Illocutionary Acts in Joaquin Phoenix's Acceptance Speeches at Film Awards Ceremonies in 2020: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts, to analyze the functions of illocutionary acts, and to describe the strategies of illocutionary acts used in Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speeches at five film awards ceremonies in 2020. The method used in this research is qualitative methodology which, according to Taylor (2016), produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior. The theoretical framework for this research refers to: Searle's (1979) theory on types of illocutionary acts, Leech's (1993) theory on functions of illocutionary acts, and Yule's (1996) theory on strategies of illocutionary acts. Out of 30 analyzed data, the research shows that: there are 11 expressive types (37%), 10 assertive types (33%), 6 directive types (20%), and 3 commissive types (10%); there are 14 convivial functions (47%), 8 collaborative functions (27%), 6 competitive functions (20%), and 2 conflictive functions (6%); there are 14 direct strategies (47%) and 16 indirect strategies (53%).

I. Introduction

As social beings, humans have needs to interact with each other. Interactions between human beings involve a communication method that is known as language. Whether spoken or written, language is used by humans for various purposes. Thus, any spoken or written language produced by humans has meaning. In linguistics, the scientific study of language, there is a specific study of meaning known as pragmatics. This type of study involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said (Yule, 1996). In other words, pragmatics is concerned with interpreting the meaning of spoken or written words in a certain context.

When someone is speaking or uttering words, those words are not only uttered without purpose but also infused with meaning. The words of utterance can be considered as an action of something. Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request (Yule, 1996). Essentially, speech acts are acts of communication. According to Bach (1979), "to communicate is indeed to express a thought or, more generally, an attitude, be it a belief, an intention, a desire, or even a feeling" (p. 15). As an act of communication, a speech act fulfills its intention if the hearer identifies the attitude being expressed by the speaker.

Acceptance speech is an example of an act of communication in which the speaker expresses gratitude for receiving a recognition or an award. In general, an acceptance speech contains an expression of gratitude towards the people who contributed to the

speaker's achievement in receiving the award. Furthermore, regardless of the nature of the awards given, award's recipients oftentimes not only express their gratitude but also express the other forms of attitude. In short, an acceptance speech can be turn into a platform for the recipient to express certain attitudes beyond gratitude, from personal belief to personal feeling.

In this research, Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speeches at film awards ceremonies in 2020 are analyzed. Phoenix is a Hollywood actor who started his career at an early age and has been getting accolades over the years, culminating in his receiving a number awards in the period of 2019-2020 for his performance in the film "Joker". However, in his past interview with Interview Magazine in 2012, he said that he was not in favor of film awards and did not want to take a part of it. Therefore, given the context of the actor who felt apathetic toward film awards then ended up receiving a number of awards years later, this research aims to analyze the illocutionary acts in Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at film awards ceremonies in 2020.

II. Review of Literatures

2.1 Pragmatics

In linguistics, pragmatics is the study of language usage in relation to its context. In accordance with that definition, Yule (1996) states that "pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning" and "pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)".

In an utterance, there usually is an objective that its speaker wants to achieve. To achieve it, the speaker makes the utterance in such a way that the hearer is able to perceive the meaning correctly. The hearer's ability in perceiving the utterance's meaning depends on the context. According to Mey (1993), context is the situation in which an utterance occurs that contributes to speaker and hearer understanding each other. It means that pragmatics concerns the meaning of an utterance based on the context that surrounding it.

2.2 Speech Act

Speech act theory was initially stated by John L. Austin in 1930s. As stated in his book, "How to Do Things with Words" (1962), utterance is closely related to action. According to Austin, when someone is saying something, he or she is also performing an act. Furthermore, Yule (1996) states that performing actions via utterances is called speech act. Based on those statements, it can be concluded that speech act is an act performed by a speaker by means of an utterance.

Austin (1962) proposes three classes of acts that fall under speech acts. Those acts are: (1) locutionary act, which is equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with certain sense and reference; (2) illocutionary act, which is the speaker's act of doing something that indicates the speaker's purpose and can be expressed in the form of promise, request, statement, etc.; and (3) perlocutionary act, which is the effect perceived by the hearer in consequence of the speaker's utterance.

