International Journal of Humanity Studies
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

LANGUAGE IN ACTION: INTERPRETING ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS IN *TICK, TICK…BOOM!*

Bejo Sutrisno[1*] and Dinda Cherril Julian Rahim[2]
[1]Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia
[2]Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing IEC Jakarta, Indonesia
*correspondence: bejo.sutrisno@uai.ac.id
https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v9i1.10167
received 25 October 2024; accepted 28 July 2025

Abstract
Although illocutionary speech acts have been extensively studied in everyday and institutional discourse, their application in cinematic narratives remains underexplored. Existing pragmatic research on film dialogue has primarily focused on genre conventions or general speech act patterns, leaving a gap in understanding how illocutionary force constructs character identity and emotional conflict in creative storytelling. This study investigates the illocutionary acts employed by Jonathan Larson, the protagonist in *Tick, Tick… Boom!,* a Netflix original musical that dramatizes the tension between personal ambition and existential anxiety. Drawing on Searle's taxonomy, the research adopts a qualitative approach to analyze 76 representative utterances from the film script and scenes, identifying and categorizing illocutionary force. The results reveal four types of illocutionary acts: directives (42.5%), assertives (26.7%), expressives (22.3%), and commissives (6.6%), with directives as the most dominant. These findings suggest that Larson's linguistic behavior is driven largely by attempts to influence, persuade, and seek validation from others. By situating speech act theory within cinematic pragmatics, this study contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary research and offers insights for scholars examining language use in media narratives. Future research may consider integrating locutionary and perlocutionary dimensions for a fuller account.

Keywords: cinematic discourse analysis, illocutionary acts, pragmatics in film, Searle's taxonomy, speech act theory

Introduction

Pragmatics plays a vital role in understanding how language functions beyond its literal meaning, particularly in how speakers use language to perform actions, express intentions, and interact with others in context. Among the core concepts in pragmatics, speech act theory, initially introduced by Austin (1962) and developed further by Searle (1976). This theory helps explain how saying something can be an action, like making a request, giving a promise, saying sorry, or stating a fact. It shows how language connects with what people mean and how they interact with each other. Although there has been a lot of research on speech acts in political

This work is licensed under CC BY-SA.
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

speeches, ads, and everyday chats, there hasn't been much study on how speech acts are used in movie dialogues, especially in films that focus on personal and emotional stories. Most prior studies tend to focus on commercial or action-based films with surface-level interactions, leaving a gap in pragmatic research regarding films that portray internal struggles, identity construction, and social negotiation. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the illocutionary speech acts of Jonathan Larson, the protagonist of Netflix's *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, aiming to reveal how his language use reflects his psychological state, interpersonal relationships, and communicative intentions throughout the narrative. Communication relies not only on the linguistic code but also on the understanding of intentions, context, and the effects of utterances on the listener (Demuyakor, 2021).

In this context, pragmatic studies, particularly those focusing on speech acts, play a vital role in examining how meaning is constructed and interpreted beyond the literal level (Adawiyah et al., 2021; Asykin et al., 2021). Speech act theory, as introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), offers a framework for understanding how utterances perform actions, such as requesting, promising, or asserting (Susanto, 2022). However, much of the existing research has centered on formal or conversational contexts, leaving a gap in the exploration of speech acts within media narratives, such as film dialogue. This study aims to address that gap by analyzing illocutionary acts in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how pragmatic meaning functions within creative and performative discourse. Fasold et al. (2014) divided the parts of the system into two: grammatical competence and communicative competence. Grammatical competence is the part of the system that allows speakers to produce and interpret grammatical sentences. In other words, we interpret a sentence solely based on its literal wording (Mahowald et al., 2024; Veres, 2022). In contrast, communicative competence involves using language beyond just conveying the literal meaning of grammatical sentences; it includes understanding the intended or pragmatic meaning within a given context. In this study, the writers focus only on the communicative competence of a language, the pragmatic meaning of utterances.

