



## ***ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS FOUND IN THE COMIC “SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE VANISHING MAN”***

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### ***Abstract***

*The aim of this study was to identify the types and analyze the meanings of illocutionary acts in the comic “Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man”. This study employed descriptive qualitative method and applied the theory by Searle (1976) to analyze the data. The data of this study were taken from the comic “Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man”. Based on the result of this study, there are five types of illocutionary acts performed by the characters in the comic, including representative (assertive), directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. Assertive is the most dominant type used by the characters in the comic.*

**Keywords:** *comic, illocutionary act, speech act*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a tool of communication that can be used by people to express their emotions, ideas, and intentions. According to Aristo & Ege (2018), language is understood as the particular set of speech norms of a particular community. It is also a part of the large culture of the community that speaks the language. With language, we can communicate with other people. Therefore, without communicating with one another through language, people cannot coexist (Putra & Agung, 2023). Speech acts are the actions that people take when they speak, according to linguistic analysis. The study of speech acts contrasts with how to carry out actions or carry out things with words. It is speaking or acting in a way that is concerned with both message and action. There are three primary activities that a speaker performs when uttering a sentence: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refers to literal meaning of a sentence, illocutionary acts are referring to the speaker’s intentions in saying something or uttering a sentence. Perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance by the speaker to the hearer. The conversation in the comic is a useful example of illocutionary acts because it creates a difficult situation in which to determine what each character is trying to say.



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The act of making statements, offers, and promises through utterances in accordance with conventional aspects relating either explicitly or performatively is known as the illocutionary act (Dewi, 2021). It is crucial to acquire illocution since it conveys how the entire statement that should be understood in conversation. People will be aware of the purpose behind utterances, which will help prevent misunderstandings when communication occurs and help them comprehend any hidden messages. Considering that every statement uttered in conversation truly has a purpose for the listener and is not always meant to be taken literally.

Before choosing the topic, the researchers looked for previous studies related to it. The first previous study from Muhammad (2021) investigated assertive illocutionary act of British and Korean in Korean Englishman YouTube channel. This study examines how Beckham and HeungMin used assertive illocutionary acts in the videos on the Korean Englishman YouTube Channel. Meanwhile, the aims of the study is to discover the types and differences of assertive illocutionary act by Beckham as British and Heung-min as Korean. Descriptive qualitative was used in the study as it was designed to obtain more understanding and analysis to describe pattern of assertive illocutionary acts in British culture and Korean culture. In their communication, the British and the Korean employ assertive acts, but they do so in different ways. Due to different cultural backgrounds, there are differences. British people typically use assertive acts more directly. The majority of Koreans use assertive acts while considering the pride of others.

The second previous study from Setiani and Utami (2018) examined illocutionary act found in “How to Train Your Dragon 2” movie. The aim of this article is to identify the illocutionary actions that the movie’s lead character performed. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. There were 333 utterances detected, with the data percentages being 43.8% representative, 41.7% directive, 7.3% expressive, 6.6% commissive, and 0.6% declarative.

The third previous study from Rahayu et al. (2018) investigated illocutionary act in the main character’s utterance in “Mirror Mirror” movie. The purpose of this study was to identify the many forms of illocutionary acts used by the main characters in the “Mirror Mirror” film according to Searle’s theory of illocutionary act, as well as to identify the context of the illocutionary acts of the main character using Hymes’

speaking model. This study also utilized descriptive qualitative method. The findings of this study indicate that 55 of the main characters' utterances feature illocutionary acts. The information was divided into five categories: expressives (12), directives (2), declaratives (0), directives (37), and commissives (2). The declarative varieties of illocutionary act were not examined in this study because the characters who delivered the utterances including such acts were not chosen as the study's subject. According to this study's analysis of Hymes' Speaking model, there were eight variables that affected how the primary characters spoke. They are genre, key, instrumentalities, participants, ends, act, sequences, and setting.

The fourth previous study from Wulan & Yulianto (2022) examined illocutionary acts found in Joe Biden's victory speech as a president. The purpose of this study is to determine the kinds of illocutionary acts and establish the context in Joe Biden's victory speech as president. The qualitative descriptive methodology was utilized by the study's researchers. In the research, the researchers analyzed 51 data. From the analysis, it was found four types of illocutionary act used by Joe Biden in his speech. They are representative (admitting, announcing, asserting, notifying, proposing, stating and telling), commissive (pledging, promising, and wishing), expressive (apologizing, greeting, thanking and praising) and declarative (declaring).

