Speech Acts in a Workplace Environment as Demonstrated in 'The Underdogs' Short Film

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Abstract— This study examines the speech acts used in the short film entitled 'The Underdogs'. The purpose of this research is to determine the way ideas are discussed between employees in a company. Speech acts have been chosen as the main topic of the research to figure out how ideas are conveyed in a work discussion—as is shown in the short film. 'The Underdogs' short film is produced by the technology company Apple Inc. as a means of advertising their products. The utterances that will be analyzed are only those that are used in scenes where the characters in the short film are at work or are discussing their work. Searle's theory on the types of Speech Acts is used to analyse the data found and taken for this research. According to this study, there are 47 utterances found in the film that fit the criteria for the data needed for this research. From all the data analysed, the most dominant type falls to the Assertive speech acts with 15 data, and the least dominant type found in the research is the Commissive speech acts with only 2 data.

Keywords: speech acts, pragmatics, short film, Searle's speech acts, Apple Inc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) formulate that the main function of language is to interpret human experience, which is often expressed in literary works. According to Hart (2011), literary works need to be studied and compared. This is why it is important to study literary works. When discussing literary works, it is also important to learn about the several kinds of literary works and the elements that form them. It is general knowledge that there are several forms of literary, and they are poetry, prose and drama (Gill, 1995). Each type has intrinsic elements that form the literary work. Films have the same basic intrinsic elements as other literary products, especially prose and drama (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Thus, it can be concluded that because there is an obvious link between film and literature, film can be considered as a branch of literature (Ramrao, 2016).

The language used in a workplace environment is an example of human experience that can be analyzed in literary works. From the field of pragmatics, the speech acts used by employees at work may be an interesting topic to be discussed. For this research, examples of speech acts used in a workplace environment will be taken from the short film 'The Underdogs'. It is a film produced by the technology company Apple Inc. as a means to advertise their products and their benefits about office work. The film is three minutes long, and tells the story of a small group of employees working their best to prepare their ideas for the new project they want to present to their boss. Regarding to the film, it has been decided that since this research will analyze the speech acts used in a workplace environment, the data analyzed in this research are utterances the character uttered while they are at work. To facilitate this research, the approach that will be used is the Pragmatics Approach.

Prior to this research, several studies have been done regarding speech acts used in various form of literary works. In general, several previous studies examine the use of speech acts from a character in a novel and their translation, to study how the translation techniques used impact the quality of the speech act translation (Hapsari et al., 2016; Lengari et al., 2022). Some studies also discuss how the translation of speech acts and their politeness strategies contribute to the framing of certain characterizations in literary works (Arbain et al., 2018, Sugiharti et al., 2022). Other studies analyze the speech acts used by characters in movies to determine the context of those speech acts (Oktadistio et al., 2018; Nareswara & Suseno, 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that the speech acts used in a workplace environment as depicted in a short film can be the gap for this research.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pragmatics Approach

Pragmatics can be interpreted as the study of the use of language. According to Leech (1983), pragmatics is a study in the field of linguistic studies which is related to semantics. In general, the concept of pragmatics is defined by Leech as a branch of linguistics with a concept that emphasizes the general description of the function of language in communication. Furthermore, Leech stated that pragmatics is the study of meaning related to speech situations.

Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson (1987) revealed that pragmatics is the study of the use of language. According to them, pragmatics is related to language and context which involves making inferences that connect what is said with what is assumed together or has been said before. Pragmatics can also solve problems between speakers and listeners, especially the point of view between them. It can be concluded that pragmatics is the study of meaning that can be seen through the language used and its context.

Yule (1996) then suggests that pragmatics is the study of the speaker's intended meaning. According to him, pragmatics contains several concepts, namely speech acts, conversational implicatures, presuppositions and deixis. Yule also divides the definition of pragmatics into four, namely (1) the field that examines the speaker's meaning, (2) the field that examines the meaning according to the context, (3) the field that examines the meaning uttered, communicated or communicated by the speaker, and (4) the field that examines forms of expression according to social distance that limit the participants involved in certain conversations.