2.3 Types of Illocutionary Act

Illocutionary act is often referred to the act of doing something in saying something. Therefore, illocutionary act is not only used to inform something but also to do something. Searle (1969) categorizes the illocutionary act into five classes: assertive or representative, commissive, directive, expressive, and declaration.

a. Assertive or Representative

Assertive, which is also known as representative, is the type of speech act that binds the speaker to the truth of what he or she utters. It is performed by the speaker to convey that his or her belief of the proposition is true. Some examples of assertive are claiming, describing, reporting, suggesting, etc.

b. Commissive

Commissive is the type of speech act that commits the speaker to do actions in the future according to his or her utterance. Essentially, it expresses what the speaker intends. Some examples of commisive are promising, threatening, vowing, etc.

c. Directive

Directive is the type of speech act that is intended to produce some efforts through action by the hearer. By using directive, the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something he or she wants. Some examples of directive are advising, ordering, requesting, etc.

d. Expressive

Expressive is the type of speech act that has the function of expressing or making known the speaker's psychological attitude toward a state of affairs that the illocution presupposes. In this case, the speaker makes the words fit with the situation in which his or her feeling is also included. Some examples of expressive are apologizing, congratulating, thanking, etc. Expressive speech is part of illocutionary speech acts (Syahrin, 2018). Walgito in Nur'aini (2018) says that perceptions come from English, namely perception, which means capture or sight.

e. Declaration

Declaration is the type of speech act that is used to say something and make it so or, in other words, change the current situation via the speaker's utterance. According to Leech (1993), declarations are illocutions whose successful performance brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. Some examples of declaration are baptizing, pronouncing, sentencing, etc.

2.4 Functions of Illocutionary Act

Leech (1993) generally classifies illocutionary functions into four types, in proportion to how they relate to the social goal of establishing and maintaining comity.

a. Competitive

Competitive function means that the illocutionary goal competes with the social goal. An illocutionary function is competitive when politeness is of a negative character and its purpose is to reduce the conflict between what the speaker wants to achieve and what is deemed as good manners. Some examples of competitive function are begging, ordering, requesting, etc.

b. Convivial

Convivial function means that the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal. In an illocution that has convivial function, politeness takes a positive form of seeking opportunities for comity or being friendly. Some examples of convivial function are congratulating, offering, thanking, etc.

c. Collaborative

Collaborative function means that the illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goal. In this function, politeness is irrelevant. Some examples of collaborative function are announcing, reporting, stating, etc.

d. Conflictive

Conflictive function means that the illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal. Politeness is disregarded in this function because conflictive illocution is inherently designed to cause offense. Some examples of conflictive function are accusing, cursing, threatening, etc.

2.5 Strategies of Speech Act

In the context of speech act, a strategy is used by the speaker so that his or her utterance can be received well by the hearer and the utterance's goal can be achieved. According to Yule (1996), there are two speech act strategies: direct and indirect speech act.

a. Direct Speech Act

Yule (1996) states that speech act strategies has a relationship between the three structural forms (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and the three general communicative functions (statement, question, command/request). Direct speech act occurs when there is a direct relationship between the utterance's structure and its function.

Performative verb is one indicator of direct speech act in an utterance. Rahmawati (in Sidiq, 2019) defines performative verb as a verb which describes or identifies an act. Based on that definition, the usage of performative verb in a speaker's utterance indicates that the speaker performs something that is described by the verb in his or her utterance.

b. Indirect Speech Act

According to Yule (1996), indirect speech act occurs whenever there is an indirect relationship between the utterance's structure and its function. For example, an utterance with declarative structure that is used by a speaker to make a command is an indirect speech act because there is a discordance between the structure and function of the utterance.

Indirect strategy correlates with the speaker's intention of making his or her utterance seem more polite. According to Leech (in Justová, 2006), people tend to use indirect speech acts mainly in connection with politeness since they thus diminish the unpleasant message contained in requests and orders for instance. Moreover, the speaker can also use indirect strategy to make his or her utterance more interesting so that the message in it will be more impactful for the hearer. Thomas (in Justová, 2006) states that people also use indirect strategies when they want to make their speech more interesting, when they want to reach goals different from their partners' or when they want to increase the force of the message communicated. In other words, by having high motivation, it produces good achievements (Khairani, 2020).

In an indirect speech act, there is an implicit meaning which can be perceived by observing the utterance's context and the hearer's response. The implicit meaning contained in an utterance is known as implicature. Rusminto (in Sidiq, 2019) asserts that conversational implicature is something that is hidden in a conversation which means that it implicitly exists in an actual language usage.

III. Research Methods

This research is conducted by using the method of qualitative research. Qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior (Steven J. Taylor, 2016). In accordance with that reference, McNeill and Chapman (2005) stated that "qualitative data is in the form of words rather than numbers. Much of the research report is composed of word-for-word quotation from those being studied" (p. 20). Therefore, it can be summarized that qualitative research is a research that uses words as the data, which are analyzed by using words (theories), resulting in a summary that is composed from words.

The data of this research are obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speeches at five film awards (The Academy Awards, British Academy Film Awards, Critics' Choice Movie Awards, Golden Globe Awards, and Screen Actor Guild Awards) in 2020 by performing the following steps: selecting and viewing the speeches; transcribing the speeches; selecting data; classifying the data; analyzing the data; and drawing the conclusion regarding the types, functions, and strategies of illocutionary act.