The fifth earlier study by Petriandy & Marlina (2018) found that "The Never Girls: Before the Bell by Kiki Thorpe" contained illocutionary acts. The aim of the study is to examine the various illocutionary techniques used in Kiki Thorpe's novel "The Never Girls Bell: Before the Bell". The descriptive qualitative method was employed in the study. The illocutionary acts discussed in the article can be categorized as representative (informing, claiming, predicting, and reporting), directional (asking, declaring), commissive (promising), expressive (liking, praising), and declarative. By accounting for about 50% of the total 28 data, the analysis of the data showed that the highest representative type in the novel is informing. Asking has the highest directive ranking, followed by 21 directive data, or roughly 37,5%.

The study of pragmatics focuses on how language functions in context and how people act and think practically. According to Sudiyono et al. (2023), the branch of linguistics that concentrates on the study of language and its context is known as pragmatics. Moreover, Yule (1996) stated that pragmatics is the study of how meaning

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is expressed by a speaker (or writer) and comprehended by a reader (or listener). The interpretation of what people say in a particular context and how that context impacts what they say is necessary for this type of study. Pragmatics may be simply described as the study of how speakers convey meaning through their speech.

Speech acts are speeches that function in communication. A form of verbal communication exists in the act of talking. The word “action” denotes movement. For this reason, speech acts are concerned about how people interpret what is being communicated or said. A speech act is something that is expressed by a person who does both a presentation of information and an action, according to the philosophy of language and linguistics. For example, the phrase “I would like the kimchi, could you please pass it to me?” is a speech act since it expresses the speaker’s desire to receive the kimchi while simultaneously requesting that someone offer them the kimchi. It is crucial to study speech acts in order to understand the message contained in each utterance. In addition, Fitriani et al. (2020) mentioned that speech acts include making a statement, giving an order, asking a question, refusing, complimenting, and thanking, while performing an action. There are three types of speech acts: Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, and Perlocutionary Act.

Locutionary act is saying something in the sentence roughly equivalent with certain reference and in the traditional sense. When the speaker says, “the dangerous dog is in the garden”, it means that outside of the room or in the park there is a dog that is dangerous. This leads to the conclusion that a locutionary act merely informs without having any effects on the partner (Sholihatin, 2019). There are several differences between locutionary and illocutionary. Literal meaning in the utterance is usually called locutionary, meanwhile an utterance that has intention from speaker is called illocutionary. Furthermore, there is perlocutionary act as the last part of speech act. Putri et al. (2019) stated that perlocutionary act is the effect of the utterance that is produced by the speaker toward the hearer or listener. Additionally, Sophia et al. (2021) describe how a statement can influence the hearer to take a particular action in their article about the illocutionary acts that character Arthur Flek exhibits in the “Joker” movie. A perlocutionary act is another way to try to sway the listener, and examples include intimidating, embarrassing, and persuading them. Additionally, several speech acts serve purposes other than those in both producing and communicating effects on the

emotions, thoughts, and or the speakers' own behaviors. Investigating illocutionary acts provides a window into the complex ways that people negotiate meaning, assert their authority, express their emotions, and build relationships in a range of cultural and social contexts. Based on the background, the researchers are interested in conducting a study about speech act, particularly regarding illocutionary act.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Since the data are presented as words rather than numbers, this study is classified as descriptive qualitative research. The data were obtained from the comic "Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man" that was released in 2018. This comic tells the story of a man named Michael Williams that suddenly disappears. There are no clues left behind when he vanishes, so it is up to Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson to figure out what happened to him and whether there may be danger around every corner in the case of the vanishing man. This study used documentation method to collect the data by reading the comic thoroughly and selecting the samples. To reach the aim of this study, purposive sampling is used to obtain the samples for the research. In the pragmatic research, the data are mostly in the form of utterances. Therefore, the samples from this comic were the utterances performed by all of the characters and 10 utterances were selected to be analyzed because they contained illocutionary acts.

There are several procedures to collect the data in this study. Firstly, the researchers read the comic from the internet several times in order to get deep understanding about the utterances performed by the characters in the comic and also to find out the meaning from the utterances. Then the researchers codified the data based on categories and took notes about the characters who performed utterances that contained illocutionary acts. After collecting data, it was followed by analyzing the data using Searle's (1976) theory. The utterances which were analyzed were in bold sentences. There were several steps in analyzing the data. First, identifying the types of illocutionary acts from the comic and also the context of the situation that influences the meanings of illocutionary act. After identifying the types of illocutionary act, the data were classified according to the types based on Searle's (1976) classification. Afterward, the researchers identified the intended meaning from utterances that contain illocutionary acts.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The researchers discuss the results of the study's two aims in this section. The aims of the study are: (1) to determine the various illocutionary acts that each character performed in the comic "Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man", (2) to find out the most common or dominant illocutionary act type used by every character in the comic and analyze some of their utterances. The section is divided into two parts by the researchers in order to reach that aim. The first step was to identify various illocutionary act types. The second step was to identify the most common illocutionary act type employed by the characters in the comic and to interpret what they mean.

