, or convey information that the speaker believes to be true. For example, in datum 3, when Asha remarks, "*Well, I just thought the etchings were pretty,*" she uses an assertive act to express her perception and reasoning.

Directive speech acts were identified 17 times, functioning to command, request, or direct the interlocutor to perform an action. An example appears in datum 14, where the directive "*Look, see*" is used to draw attention to something specific. Expressive speech acts, on the other hand, were found 12 times and serve to express emotions, attitudes, or reactions to situations. For instance, in datum 22, Asha declares, "*You don't deserve a star!*"—an expressive act that conveys emotional rejection and disagreement. These

patterns demonstrate how Asha's language reflects not only the transmission of information but also emotional engagement and interpersonal influence throughout the film.

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