

## A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACT PERFORMED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN ALAN POUL'S *THE BACK-UP PLAN* MOVIE

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### Abstract

*This research aims to analyze the types and functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in a movie entitled The Back-up Plan. In this research, descriptive qualitative method was applied with the researcher as the main instrument and the data sheets as the secondary instrument. The data of this research were utterances in the form of words, phrases, and sentences spoken by the main characters in the movie. After being collected, the data were organized and analyzed based on Searle and Leech's theory of illocutionary act. This study found that there are four types of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in the movie. They are representative act, directive act, expressive act, and commissive act. Representative act is found as the most dominant type performed by the main characters. The main characters employ representative act to convey their ideas to each other. On the other hand, declarative act is not performed by the main characters in the movie since to perform a felicitous declaration, particular authorities and circumstances are needed. Moreover, there are three functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in this movie. They are collaborative function, competitive function, and convivial function. The most dominant function performed by the main characters is collaborative function since it is intended to tell the truth of the main characters' feelings to each other. Meanwhile, conflictive function is not performed by the main characters since it is intended to offend the hearer.*

Key words: pragmatic, illocutionary act, *The Back-up Plan*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is an inseparable part of human's life. Its role is inevitably crucial to ease people's intentions in delivering messages. People socialize to each other in their life by conducting communication through language. Language can be studied by employing many approaches. One of many approaches that can be employed to

study language is pragmatic approach. Leech (1983: 1) defines pragmatics as the study of how language is used in communication. When people are attempting to express themselves, they do not merely produce utterances which contain grammatical structures and words. Besides, people also perform actions via their utterances which are generally called speech

act. According to Austin (1962: 98), there are three types of speech act in producing an utterance. They are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

The most important study from the three kinds of speech act is the study of illocutionary act (Cutting, 2002: 16). It becomes the basic analysis in pragmatic comprehension. The phenomena of illocutionary act cannot only be seen in real life but it can also be found in a movie. The characters in a movie use language by performing speech act, particularly illocutionary act, in their dialogues. In a movie, language represents the ways people actually talk. In this respect, the researcher used a movie entitled *The Back-up Plan* as the object of the study to explore the usage of illocutionary act.

There are several factors why this movie is selected as the object of this research. First, the researcher is interested in the way the two main characters engaged in a relationship even though they are often involved in a conflict. The problems faced by the main characters appear within their utterances. Second, the conversations of the two main characters which mainly discuss how they overcome the problems in their relationship are interesting to be observed. The language of the main characters

employs various types of speech act, particularly illocutionary act. Hence, this study analyzes the illocutionary act performed by the main characters in *The Back-up Plan* movie to explore the types and the functions of illocutionary act used by the main characters in the movie.

This research has two objectives: (1) to identify the types of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in *The Back-up Plan* movie, and (2) to describe the functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in *The Back-up Plan* movie. In analyzing the types of illocutionary act, the researcher employed the theory of illocutionary act proposed by Searle (1969). He divides the types of illocutionary act into five: declarative, representative, directive, expressive, and commissive. Meanwhile, in analyzing the functions of illocutionary act, the researcher applied the theory of illocutionary function proposed by Leech (1983). He divides illocutionary function into four types: collaborative, competitive, convivial, and conflictive.

This research is significant since it will enrich the readers' knowledge about how illocutionary act is used in daily conversation. Moreover, it also helps the

readers to be more aware in using language to deliver their ideas to other people.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, descriptive qualitative research was applied. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 4), the examples of descriptive data are human being's written or spoken words and their observable behaviors. The use of qualitative approach was aimed to describe the types and the functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in *The Back-up Plan* movie.

The data of this were taken in the form of utterances spoken by the two main characters in the movie while the contexts were dialogues. The source of this study was a movie entitled *The Back-up Plan*. The primary instrument of this research was the researcher herself since the study employed a descriptive qualitative research. Furthermore, the secondary instrument of this research was the data sheet which was used to collect the data of illocutionary act from the sources. The researcher took some steps during the data collection: watching the movie, finding its transcript, making the data sheet, and categorizing the raw data into the sheet. The first step was watching the movie to understand its plot and story. After the researcher understood the content

of the movie, it was then re-watched to find the utterances containing illocutionary act performed by the two main characters. After that, the researcher searched for the script of the movie from the internet and checked the accuracy of the script with the dialogues in the movie. Next, the researcher took notes of the main characters' utterances which were in accordance with the objectives of the study. Categorizing the raw data into the data sheet was the final step of the data collecting techniques. To achieve trustworthiness, the researcher discussed her data and findings with her two supervisors and also asked three linguistics students to check her data findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

There are 277 data of illocutionary act found in this research. In relation to the first objective, this research reveals four types of illocutionary act are performed in the movie: representative, directive, expressive, and commissive. The most often occurring type is representative with 158 occurrences. In the second rank is directive act with 84 occurrences. Expressive act is in the third rank 23 occurrences. Meanwhile, the least occurring type is commissive act with only 12 occurrences. Based on the findings,

declarative act is not performed by the main characters in the movie.

Furthermore, in relation to the second objective, this research reveals three functions of illocutionary act are performed in the movie: collaborative, competitive, and convivial. The dominant function of illocutionary act found in the movie is collaborative with 158 occurrences, followed by competitive with 84 occurrences. The function with the smallest occurrences is convivial with 35 occurrences. Conflicting function is not performed by the main characters in the movie.

## **Discussion**

In this research, there are four types and three functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in the movie. A more detailed explanation about the types and functions of illocutionary act performed by the main characters in the movie can be seen in the example below.

Stan : I love you. I've been waiting my whole life for you. And I can't let one little baby get in the way of that. I just... can't.