#### Types of Illocutionary Acts

The researchers list all of the characters' utterances in the comic "Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man" in this part. The frequency of the illocutionary act that have been examined is shown in table 1. To show the examples of the utterances made by all Sherlock Holmes characters in the comic book, the utterances are also provided in each finding of illocutionary types. The results are provided in table 1 as follows:

**Table 1.** Types of Illocutionary Act Found in the Comic "Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man"

Types of Illocutionary	Frequency	Utterances
Assertive	30	"She is an intelligent, brave woman, and raised you to be likewise." "Oh, an excellent worker, very quick and most careful."
Directive	13	"You need to pay less attention!" "I have thirty cases, man! I need assistance!"
Commissive	6	"If I hear anything at all, I will tell you gentleman, you have my word on it!" "I shall find Wiggins; I promise you that."
Expressive	25	"Of course. Thank you, Mr. Holmes, I appreciate it. " "I'm sorry to disturb you. Mr. Hookham."
Declarative	3	"Die, Williams!" "Holmes! A boy is missing already!"
Total	77	

According to the table 1 above, 77 utterances were discovered and classified as illocutionary acts. Declaratives, directives, expressives, commissives, and assertives are the illocutionary act types that have been identified. There are 25 expressive utterances, 6 commissive utterances, 30 assertive utterances, 13 directive utterances and 3 declarative utterances. In their conversations, the characters in the comic frequently use assertive to express how they feel about a particular situation. In this study, the researchers also analyzed 2 data from each type of illocutionary act that was found, and 10 data have been analyzed in order to find out the meaning of the utterance.

#### The Dominant Types of Illocutionary Acts

The researchers discovered the number of illocutionary acts in the comic “Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man” by gathering the necessary data. As shown previously in table 1, representatives appeared 30 times, expressives appeared 25 times, directives appeared 13 times, commissives appeared 6 times and declaratives three times. According to the analysis of the data, the most common type of illocutionary act in the comic “Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man” comic was representative, with expressive, directive, commissive, and declarative coming in second, third, fourth, and fifth respectively.

#### Discussion

##### a. Representative (Assertive)

In uttering a representative (assertive), a speaker expresses his or her opinion on whether they believe something to be true or false. As stated by Searle (1976) that “the point or purpose of the members of the representative class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something is being the case, to see truth of the expressed proposition”. The main representatives act is suggesting, asserting, stating, concluding, reporting and complaining. Most of the characters in the comic “Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man” performed assertive. This is supported by following data:

#### Data 1

May : “How long have you known?”  
Holmes : “I had my suspicions, but when I saw the photograph, I knew that you and Michael were one and the same. And the book “Running A Thousand Miles for Freedom” the story of Ellen craft a woman of mixed

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parentage who disguised herself as a white plantation owner to escape slavery.”

Holmes : “Your mother, Georgia born, knew well that dread world before America’s thirteenth amendment was passed. **She is an intelligent, brave woman and raised you to be likewise.**”

(Moore et al., 2018)

In the statement in data 1, Holmes asserted that May’s mother possesses qualities of intelligence and bravery, and has successfully taught these characteristics in her daughter. This encompasses the quality of assertiveness and, as stated by Holmes, the characterization of an individual as intelligent and courageous. Therefore, this utterance contains an assertive description.

#### Data 2

Mr. Hookham : “So, what may we help you with?”

Holmes : “What kind of a man was Michael Williams?”

Mr. Hookham : “**Oh, an excellent worker, very quick and most careful.**”

(Moore et al., 2018)

The last sentence in data 2 refers to a statement made by Mr. Hookham, which is identified as an assertive utterance he performed. This statement conveys Mr. Hookham’s opinion on his worker, whom he describes as a quick learner who pays close attention to detail. The statement conveys Mr. Hookham’s point of view to the listener, demonstrating his belief in the worker’s skills and defining the statement as an accurate statement of his opinion.