Recent trends in pragmatic research emphasize the dynamic relationship between language use and context, particularly how meaning is shaped not only by linguistic structure but also by situational, social, and cultural factors (Ratri & Bram, 2022). Contemporary scholars have increasingly turned their attention to how pragmatic principles, especially speech act theory, operate in media and cinematic discourse, highlighting how fictional dialogues mirror, exaggerate, or subvert real-life communication patterns. Rather than focusing solely on everyday or institutional talk, recent studies have explored how characters in films use language to perform actions, express intentions, and negotiate relationships through dialogue (Devi & Ambalegin, 2022; Jucker, 2021; Mulatsih, 2021). Speech act theory, originally developed by Austin (1962) and refined by Searle (1969) remains a foundational framework in these analyses, particularly in identifying illocutionary force within fictional exchanges (Susanto, 2022; Yudha, 2022). This growing body of research suggests that movies offer rich data for pragmatic inquiry, as they blend creative narrative with intentional speech functions. However, many studies have focused on mainstream genres or political discourse, leaving a gap in understanding how speech acts are deployed in biographical and musical films. Addressing this

gap, the present study analyzes illocutionary acts in *Tick, Tick… Boom!* to contribute to the evolving discourse on pragmatics in audiovisual storytelling.

Furthermore, Searle (1969) argued that speaking a language means also performing speech acts, including acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, and making promises (Asykin et al., 2021; Ratri & Bram, 2022). These actions are classified as illocutionary speech acts. More specifically, illocutionary speech acts are divided into five parts: Assertive, meaning to make statements; directive, meaning to get the listener to do something; commissive, meaning to make a promise; expression, meaning to express the speaker's feelings or emotions about something; and declaration, meaning to create a change based on what is uttered (Searle, 1976).

Communication involves the usage of speech acts (Asykin et al., 2021). In movies, the communication is evident in the dialogue between characters. As stated by Yule (1966), the advantage of studying language through pragmatics is that one can talk about people's intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that they are performing when they speak. This study aims to examine the types of illocutionary speech acts performed by the main character, Jonathan Larson, in Netflix's *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, a biographical musical that portrays the emotional and creative struggles of a young composer on the verge of a breakthrough. The video has cultural and communicative relevance since it shows the complex interpersonal dynamics that shape the artist's relationships, identity, and internal problems, in addition to his linguistic expressions under pressure. This study makes a distinctive contribution to the developing discipline of pragmatics by examining Larson's statements via the prism of speech act theory, especially in expanding the use of illocutionary analysis to cinematic tales. The goal of the study is to show how true patterns of communicative intention and function can be reflected in fictional discourse that is based on real-life experiences. By doing this, it offers empirical evidence for the applicability of speech act theory to the analysis of meaning-making outside of casual conversation. It also sheds light on how performative language in movies can highlight the relationship between linguistic action, social interaction, and personal aspiration. This targeted examination bridges theoretical models with modern audiovisual media, contributing to the corpus of pragmatic research.

The study of illocutionary speech acts has drawn more interest in linguistic and pragmatic studies in recent years, especially when it comes to media like movies, interviews, and websites like YouTube. Finding the kinds and occurrences of illocutionary acts in diverse cinematic situations has been the subject of numerous studies. For instance, Sembiring et al. (2019) found that there are 30 utterances of illocutionary speech acts used in the movie *Aladdin* (2019). In the movie *You Are My Home*, Hutajulu & Herman (2019) found that there are a total of 78 representatives, 90 declaratives, 40 expressives, and 8 commissives. There are a total of 99 utterances of illocutionary speech acts in the movie *London Has Fallen* (2016), with directive utterances being the dominant utterance used in this movie, analyzed by Tutuarima, Z., Nuraeningsih, N., & Rusiana (2018). In Haucsa et al.'s study (2020) with the title 'Illocutionary Speech Acts Analysis in Tom Cruise's Interview', it is found that the percentage of the most performed or the most used speech acts is the representative (48.7%), and the least one is declarative (0%).

