

ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS OF MOANA'S CHARACTER INTERACTIONS IN MOANA MOVIE DIALOGUES

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Abstract

The illocutionary acts found in the speech of Moana, the main character in the animated movie Moana (2016), are the focus of this investigation. Using the framework of Speech Act Theory by Searle (1979), this research aims to classify and interpret the types and functions of illocutionary utterances spoken by Moana throughout the movie. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using Moana's dialogues as the primary data, which are then examined according to the five illocutionary acts: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The findings show that four types of illocutionary acts were identified: assertive (56.82%), directive (25.76%), expressive (10.61%), and commissive (6.82%), while declarative acts were not found. The dominance of assertive and directive types indicates Moana's strong character, leadership, and assertiveness in communicating her beliefs and guiding actions. Expressive and commissive acts reflect emotional depth and responsibility. The results also reveal that illocutionary acts are vital in shaping character development, advancing the narrative, and portraying pragmatic meaning in movie dialogues. This study contributes to the field of pragmatics and can be used as an authentic source for language learning, particularly in understanding the communicative function of utterances in social and narrative contexts.

Keywords: *Speech act, Illocutionary act, Moana, Movie dialogue*

I INTRODUCTION

The animated movie Moana (2016) offers a valuable setting for examining illocutionary acts. As the main character, Moana is actively involved in communication, displays her feelings, and demonstrates leadership qualities. Her lines include commands, promises, refusals, and expressions that highlight the depth of her interactions. Previous research, including studies by (Diffani & Kholis, 2023) and (Ashfiya & Degaf, 2023), indicates that female roles in cinema frequently utilize speech acts to depict societal roles and acts of defiance, particularly within male-dominated stories.

In addition to its theoretical importance, examining movie dialogue is valuable in teaching English as a second language. Movies showcase authentic, context-rich communication. Studies by (Anastasya & Supri, 2024) and (Lutviana & Hendar, 2024) indicate that dialogue in movies aids students in grasping pragmatic functions like expressing thanks, offering apologies, or asserting social identities.

However, there is a noticeable lack of research addressing how animated female protagonists like Moana utilize speech to define their characters, navigate relationships, and propel the story forward. This study seeks to fill that void by investigating Moana's speech acts through the framework of pragmatic theory, focusing on their functions and contexts.

This study is founded on pragmatic theory, which examines how language interacts with its usage context. As noted by (Huang, 2017) and (Taguchi, 2024), meaning arises not just from the literal definition of words but is also shaped by societal standards, the speaker's purpose, vocal tone, and physical movements. Essentially, how something is expressed holds equal value to the content itself, particularly in cinema, where visual and emotional elements significantly aid in interpreting dialogue.

Along with general principles of pragmatics, this study incorporates Speech Act Theory, which was initially proposed by (Austin, 2020) and further advanced by (Searle, 1979). Austin suggested that language can act as a form of action, instead of merely serving to communicate information. Searle (1979) enriched this concept by defining five speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. These categories are employed to categorize the lines spoken by Moana throughout the movie and to examine the purpose behind each dialogue segment.

The research also references Contextual Meaning Theory, especially as outlined by (Leech, 1983), who highlights that meaning is mainly contingent on context and that social norms and politeness play significant roles in language usage. This theory clarifies why Moana's speech varies based on her conversation partner and the scenario. (Piskorska, 2020) Supports this notion by arguing that context aids listeners in understanding implicit meanings, particularly when messages are not directly articulated.

Lastly, the study is bolstered by (Cutting, 2005) idea of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). These are indicators such as specific verbs, sentence structures, intonation, or even body language

that reveal the speaker's intent. In a movie like Moana, these signals are particularly crucial, as the interpretation of a statement often relies on non-verbal communication as well.

This study aims to define the kinds of illocutionary acts that Moana employs and examine their communicative roles within the surrounding context. The research aimed at figuring out the types of illocutionary acts Moana utilize throughout the movie and the contextual effects as well as meanings of illocutionary acts.

II METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the meaning, function, and communicative purpose behind the illocutionary acts performed by the main character, Moana, in the animated movie Moana (2016). This approach was chosen because the focus of the research lies not in quantifying data, but in interpreting the contextual meaning of speech acts within a narrative and social setting.

The object of the study was the movie Moana, produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and released in 2016. The main character, Moana, was selected as the subject of analysis due to her central role in the storyline and her dynamic use of language. The primary data consisted of all utterances delivered by Moana throughout the movie, including both her direct interactions with other characters and her monologues. To ensure linguistic accuracy, the researcher used the official English subtitles as the main source for transcription. In addition to the verbal expressions, visual context such as facial expressions, gestures, intonation, and scene settings was also taken into account to support the pragmatic interpretation of the data.

Data collection was carried out in several stages. First, the researcher watched the movie multiple times (two to three viewings) to gain a full understanding of the storyline and character dynamics. Second, the researcher manually transcribed and verified Moana's dialogues based on the official subtitles. Third, utterances that reflected speech acts were identified. Fourth, each utterance was classified according to Searle's (1979) theory, which divides illocutionary acts into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Lastly, the function and pragmatic meaning of each speech act were analyzed within its narrative context.