IV. Discussion

In this research, there are 30 data obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speeches at five film awards in 2020. They were analyzed in order to find the illocutionary types, illocutionary functions, and speech act strategies used in the data.

4.1 Types of Illocutionary Act

The following pie chart shows that of 30 data analyzed, there are 11 data (37%) classified as expressive, 10 data (33%) classified as assertive, 6 data (20%) classified as directive, and 3 data (10%) classified as commissive.
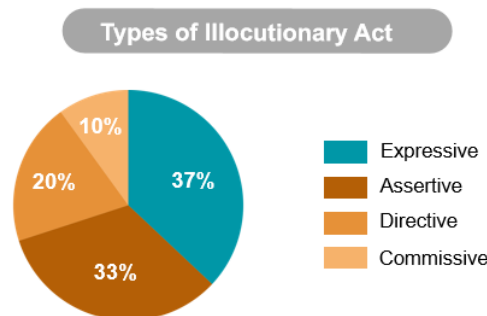

Figure 1. Types of Illocutionary Act

4.2 Expressive Illocutionary Act

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Critics' Choice Awards ceremony in 2020.

"First I'd like to thank the award for going plant-based and trying to offset our carbon footprint. It's really an amazing message. I deeply appreciate that."

Joaquin Phoenix started his utterance by stating "I'd like to thank the award" as an expression of gratitude to the award organizer for providing plant-based meals which can have a significant effect on offsetting carbon footprint. That particular action from the

organizer surely impacted Phoenix's psychological attitude in a positive way, proven by the usage of the adjective "amazing" in his following utterance. Phoenix then continued his expression of gratitude by stating *I deeply appreciate that* at the end of his utterance. As proposed by Searle (1969), the illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses his psychological attitude is classified as expressive.

a. Assertive Illocutionary Act

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2020.

"Contrary to popular belief, I don't wanna rock the boat, but the boat is fucking rocked."

Joaquin Phoenix's utterance in the data above shows that he tried to tell the truth about him not wanting to upset anyone by saying "I don't wanna rock the boat" which, he believed, was not something that people expected from him. Then, by saying "the boat is fucking rocked", he tried to assure the hearer(s) that the circumstance they were in made him sure that he needed to "rock the boat". Based on Phoenix's utterance which convey that his belief of the proposition is true, the illocutionary type of this data is classified as assertive.

b. Directive Illocutionary Act

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2020.

"It's great to vote, but sometimes we have to take that responsibility on ourselves and make changes and sacrifices in our own lives."

Joaquin Phoenix started his utterance by stating that voting (which refers to the 2019 off-year election in the US) was a great act, but he also emphasized that he and the hearer must do something more than that. The usage of "have to" in his utterance indicates that it was Phoenix's way of asking or influencing his hearer(s) to do some actions ("make changes and sacrifices in our own lives") which can result in his utterance's goal achieved. The type of this illocutionary act in this data is directive because it is intended to produce some efforts through action by the hearer.
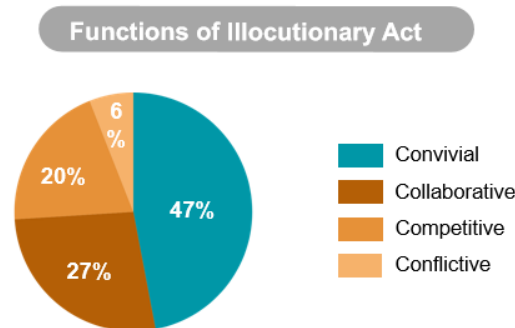
c. Commissive Illocutionary Act

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2020.

"I'll try to do better and I hope you will too."

In his utterance, Joaquin Phoenix committed himself to do better in the future. Phoenix's utterance refers to his previous statement about the lessons he learned to make himself better and the contributions he can do to help making changes in the world. His promise and commitment to do an action in the future indicate that the type of illocutionary act in this data is commissive.

d. Functions of Illocutionary Act

The following pie chart shows that of 30 data analyzed, there are 14 data (47%) classified as convivial, 8 data (27%) classified as collaborative, 6 data (20%) classified as competitive, and 2 data (6%) classified as conflictive.

Figure 2. *Functions of Illocutionary Act*

e. Convivial Function

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Academy Awards (Oscars) ceremony in 2020.

"I've been a scoundrel all my life. I've been selfish. I've been cruel at times, hard to work with, and I am grateful that so many of you in this room have given me a second chance."