Although these studies have greatly advanced our knowledge of the distribution of speech acts in media, they mostly concentrate on dialogue or action-driven movies and frequently highlight quantitative counts of speech act types without delving deeper into the characters' intended meanings. There is still little research on how illocutionary acts work in musical-biographical films, particularly those that combine narrative storytelling with autobiographical and artistic expression, despite the growing interest in pragmatic analysis across a variety of media. Movies like *Tick, Tick… Boom!* present a unique intersection where emotional introspection, performative dialogue, and authentic language use converge, often drawing directly from the lived experiences of real individuals. This combination provides a wealth of information for pragmatic research, especially in figuring out how language reflects interpersonal dynamics and character development. Nonetheless, current speech act research, which frequently focuses on political discourse, action movies, or casual talk, still understudies this genre. By examining the complex and emotionally charged language employed in these narrative situations, this significant gap offers a chance to broaden the application of speech act theory.

The present study addresses this gap by focusing not only on the frequency of illocutionary speech acts, but also on their function and significance in shaping the character of Jonathan Larson in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*. A fascinating backdrop for pragmatic analysis is offered by this Netflix original movie, which dramatizes the late composer's battle to achieve artistic accomplishment before the age of thirty. In contrast to the action or romantic movies that were previously examined, this movie places language at the center of the character's identity, inner turmoil, and creative process. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in its interpretive approach: it explores how illocutionary speech acts reflect Jon's psychological state, relational dynamics, and communicative strategies, offering deeper insights into character construction and pragmatic meaning in cinematic discourse.

By applying Searle's taxonomy to a rich, introspective narrative, this study not only extends the scope of speech act theory into a new genre but also emphasizes the relevance of pragmatics in understanding how language shapes human experience in film. In doing so, it contributes both theoretically and methodologically to the growing body of research on speech acts in media. Within linguistics, there are several subfields to explore, with one of them being pragmatics (Puranjani & Rajeg, 2022). Brown & Levinson (1987) described pragmatics as the study of the relations between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammar. Pragmatics covers the study of deixis, implicature, presupposition, and speech acts. Speech act theory, as a part of pragmatics, is categorized into three parts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts, as proposed by Searle (Adawiyah et al., 2021; Auliya, 2022).

The study of speech acts in movies offers a special perspective that allows pragmatic phenomena to be investigated in lively, realistic environments that simulate communication in real life. In addition to being cultural artifacts, movies, especially those with deep narratives and emotional depth, also function as pragmatic texts in which characters use language to carry out social behaviors like asking for things, expressing emotions, giving orders, or negotiating goals. Researchers can gain insight into speaker intent and listener interpretation by examining speech actions in this media, which enables them to see how language

works in context and interactively. By theoretically extending speech act theory into multimodal discourse contexts and practically improving our comprehension of how language is strategically employed in media, education, and interpersonal communication, this focus makes a significant contribution to both theoretical and applied linguistics. Nonetheless, a large portion of the literature to date has focused on action-packed or popular commercial films, frequently with little interpretive nuance, despite increased interest in pragmatics and media discourse. The subtle use of illocutionary acts in character-driven, autobiographical, or creative films, where speech shows inner conflict, identity building, and social negotiation, is one area that has received little attention. By analyzing Jonathan Larson's speech acts in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, a film that deftly combines narrative, performance, and introspection, this study fills that gap.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, focuses on how language is used in real-life situations to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words (Adawiyah et al., 2021; Demuyakor, 2021). Leech (2011) explains that pragmatics interacts closely with core grammatical components such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, but distinguishes itself by emphasizing how meaning is shaped through use in context. This foundational perspective is essential to this study, as the aim is to examine how utterances in the film *Tick, Tick… Boom!* function not just as syntactic or semantic units, but as purposeful actions within a specific narrative context.