#### b. Directive

When performing directive, speakers frequently want to elicit a response from their audience. The speakers in this instance have taken directive acts. The use of language by speakers to persuade their listeners to do something is known as a directive act. Searle (1976) state “These have as their illocutionary point the speaker’s attempts (of varied degrees, and therefore more accurately, they are determinates of the determinable which includes attempts) to persuade the listener to do something”. It is directing the hearer to do something, describing, asking, and requesting. The used of directive in the comic presented by the data below:

#### Data 3



*I Ketut...*

Chemist : “Oh, I never forget a face! There was a family there, what was their name? Kane, was it?”  
Mr. Kane : “Sir, you are mistaken. I was never in Tooting.”  
Chemist : “Well, I would swear that the younger Kane boy...”  
Prof. Moriarty: “**You need to pay less attention!**”

(Moore et al., 2018)

This conversation in data 3 happened in a pharmacy. The chemist kept asking Mr. Kane about his past in Tooting but Mr. Kane denied it. At the end, that chemist swore that he knew Mr. Kane, but Prof. Moriarty interrupted his sentence by saying “**You need to pay less attention!**”. This utterance is a directive because the speaker (Prof. Moriarty) ask to hearer (chemist) to do something, which is to pay less attention to other people’s personal life or stop talking too much.

Data 4

Lestrade : “Holmes, why on earth would your solicitor be here, at his place of work? **I have thirty cases, man! I need assistance!**”

Holmes : “And I will, Lestrade. As soon as we finish here, I am all yours.”

(Moore et al., 2018)

Directive utterance was indicated in the bold sentence said by Lestrade as shown in data 4. The sentence “I need assistance!”, means he was asking Holmes to help him finish his case. The situation is the speaker (Lestrade) commands the listener (Holmes) to help him finishing his case. This This sentence includes a command sentence called directive.

c. Commissive

Commissive actions are those that commit the speakers to taking a particular course of action in the future. According to Searle (1976), he states “the illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action”. An example of commissive act includes promising, offering, refusing and pledges. The use of commissive in the comic presented by the data below:

Data 5

Holmes : “Perhaps.. the change from the coin I gave him. I believe I said he could keep it.”  
Daniel : “Then he’d have bought us all a good feed, sir. But he didn’t.”

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Holmes : “I shall find Wiggins, **I promise you that**. I’m to Hookham’s and while I’m there, I need you to do a little job.”

(Moore et al., 2018)

Data 5 shows the conversation between two characters, Holmes and Daniel, which is Wiggins’s friend. They were talking about Wiggins who disappeared since Holmes asked him to visit the pharmacy. Therefore, Holmes promised to find him by saying an utterance “*I promise you that*” to convince Daniel to be patient for that moment. This statement is considered as commissive act since it was promising something to another speaker regarding to their commitment related to the action in the future. In this situation, Holmes promised to Daniel that he will find Wiggins as soon as possible.

### **Data 6**

May’s mother : “I had better get back on the children, if you don’t mind.”

Holmes : “Of course. Well, thank you. It has been most informative.”

May’s mother : “I hear anything at all, **I will tell you gentleman**, you have my word on it!”

(Moore et al., 2018)

The conversation between two characters, May’s mother and Holmes, can be seen in data 6. Holmes and Dr.Watson decided to go to May’s house because she gave her address to reach her at. But, instead meeting May, they met her mother because she was not home. Holmes then asked a few questions to May’s mother about Mr. Williams and May. At the end, after answering some questions, May’s mother decided to go back to the children, because there were a lot of children in her house. She also promised to them by saying “*I will tell you gentleman*”, which means she would give more information when she got important information related to their case. This statement can be considered as commissive act since it was promising something to another speaker to have a commitment for doing something in the future. In this situation, May’s mother promised Holmes and Dr.Watson that she will inform them about information related to May and Mr. Williams.

### d. Expressive

In expressive, speakers of a language frequently convey their feelings to their listeners. By doing so, the speaker has engaged in expressive behavior, which is defined as behavior that expresses a speaker’s psychological state. Searle (1976) state that “The

purpose of this class's illocution is to convey the psychological state described by the sincerity condition regarding a situation described by the propositional content". This act can be categorized by statements like pleasure, like, dislike, pain, joy, and sorrow. There are some expressive speech acts in the comic Sherlock Holmes as shown in the data below:

**Data 7**

Holmes : "Mrs. Williams, please write down your address. If there is anything I can do, I shall be in touch."