In his utterance, Joaquin Phoenix admitted that he has bad reputation (scoundrel, selfish, cruel, hard to work with) in the past. By doing so, he appeared honest and humble to his hearer(s). Then he continued his utterance by expressing his gratitude toward the people that have given him a second chance. His gratitude can be seen as Phoenix's way of being courteous and friendly. As formulated by Leech (1993), an illocution that is used for seeking opportunities for comity is classified as convivial.

f. Collaborative Function

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2020.

"I think together, hopefully, we can be unified and actually make some changes."

Instead of using "should" or "must", Joaquin Phoenix used the modal verb "can" in his utterance which indicates that the illocution does not bind the hearer(s) to agreeing or doing what Phoenix stated. Phoenix made the utterance as way to express his opinion on something and he didn't concern about being polite. As stated by Leech (1993), an illocution in which politeness is irrelevant can be classified as collaborative.

g. Competitive Function

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA) ceremony in 2020.

"I think that we have to really do the hard work to truly understand systemic racism."

Through his utterance, Joaquin Phoenix tried to persuade his hearer(s) to take part in understanding and fighting systemic racism, especially in the film industry. By using the idiom "have to" which means his following statement is necessary, Phoenix attempted to achieve his goal without disregarding politeness. The nature of his request, which competes with the social goal, makes the illocution of this data classified as competitive.

h. Conflictive Function

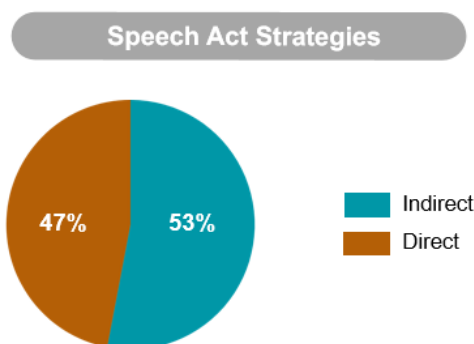The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Academy Awards (Oscars) ceremony in 2020.

"I think that we've become very disconnected from natural world. And many of us, what we're guilty of is an egocentric world view, the belief that we're the center of the universe. We go into the natural world and we plunder it for its resources."

Despite of containing some truths in it, Joaquin Phoenix's utterance can be disregarded by the hearers who do not share the same point of view. Moreover, Phoenix's claim in his utterance can offend some people because of the verbs he used ("guilty", "plunder") that have negative connotation. As stated by Leech (1993), an illocution that conflicts with the social goal and inherently designed to cause offense is classified as conflictive.

i. Speech Act Strategies

The following pie chart shows that of 30 data analyzed, there are 16 data (53%) classified as indirect strategy and 14 data (47%) classified as direct strategy.

Figure 3. *Speech Act Strategies*

j. Indirect Strategy

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards ceremony in 2020.

"And, really, I am standing here on the shoulders of my favorite actor, Heath Ledger."

In a literal sense, the phrase "standing here on the shoulders of…" in the data above means that the speaker is standing on someone's shoulders. However, in the context of Joaquin Phoenix's utterance, the phrase is actually an idiom which is interpreted as getting the benefit from what someone else did in the past. Phoenix implicitly stated that the award he received was the result of the inspiration he got from Heath Ledger, his favorite actor, who played Joker in *The Dark Knight*. Therefore, the illocution of this data has an indirect strategy.

k. Direct Strategy

The following data is obtained from Joaquin Phoenix's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2020.

"Thank you so much for putting up with me. I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful for this night and all of you. Thank you."

Joaquin Phoenix expressed his gratitude clearly to the hearers by saying "thank you" followed by the phrase "putting up with me" which means tolerating his behavior in the past. He continued his utterance by using the adjective "grateful" which literally means Phoenix's feeling of gratitude for what he experienced that night. The declarative structure of Phoenix's utterance is used to state his feeling without imbuing it with hidden meaning, thus the illocution of this data has a direct strategy.

V. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion, the following conclusions are obtained:

1. The types of illocutionary act found in this research consist of 11 data (37%) classified as expressive, 10 data (33%) classified as assertive, 6 data (20%) classified as directive, and 3 data (10%) classified as commissive. Declaration illocutionary act is not found in this research because, in awards ceremonies, this type of illocutionary type is generally used only by the presenter who reads the name of award recipient.
2. The functions of illocutionary act found in this research consist of 14 data (47%) classified as convivial, 8 data (27%) classified as collaborative, 6 data (20%) classified as competitive, and 2 data (6%) classified as conflictive. Convivial function is found in expressive and commissive illocutionary type; competitive function is found in directive illocutionary type; collaborative and conflictive functions are found in assertive illocutionary type.
3. The speech act strategies found in this research consist of 16 data (53%) classified as indirect strategy and 14 data (47%) classified as direct strategy. Direct strategy is used in assertive, commissive, and expressive illocutionary type; while indirect strategy is used in assertive, commissive, directive, and expressive illocutionary type.

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