Yule (1966) reinforces this view by defining pragmatics as the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. His approach emphasizes speaker intention, listener interpretation, and the situational context, key elements in understanding how illocutionary acts operate in character dialogue (Asykin et al., 2021; Auliya, 2022; Mulatsih, 2021). This perspective is particularly useful for this study because it allows the researcher to uncover layers of meaning that are not explicitly stated in the script but are implied through tone, context, and speaker intention.

In addition, Griffiths (2006) highlights that pragmatics explores how utterances can convey more than what is encoded in their literal form (Demuyakor, 2021). This insight is crucial to analyzing *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, where much of the emotional weight and character development relies on subtext, implied meaning, and nuanced verbal expression. Griffiths' focus on the interpretive nature of language use justifies the pragmatic lens through which this study examines Jonathan Larson's dialogue (Rokhmah & Santoso, 2022).

Central to this research is speech act theory, a core framework within pragmatics that addresses how utterances perform actions rather than merely convey information. Austin (1962) introduced this theory to highlight that when people speak, they are not just stating facts but often performing acts, such as promising, apologizing, or requesting. This idea is further developed in Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary acts, which classifies these speech acts into categories like assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. The choice to use Searle's taxonomy is deliberate, as it offers a systematic approach for identifying and categorizing the types of illocutionary force present in Jon's utterances throughout the film.

Finally, the work of Ekoro and Gunn (2021) supports the relevance of using a pragmatic framework in media discourse by emphasizing how pragmatics allows us to uncover meaning beneath the surface of linguistic expressions. They argue that pragmatic analysis enables listeners, and by extension, researchers, to better understand the communicative intentions that are shaped by context and interaction. Their insights justify this study's approach, as understanding Jon's speech acts requires interpreting not just what is said, but what is meant and done through his words.

Therefore, combining these theories and references is not just about ideas; it is about how to actually do the analysis. Each one helps create a structure that allows for a deeper look at how speech acts function in *Tick, Tick…Boom!*. This approach helps uncover how language shows character goals, inner struggles, and relationships, which in turn allows for a more thoughtful and context-aware understanding of Jon's speech acts.

Speech acts

Speech act theory, first introduced by Austin (1962), serves as the central theoretical foundation for this study. Austin argued that language is not merely a tool for conveying information but also a means of performing actions. For example, utterances like "I promise" or "I apologize" are not just descriptive statements but acts that commit or express the speaker's intentions. This conceptualization is essential to the current study, as it provides a framework for analyzing how the main character in *Tick, Tick… Boom!* Jonathan Larson uses language not only to express ideas but to perform various social and interpersonal actions throughout the film.

Austin's model consists of three components: locutionary (the act of saying something), illocutionary (the intended function of the utterance), and perlocutionary (the effect on the listener) (Demuyakor, 2021). Among these, illocutionary acts, the focus of this study, are particularly important, as they capture the speaker's intention and the communicative force behind the utterance. Ekoro and Gunn (2021) reinforce this by defining illocutionary acts as the core actions performed through speech, such as asserting, requesting, or expressing feelings. Their emphasis on the pragmatic function of utterances supports this study's aim to go beyond surface-level dialogue and uncover deeper layers of meaning.

While Austin's taxonomy was foundational, it was later refined by Searle (1976, 1979), whose classification offers greater analytical clarity (Demuyakor, 2021). Searle identified five main categories of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (Searle JR, 1976). His taxonomy is adopted in this study because it provides a clear and practical framework for categorizing the various speech acts in the film. For instance, assertives (e.g., stating or informing) reveal Jon's beliefs and frustrations; directives (e.g., requesting or urging) highlight his attempts to influence others; expressives (e.g., thanking or apologizing) expose his emotional struggles; and commissives (e.g., promising or intending) reflect his personal commitments and future goals (Chen & Sun, 2023). Declaratives, though less frequent, also mark key turning points in his personal or professional identity.