It can be concluded that the definition of pragmatics according to Yule is a contextual meaning that is communicated by a speaker, writer, and interpreter by a reader or listener. Therefore, it is safe to say that pragmatics is a science that examines everything related to the act of communicating, and one way to study it is through the analysis of speech acts.

B. Speech Acts

The first speech acts theory was proposed by Austin in 1962 in his book "How to do Things with Words". According to him, producing a word also means creating an action which is an element of language and means that what is said is also what is done. From Austin's theory, Searle developed his own in 1969 to make it more applicable. Searle emphasized Austin's notion that language is used to perform actions through utterances issued in a particular manner by speakers in a conversation which are called speech acts, and subsequent speech acts become the basic or minimal unit of linguistic communication. Both of these theories are in line with Yule's (1996) opinion which states that a speech act is an act of action by an utterance.

Austin (1962) divides speech acts into three: (1) locutionary acts, namely speech acts that only say something such as speaking or asking, (2) illocutionary acts, which mean speech acts that state an action, and lastly (3) perlocutionary acts, namely speech acts that cause an influence on the interlocutor speaker. Searle (1969) then has the opinion that when someone speaks, he will perform three different actions, namely speech, proposition, and illocutionary. Searle developed his theory to complement Austin's categorization which was considered unclear and overlapping from one category to the next. The following is the classification of speech acts according to Searle:

The theory of speech acts put forward by Searle also provides a framework that uses three dimensions, and they are speech, meaning and action. This framework is explained through certain characterizations with detailed explanations and clear examples of each categorization. That is why the classification of Searle's speech acts will be used as a reference in this study in the study of speech acts that will be carried out on the four main characters of the short film 'The Underdogs'. By determining the types of speech acts are used by the characters, who represent office workers in general, it is hoped that this study will be able to determine what kind of speech acts used when employees are in discussion.

III.   METHOD

The approach used in this study is the Pragmatics Approach. This approach is chosen because the focus of this research is the speech acts used in a workplace environment as shown in the short film 'The Underdogs', to provide an overview of the types of speech acts used among employees when doing a discussion about their work. This research is descriptive because it describes the speech acts of the characters in the short film. This research is also qualitative because this research aims to explore and understand a phenomenon that is not widely known (Mack et al, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Eisner, 1991). This research is a fixed case study research because before the research is carried out, the researcher has determined the formulation of the problem in advance (Sutopo, 2006).

The research location is a boundary determined by the focus or research object (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Santosa, 2021). In relation to the purpose of this study, the location of the research is the transcription of the dialogue taken from the short film 'The Underdogs.' Therefore, it can be concluded that the research source is a document. Meanwhile, the participant in this study is the four main characters of the film, who represent employees of a company. The data in this study are the utterances of the four main characters in the short film, therefore this type of data is linguistics data. The dialogues chosen are only those that are uttered when they are at their office. All of these data are transcribed from the dialogues of the short film, which can also be referred to as primary data sources. Meanwhile, secondary data is in the form of previous research which helps in concluding research gaps.

IV.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The short film 'The Underdogs' tells the story of how four employees in a fictional company try their best to work on a project that will get them promoted. The film is three minutes long, and it depicts interactions between the employees as the main characters of the film in a work setting. Therefore, the data that are analyzed in this research are utterances that come from the dialogues the four employees have while they are at work. In relation to the main topic of this research, the result of the analysis help determine the kinds of speech acts used between employees in a workplace environment as shown in the table below.