Zoe : **There's something I need to tell you.**

Stan : Okay.

(IA/S-23/P70/D-55e/Re/CB)

The above dialogue happened when Zoe and Stan were reuniting after the split because of the pregnancy news. Stan was telling Zoe how he did not want the pregnancy to break them apart. Zoe then responded his utterance by informing him that she had something to tell him. In relation to the context, Zoe's utterance as shown in the bold expression is identified as representative act in the form of informing. Her utterance is a statement which contains particular information. Informing belongs to collaborative function. Since Zoe's utterance ignores Stan's previous explanation, it belongs to collaborative function. Another example can be seen in the following datum.

Stan : That's nice. I hope it continues.

Zoe : Thanks. Well, have a nice life.

**Try not to steal anymore cabs.**

Stan : You do the same.

(IA/S-4/P10/D-8d/Di/CP)

The above dialogue occurred at a subway station after the cab argument. When Zoe and Stan were about to go separately, Stan advised Zoe to not steal anymore cabs. In relation to this context, since Stan's utterance is an imperative sentence which contains advice, it is identified as directive act in the form of advising. Stan's utterance employs

competitive function since it deals with what the speaker wants to achieve. By advising her, Stan wants Zoe to not steal other person's cab like what she did to him.

The next example shows expressive act which employs convivial function performed by the main characters in the movie.

Stan : So, why are you in such a good mood anyway?

Zoe : Not that it's any of your business, but...good things are happening to me.

Stan : That's good. I hope it continues.

Zoe : **Thanks.** Well, have a nice life. Try not to steal anymore cabs.

(IA/S-4/P10/D-8b/Ex/CV)

The above dialogue happened at a subway station. Stan wished Zoe that the good things happening to her would continue. Zoe then responded his wish by thanking him. With regard to this context, since Zoe's utterance is a statement which contains a thanking expression, it is identified as expressive act in the form of thanking. Thanking employs convivial function since it coincides with the social goal. 'Thank' is intended to show politeness and gratitude towards someone's good deed. Therefore, the function of Zoe's utterance is

convivial since it shows her gratitude towards Stan's wish.

An example of commissive act which employs convivial function is presented below.

Stan : Can I just give you my card?

**Here, take my card.** I'm not a freak, really. I sell cheese.

Zoe : Cheese?

Stan : Yeah. My family has a goat farm. We make cheese. You like cheese?

(IA/S-5/P14/D-13b/Co/CV)

The above dialogue occurred when Stan was at Zoe's pet store. Stan was telling her that he was not a stalker. He then offered her to take his name card. In relation with the context, since Stan's utterance is an imperative sentence which contains an offer, it is then identified as commissive act in the form of offering. Offering employs convivial function since it matches with the social goal. By offering Zoe to take his name card, Stan is politely proving to her that he is not a stalker.

Based on the analysis, representative act becomes the most frequent type which is employed by the main characters in the movie. This finding indicates that the two main characters have many things to inform

about each other since they are a new couple who are in the steps of knowing each other better. By employing representative act, their beliefs, ideas, and messages are conveyed to each other. On the other hand, declarative act is not found performed by the main characters in the movie since it needs particular authority and circumstances. As the two main characters are common people with no certain authority, they do not perform any declaration in their utterances.

On the other hand, collaborative function becomes the most dominant function performed by the main characters in the movie. They choose to perform illocutionary act with collaborative function to tell the truth of their feelings to each other. In contrast to collaborative, conflictive function is not found performed by the main characters since it is intended to offend or hurt the feeling of the hearer. The main characters are a couple who are in love and they want to give good impression to each other. Therefore, they do not employ conflictive function in their utterance as it can create conflict in their relationship.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusion**

In reference to the findings and the discussion, this research reveals four types and three functions of illocutionary act

employed by the main characters in the movie.

The four types of illocutionary act found in the movie are representative, directive, expressive, and commissive. Of the four types, representative act ranks first. This means that the main characters want to convey their beliefs to each other. Therefore, they perform representative act to deliver their messages. Furthermore, questioning and informing are the most dominant forces employed by the main characters. This implies that as a new couple, they have many things to ask and inform each other. Therefore, the two illocutionary forces are dominantly employed by the main characters in the movie. On the other hand, declarative act is not employed by the main characters since to performing a felicitous declaration needs particular circumstances and authorities. In the movie, the two main characters are described as common people who do not have any authority in particular position. Therefore, they do not use declarative act in their utterances.

From the functions of illocutionary act, three functions are performed by the main characters in the movie. They are competitive function, collaborative function, and convivial function. Of the three functions, collaborative function is the most

dominant type performed by the main characters. Since collaborative function is intended to ignore the social goal, it is used by the main characters in the movie to tell the truth of their feelings to each other. Meanwhile, conflictive function is not performed by the main characters in the movie. Since it is intended to offend and hurt the feeling of the hearer, the main characters do not use it as they are a couple who love each other and they want to leave a good impression to each other.

### Suggestions

Considering the conclusion above, the researcher gives three suggestions. First, to the students of English Language and Literature, they can apply pragmatic approach, especially related to illocutionary act by analyzing it in different movies with different social settings. They can also use the research as a reference to conduct further study involving the phenomena of illocutionary act in a movie. Second, the suggestion is given to English lecturers. The lecturers can use this research in teaching pragmatics, especially in speech act and illocutionary act. They can explain about the application of types and functions of illocutionary act. Third, to other researchers, there are still many problems in this study. This research does not cover all aspects of

illocutionary act. It only focuses on the types and functions of illocutionary act. Other researchers may conduct research on observing illocutionary act from different perspectives.

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