By using Searle's classification, this study can systematically identify and interpret the types of illocutionary acts Jon uses and how these acts contribute to his character development and narrative arc. Huang (2017) supports this focus by

stating that illocutionary acts are central to understanding what speakers aim to accomplish through language, making this theoretical approach directly aligned with the study's objective: to uncover the communicative intentions embedded in Jon's utterances.

In sum, the combined insights of Austin (1962), Searle (1979; 1976), and supporting scholars such as Ekoro and Gunn (2021), Griffiths (2006), and Huang (2017) provide the analytical tools necessary for examining how Jon's language functions as action. This theoretical foundation enables the study to not only identify the types of illocutionary acts in *Tick, Tick… Boom!* but also to interpret how these acts reflect the character's motivations, internal conflicts, and relationships—thereby contributing to the broader field of pragmatics and speech act theory in cinematic discourse.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, focusing on content analysis, to examine the different types of speech acts that involve action or intention, as performed by the main character, Jonathan Larson, in Netflix's original musical-biographical film *Tick, Tick… Boom!* (2021). Creswell (2012) explains that qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups attach to social or human issues. It focuses on detailed, contextual information. Similarly, content analysis is a way to look at verbal communication in a structured manner to find patterns, intentions, and how language functions. Downe-Wamboldt (1992) defines content analysis as a method that enables researchers to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data through a structured, objective approach.

Source and context of data

The primary data used in this study were the dialogue spoken by the character Jonathan Larson in the film *Tick, Tick… Boom!*. This film portrays the real-life difficulties faced by an up-and-coming composer dealing with both personal and professional issues. The movie is full of conversations, emotions, and deep thinking, which makes it a good choice for analyzing how people use language in real situations. Each of Jonathan's lines was looked at in the context of the scene it came from, along with his feelings, relationships, and the overall setting of the conversation.

To ensure accurate transcription and contextual interpretation, two data sources were used:

1) The official subtitle transcript from the film on Netflix, which provides a synchronized script of the spoken dialogue.
2) An online movie script (secondary data source), cross-checked line by line with the actual spoken dialogue in the film to verify accuracy and account for any deviations or omissions in the subtitle version.

Data collection procedure

The data collection involved the following steps.

1) Watching the film repeatedly to familiarize with the plot, character interactions, and relevant utterances by the main character, Jonathan Larson.

2) Identifying and extracting all spoken utterances by Jonathan Larson that contained performative or intentional expressions relevant to speech act theory.
3) Noting the scene context of each utterance, including speaker intent, interlocutor relationship, emotional tone, and situational background, to aid in accurate pragmatic interpretation.
4) Cross-referencing **utterances** between the subtitle and script to ensure that the transcription accurately reflected what was spoken.

Data classification and analysis

The analysis process involved several stages:

1) Classification of utterances was conducted using Searle's (1976) taxonomy of illocutionary acts, which includes five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives.
2) Coding and categorizing each utterance based on its illocutionary force, that is, the intended function behind the speaker's utterance (e.g., informing, requesting, promising, expressing emotion).
3) Considering contextual cues, such as body language, tone, prior dialogue, and social relationships within the scene, to support accurate identification of illocutionary intent in the classification process.
4) Recording and analyzing the frequency and distribution of each speech act type to determine patterns in Jon's language use and communication strategies.

By using Searle's framework, the study aimed to interpret how Jon uses language not only to express thoughts and emotions but also to perform social actions and achieve interpersonal goals. This analysis is crucial to achieving the research objective of uncovering how illocutionary speech acts contribute to the portrayal of Jon's character, intentions, and development throughout the film.

Findings

After thoroughly watching, analyzing, and categorizing the dialogues of the main character in the movie *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, the writers identified four types of illocutionary speech acts present throughout the 2 hours and 1 minute movie. The character Jon utters a total of 76 illocutionary utterances. The data are broken down into details as in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Illocutionary Act in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*

No.	Type of Illocutionary Act	Data
1	Assertive	21
2	Directive	33
3	Commissive	5
4	Expressive	17
Total		76

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that the types of illocutionary act are assertive (21 data), directive (33 data), commissive (5 data), and expressive (76 data). The analysis based on the movie script is shown in Table 2.