TABLE 1

No.	Type of Speech Acts	Frequency
1.	Assertive	16
2.	Directive	15
3.	Expressive	9
4.	Commissive	2
5.	Declarative	5
	Total	**47**

For this research, there are 47 data taken in total. This means that there are 47 utterances analyzed that represent the speech acts uttered by the four characters in the short film. These utterances are chosen to be analyzed because they are uttered by the main characters, who are employees of a company, in a workplace environment. Other utterances that are uttered by other characters, or are uttered outside of work setting, or about topics not related to their work, are not chosen as data to be analysed in this research. Out of all the data anlysed, the most dominant type of speech acts found is the Assertive type. There are 17 data in total for this type. An example of this data is *"We need to find a name for the box"*, which is considered an Assertive speech act because it is an example of a demand one of the characters uttered in the short film. According to Searle (1969), a statement is a form of Assertive speech act. Other examples for this type of speech act is *" We need to weeks".* This example, like the previous one, is also a form of Assertive act because this utterance shows the speaker's intent to make demands. In the film, the speaker for both utterances was telling the rest of team on what they all should do finish their project.

The second type of speech acts that is the most frequent is the Directive speech act. There are 15 data found for this type of speech acts, and they are mostly in the form of questions, even though they may have different purposes. An example of this type is *"When is the meeting?"*, which is a line that one of the characters asked to inquire when their important meeting would be held. Another example of the Directive speech act is *"Dave, can you please double-check those figures for us?"*. This example, while it is still in a question form, has a different purpose than the first example because when the utterance is uttered, the speaker is giving directions to the listener. Regarding the many purposes of question-formed utterances, this brings us to the next type of speech acts. The third most frequently found type is the Expressive speech act with 9 data. In this research, this type of speech act is found to praise every progress the characters have made throughout the process of completing their career-changing project. An example of this data is *"Do I really have to go see Mike in finance?",* which is utterance in the form of a question, but is actually a form of expressing one's self. The utterance is an example when an utterance is used as a form of expression. Now, as for another example of Expressive speech, there is also an utternace in the form of a statement. The example is *"This is going to look so good in the presentation"*, which is uttered by a character nearing the end of their work to compliment the result of their hardwork.

There are only 5 data found to represent the Declarative speech acts. Utterances that fall under this type are uttered by the characters in this short film when they are declaring something that will create some sort of change— be it for the speaker, for the listener, or both, or just for the situation in general. An example of this type of speech acts is *"I just got us a meeting with Vivienne"*, because this line insinuates that a meeting with Vivinenne, who is the characters' boss, will determine the path of their career. Another example for this type is the utterance *"It's time".* In the film, this line is uttered nearing the end of the film to announce that it is time for them to meet with their boss and present all their hardwork. As for the type of speech act that is least found in this research is the Commissive speech act with only two data. In the short film, this type includes utterances that are found when the characters are offering a solution or assistance, still with finally purpose that is to ensure the result of their project turns out to be good. An example of this type is *"I'll email you the video"*, which is an offer made by one character to another because the aforementioned video that they are discussing is paramount to their project. The other example for this type of speech acts is *"This is how we get off this floor",* because in the film, this line is uttered by the speaker whilst vaguely demonstrating how their presentation should go in front of their boss.

V.   CONCLUSION

The results of the research on the short film 'The Underdogs' in regards to the speech acts used reveal that there are 47 utterances found. Out of those utterances, the most dominant type falls to the Assertive speech acts with 15 data. Meanwhile, the least dominant type found in the research is the Commissive speech acts with only 2 data. These results may indicate that the Assertive type is found most frequently in the short film because the context is that the characters are employees who are at their workplace discussing their work. This means that forms of utterances that fall under the category of Assertive—such as making statements—are often done while employees are interacting at work. The reason why the Commissive type is the least frequent one to be found is because it is rare that character who are employees make utterances that fall under that category—such as making promises or threats. One influencing factor to this result may come from the fact that the context of this short film is strictly about discussing work, when in reality, people may perhaps talk about something else when they are in their workplace environment. Therefore, it may be prudent to do more research on the speech acts of employees in a workplace environment when they are under other circumstances.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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