May : **"Of course. Thank you, Mr. Holmes, I appreciate it."**

(Moore et al., 2018)

Data 7 shows the conversation between Holmes and Mrs. May Williams as his client. Before May said "*thank you*" to Holmes, they were talking about Mr. Williams who has been missing for two nights. Holmes asked a lot of questions to find out what really happened to Mr. Williams. After asking a lot of questions, Holmes asked May to write down her address and then she said "*Of course. Thank you, Mr. Holmes, I appreciate it*", which means she felt happy when Holmes helped her and she appreciated his help. This utterance is considered as expressive act since it was thanking to another speaker (participant) who has conducted an action that was beneficial for her.

**Data 8**

Mr. Hookham : "Come."

Holmes : **"I'm sorry to disturb you. Mr. Hookham.** I'm Sherlock Holmes and this is my associate, Dr. Watson."

Mr. Hookham : "A pleasure to meet you both. What can I do for you?"

(Moore et al., 2018)

In data 8, the conversation happened between Holmes and Mr. Hookham, the leader of the company where Mr. Williams works. First step of his case, Holmes decided to visit the place where Mr. Williams worked because he wanted to ask questions to leader of the company, which was Mr. Hookham. When Holmes was about to enter Mr. Hookham's room, he knocked the door first and Mr. Hookham said "come", which meant Holmes was allowed to enter the room. Then, Holmes entered the room while saying "*I'm sorry to disturb you. Mr. Hookham*". The utterance means Holmes understood that he disturbed Mr. Hookham that was still in work. This utterance can be considered as expressive speech act since it was apologizing to others about a thing that

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was conducted by the speaker. In this situation, Holmes apologized to the company leader because he was interrupting him when he was working.

#### **e. Declarative**

The words spoken in a specific setting may have the power to immediately alter the state of the world. Declaratives are speech acts that have the power to alter the course of events and also demonstrating how the speaker's words affect the listener is this action. It is the distinguishing feature of this class, according to Searle (1976), that the successful execution of its members results in the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. The examples of declarative speech acts in the comic Sherlock Holmes are shown in the following data.

#### **Data 9**

Dr. Watson : "For god's sake man, don't shoot! I don't know who you are or what you want, but I've nothing to do with that man! Wait a second, you.. you're Michael Williams!"

Mr. Kane : "**Die, Williams!**"

(Moore et al., 2018)

The conversation in data 9 happened on the train when Dr. Watson was chased by Mr. Kane. In that situation, Dr. Watson was chased by Kane, but suddenly someone came and shot Kane. It was May that was impersonating Michael Williams and then Dr. Watson realized it. But Kane was not dead after falling and then he shot May back until she fell from the train. Before Kane shot May back, he delivered a statement by saying "*Die, Williams!*" which means he wanted to execute someone that actually was Michael Williams. This utterance can be considered as declarative since it was declaring an action. Kane believed a guy that he shot was Michael Williams, but in fact he was not Michael Williams.

#### **Data 10**

Holmes : "I shall find Wiggins, I promise you that. I'm to Hookham's and while I'm there, I need you to do a little job."

Watson : "**Holmes! A boy is missing already!**"

(Moore et al., 2018)

Based on the conversation in data 10, it can be seen that Watson delivered an utterance after knowing that a boy named Wiggins, who was sent by Holmes to the pharmacy, was missing. At the beginning of the story, Holmes asked the boy to buy medicine in a

pharmacy, but after one day, he did not return, and Holmes just realized it when Daniel (Wiggin's friend) told him. After Holmes said that he wanted to find Wiggins, Watson delivered a statement by saying, "*Holmes! A boy is missing already!*" which means he declares and also emphasizes that Wiggins is missing based on fact or reality. The utterance that was performed by Watson can be considered as declarative since it is declaring a statement based on a fact that has already happened.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis, 5 types of illocutionary acts were found in the comic "Sherlock Holmes: The Vanishing Man". Those types are representative (assertive), directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. The most dominant type of illocutionary act in the comic is assertive because the characters in the comic use it in their conversation to express their beliefs about a particular case or situation. Assertive is an utterance where it represents suggesting, asserting, stating, concluding, reporting and complaining. The intent behind the statement depends on the context of the situation. The characters in the comic usually have different intentions, so the context of the situation will influence the type of assertive act they will carry out.

This study can be used as a source of information by other researchers who are interested in conducting a study regarding illocutionary acts in comic or other types of data source. It will enhance pragmatic research and enable them to conduct more in-depth studies linked to this study. The researchers advised the readers to study this article in order to contribute more effectively to the comprehension of illocutionary act. Therefore, when they communicate with other individuals, they would not be confused as to what they mean because sometimes communication contains implied meaning.

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