No.	Data	Type of Illocutionary Act
1	You are an angel on earth.	Expressive
2	No, thank you. No, no, no. I got you.	Directive
3	You're not going to pay. I don't want you to pay.	Directive
4	You're coming next Friday, right?	Directive
5	I'm allowing myself to be led by love.	Assertive
6	I'm on it.	Commissive
7	How will I ever survive?	Directive
8	I'm leaving you my mix tapes. You can play them in remembrance of me.	Directive
9	You look great.	Expressive
10	It's freezing up here.	Assertive
11	Can we go inside now? I'm just, I'm sorry, I'm scared I'm beginning to lose sensation in my extremities.	Directive
12	Hold on.	Directive
13	I said: "Oh." What was I supposed to say? I didn't know what to say. I mean, I can't leave New York.	Assertive
14	I don't want a job in advertising.	Assertive
15	Oh. My. God.	Expressive
16	At the very least, I need drums, a synth, guitar --	Directive
17	Two more and piano is the absolute bare minimum for this.	Directive
18	We're filling up fast, so I just wanted to make sure you got your spot.	Directive
19	So can I count you in?	Directive
20	I'm getting very close.	Assertive
21	No. Don't go. Hang out. You can sleep in your old room.	Directive
22	Can we talk about it tomorrow? I just really need to finish this song. Okay?	Directive
23	You don't seem sure…	Assertive
24	What?	Expressive
25	Shit.	Expressive
26	He's going to be fine.	Directive
27	Thank you for your patience.	Expressive
28	It's perfect. Keep going.	Directive
29	I love it. I love it.	Expressive
30	Thank you for everything.	Expressive
31	Make sure you're not speeding up.	Directive
32	Why didn't you tell me you were coming?	Directive
33	The actors have a break. I don't have any breaks.	Assertive

34	Can you ask for an extension? I'm sorry – I just – Can we talk about it tonight?	Directive
35	Let's add this whole section to the work list. Add the whole song.	Directive
36	Can I call you back later? I'm right in the middle of something here…	Directives
37	How much does it pay?	Directive
38	I'll be there.	Commissive
39	Any day now.	Commissive
40	You could have called first.	Directive
41	I'm writing, Susan.	Assertive
42	Can we talk about this later? Please?	Directive
43	Everyone is unhappy in New York. That's what New York is.	Assertive
44	You're right, I've been distracted, but I promise, after the workshop – I just have to get to after the workshop…	Commissive
45	I can't move to the Berkshires. I can't leave my career behind.	Assertive
46	Susan. Susan, wait.	Directive
47	Susan. Hold on, Susan.	Directives
48	Okay. No, because of the subway.	Assertive
49	Sorry about that.	Expressive
50	It was a joke.	Assertive
51	Tell them I had a stroke.	Directive
52	Money isn't everything.	Assertive
53	Michael. Michael.	Directive
54	I'm so sorry.	Expressive
55	Can you give her a message for me?	Directive
56	Can you sight-read?	Directive
57	It's a rehearsal studio, Dad.	Assertive
58	That's for someone else actually.	Directive
59	Thank you for being here.	Expressive
60	I'm a little nervous.	Expressive
61	Whoe… hey, well… you don't have to do that… that's very kind. Thank you. Okay. Thank you so much for being here this morning – right.	Expressive
62	I really hope you like it.	Directive
63	Hi, Rosa. Thank you so much for calling.	Expressive
64	I'll apologise to the focus group lady. I'll never say anything bad about marketing research ever again, I swear to God.	Commissive
65	I spent eight years killing myself on a musical that is never going to happen.	Assertive
66	I can't keep wasting my time, Mike. I turn thirty in two days.	Assertive
67	I can't keep waiting. This is my life.	Assertive