In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument. As a human instrument, the researcher played an active role in observing, categorizing, and interpreting the data. To ensure consistency in coding, a classification guide was used, containing definitions and criteria for each speech act type as outlined by Searle (1979). Field notes were also utilized to record non-verbal elements and contextual cues that could not be captured in written dialogue alone. Discussions with peers and academic supervisors were conducted to validate the interpretations and resolve any ambiguous findings.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative technique, which is both inductive and interpretive. Each speech act was examined not only in terms of its linguistic structure but also its pragmatic function, with attention to the social context, relationships between characters, and narrative implications. Searle's theory (1979) served as the core analytical framework, while complementary insights were drawn from Leech's politeness principles, Austin's speech act theory, Cutting's concept of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), and multimodal approaches. These additional perspectives helped the researcher interpret Moana's language use more holistically, considering both spoken and unspoken meaning in the context of animated storytelling.

III RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULT

The data collected from the movie Moana (2016) resulted in 132 utterances delivered by the main character, Moana. These utterances were classified based on Searle's (1979) taxonomy of illocutionary acts. The analysis identified four types of speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive. No declarative speech acts were found in the dataset.

The classification process focused on the form and function of each utterance in context, without analyzing the responses from other characters. The speech acts were categorized by observing Moana's dialogues and supported by visual cues from the scenes.

Table 1. Data distribution based on illocutionary acts type

From	No.	Type of speech act: Illocutionary	Quantity	Percentage	this
	1	Assertive	75	56.82%	
	2	Directive	34	25.76%	
	3	Commissive	9	10.61%	
	4	Expressive	14	6.82%	
	5	Declarative.	0	0.00%	
	Total		132		

distribution, it can be observed that assertive acts were the most frequently used by Moana, followed by directive, commissive, and expressive acts. The absence of declarative acts is notable and suggests limitations in the character's formal authority within the story.

3.2 DISCUSSION

This study explores the application of illocutionary speech in Moana's character conversations in the movie Moana. Referring to the classification proposed by Searle (1979), the five types of illocutionary acts include assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative forms. An analysis of the 132 dialogue excerpts indicated that four of the five types appeared in Moana's dialogues, while the declarative ones were not detected. The following is a description and discussion for each type of speech act, supplemented by some excerpts from Moana's original dialogue as data.

3.2.1 ASSERTIVE

Assertive speech is illocution that states something as truth according to the speaker's beliefs. This type of speech reflects a confident attitude, expressing an opinion, presenting facts, or explaining. In the movie Moana, the main character most often uses this type of speech because most of his dialogue is used to assert opinions, convey information, and convince others of his beliefs.

"We were voyagers!"

Moana uses this sentence to convince herself and the people in her village that they are descended from sailors. It's a form of revealing cultural and historical identity, and Moana uses it to build confidence amid a conflict about her destiny. This speech serves as an effort to affirm the narrative.

"The ocean chose me."

This speech reflects Moana's personal belief in the calling she feels from nature. Although not everyone believed him, he still conveyed this emphatically. This sentence shows Moana's belief in her mission, so it is illocutionary and expresses the facts according to her.

"There's nowhere you could go that I won't be with you."

Moana said this to her grandmother with great emotion. It is a form of affirmation of affection and constant emotional presence, even when they are physically separated. This speech shows the power of language to convey emotional commitment in an assertive form.

The high use of assertive (56.82%) shows that Moana is a reflective figure and believes in her vision. He uses a lot of sentences that serve as statements and confidence to form his identity as a prospective leader.

3.2.2 DIRECTIVE

Directive speech acts function to encourage others to take action, often appearing in forms such as instructions, appeals, recommendations, or invitations. In the movie, this type is used by Moana to move other characters to perform certain actions, especially in her interactions with Maui.

"Teach me to sail."

Moana said this speech to Maui in an urgent tone. He wants to learn because he feels responsible for the mission given to him. This request indicates that Moana is an active character and has a strong determination to learn.

"Come with me."

This is Moana's direct invitation to Maui. This speech is not only functional as an invitation, but also has emotional value because it signifies Moana's trust in Maui as a companion on the trip.

"You have to restore the heart."

This sentence is spoken with high emotional pressure. Moana urges Maui to act, considering that only she can win Te Fiti's heart. This speech reflects Moana's strength of character in taking on the driving role.

The fairly high number of directive usage (25.76%) shows that Moana is not only a passive figure, but an initiator in action. He uses language to influence and direct the actions of other characters, while also asserting his leadership despite his youth.

3.3 EXPRESSIVE

Expressive speech expresses the speaker's feelings and attitudes towards something. In the movie, Moana expresses gratitude, sadness, affection, and apologies through various dialogues. Although there are not as many assertive and directive as there are, expressive ones have a high emotional weight.

"Thank you."

Moana expresses this thank you in critical situations, such as to her grandmother or Maui. It is a form of recognition for the help and support he receives.

"I'm sorry."

This sentence came about when Moana realized the impact of her decision on others. His apology shows that he is a character who is not only brave but also has a high sense of empathy.

"I love you."

This speech appears in family relationships, especially with his grandmother. In addition to expressing affection, this sentence also creates a strong emotional bond in the story.

Expressive use (10.61%) showed that Moana's character had emotional depth. Moana is rational compassionate, courageous in admitting mistakes, and knows how to convey gratitude or love.

3.4 COMMISSIVE

Commissive speech is a type of illocution that shows the speaker's commitment to do something in the future, such as a promise or intention. Although the number is relatively small (6.82%), commissives are essential in building Moana's responsible and determined character.

"I will return the heart of Te Fiti."

This speech is the promise that is the basis of the entire storyline. Moana shows her commitment to the mission she believes in.

"I promise I won't let you down."

This speech confirms that Moana wants to convince her supporters that she can be trusted. This sentence also serves to build the moral credibility of the main character.

The commissive that Moana uses shows that she not only acts impulsively, but also thinks about the consequences and is morally responsible. It reinforces the image of leadership that is oriented towards intention and determination.

3.5 DECLARATIVE

Declarative is an act of speech that can change status or social reality directly, for example, validating, deciding, or determining. In the data collected, no declarative use by Moana was found. This can be explained through Moana's social position, who, despite being the main character, does not have formal authority at the story's beginning.

The absence of declarative evidence suggests that Moana's character does not have the institutional authority to verbally make changes in social status. However, he remains an agent of change through actions and speech in the form of assertive, directive, and commissive.

The paragraphs discussed above show that Moana's use of illocution speech not only has a practical function, but also a strategic and reflective function in shaping the narrative and character development. With the dominance of assertive speech, Moana appears as a strong person in expressing her identity, beliefs, and hopes. This confirms that dialogue in the movie is more than just a means of communication between characters, but also a medium to show the personal growth and leadership of the main character.

In addition, the variety of other types of speech shows a balance between the aspects of thought and emotions in Moana. Directive speech shows his active role and impact in the storyline, expressive speech

shows his empathetic side and emotional closeness, and commissive speech highlights his determination and moral responsibility. Although there is no declarative speech, its absence confirms Moana's image as a leader who grows out of personal experience, not because of formal positions or structural power.

From this analysis, it is clear that Moana's speech actions have an essential role in shaping the dynamics of the story. Speech functions as a means of communication and a narrative medium that reflects character transformation. Moana uses every type of speech to express her leadership values, emotions, and principles.

The dominant use of assertiveness language reflects Moana's confidence and character consistency. He conveys information and uses it to strengthen the legitimacy of his role as a leader. The courage to express an opinion is the main force that guides the story.

Meanwhile, using directives shows Moana as a figure who can influence others. It is not passive or waiting, but actively invites, leads, and encourages action. It can be seen that in every step of her adventure, Moana utilizes her communicative skills to overcome conflicts and challenges.

Expressive speech provides a balance between strength and tenderness. Moana is not described as a rigid figure, but instead has high emotional sensitivity. Her ability to express affection, gratitude, and regret shows the psychological depth of this character.

Commissive speech shows the dimension of responsibility. The promises spoken are not just words but a commitment that binds the story's journey. This reinforces Moana's moral side, making her a figure who acts not only for herself but also for the wider community and values.

The absence of declaratives confirms that Moana's authority is not structural, but is built gradually through real actions and trust from the people around her. This shows that leadership can evolve from personal qualities, not just from position.

Thus, through various speech acts, Moana transforms from a doubtful teenager to an influential leader. Language became the primary means of expressing his struggles, the values he held, and his vision of change. It plays a crucial role in creating intense and emotional story dynamics. The language used by the characters not only conveys the message but also becomes a depiction of identity, values, and social relationships that develop throughout the movie.

IV CONCLUSION

This research indicates that the character Moana in the movie Moana uses various types of illocutionary speech to convey the meaning and purpose of her communication. Of the 132 dialogue excerpts that have been analyzed, it was found that Moana performs four types of speech according to Searle's (1979) classification: assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive. Assertive speech emerged as the most commonly used, reflecting Moana's character's reflective and confident nature. Meanwhile, directive speech shows an active role and leadership, expressive speech shows an emotional side, and commissive speech reflects perseverance and personal responsibility. Declarative speech was not found, as Moana's social context and position did not position her as a formal authority.

In addition to the type of speech itself, the analysis also reveals that the context of the situation and social relationships affect the way and function of the language used. Moana adjusts her way of communicating by considering who she is talking to and the importance of the situation. This shows that the use of illocutionary speech in movies is not only linguistic but also depicts the social and psychological dynamics of the characters. Thus, this study emphasizes that speech acts in cinema can function as a reflective medium to understand interactions and character formation pragmatically.

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