68	No, you don't understand. I'm running out of time.	Assertive
69	What? How long have you…?	Expressive
70	Mike --	Directive
71	Whatever comes next… I'm here. I promise.	Commissive
72	I'm so cold.	Assertive
73	Well, I would have been sad not to see you every Sunday morning.	Assertive
74	I'm so happy you're here.	Expressive
75	Okay. I'm happy for you.	Expressive
76	Just questions	Assertive
Total		76

Discussion

Types of illocutionary speech acts performed by John Larson

In this part, the writers discuss the findings based on the data in Table 2. All the data below are the results from the 75 data found in the movie, analyzed based on Searle's (1979) taxonomy of illocutionary speech acts.

Assertive

According to Searle (1979), assertives are statements in which the speaker attempts to provide details, make a claim, or state a proposition. In other words, assertives convey the speaker's desire for the listener to be aware of their beliefs. It involves the act of informing, stating, claiming, and so on.

Based on data no.5 in table 2, after learning that Jon had decided to quit his job at the diner. Susan, his girlfriend, questioned him about his decision. It led Jon to explain to Susan that he was not just quitting, but also allowing himself to be led by love. Jon's statement saying, "I'm allowing myself to be led by love," is considered assertive. According to Searle (1979), assertive acts are those in which the speaker aims to convey information, describe a situation, or express a proposition. Through Jon's words, "I'm allowing myself to be led by love." Jon wanted Susan to know that he decided to quit the job because he wanted to focus on the thing that he loved, which was working on his musical workshop that was coming in seven days. With this context, it can be concluded that Jon's statement qualifies as assertive since the purpose of assertive is to provide information.

In data no. 10 in Table 2, another assertive is used by Jon. After holding a party in this apartment, Jon went upstairs to the rooftop of his apartment to meet Susan, who was standing there waiting for Jon to come. When he walked out to approach her, he said, "It's freezing up here.". With these words, Jon also committed an act by making a statement about the weather. As stated by Searle (1979), when someone performs an assertive act, they are making a claim about the world that can be judged accurate or incorrect, and it is evident in the statement that is proposed by Jon.

Jon demonstrated another assertive act, especially an act of refusing in data no. 13 in table 2. The context involved Jon's friend, Michael, offering him a job in the field of advertising. Rather than accepting the offer, Jon clearly showed his rejection of the offer by saying, "I don't want a job in advertising." This statement not only conveyed his decision but also provided a clear assertion that he had no

interest in the job being offered. This refusal is an example of an assertive act because it involves claiming his personal preference (Searle, 1979).

Based on these three pieces of data, it can be concluded that Jon used assertive utterances throughout the movie, consider Jon's act of informing about his decision to quit his job, saying "I'm allowing myself to be led by love,"; the act of stating his observations about the weather through his statement "It's freezing up here,", and the act of rejecting, "I don't want a job in advertising." These acts allowed Jon to convey his beliefs and perspectives.

Directive

Directive acts occur when the speaker attempts to get the listener to do something by expressing their desires, as proposed by Searle (1979). It includes the act of ordering, commanding, requesting, begging, inviting, advising, etc. For example, when a speaker says, "Please close the door," they are performing an act of requesting, whose goal is to make the listener close the door.

As shown in Data No. 20 in Table 2, Jon performed a directive speech act. In this scene, Michael—who was no longer Jon's roommate—was currently in Jon's apartment. When Michael was about to leave, Jon said, "No. Don't go. Hang out." This utterance reflects a directive act, as the speaker is expressing a desire for the listener to perform an action. In this context, Jon clearly communicated that he did not want Michael to leave. His words function as an act of inviting, which falls under the category of directive speech acts.

During the rehearsal for his workshop, Jon clearly performed a directive speech act, as shown in Data No. 30 in Table 2. While sitting next to the pianist who would later perform in the workshop, Jon said, "Make sure you're not speeding up," as he supervised the practice. This utterance indicates that Jon wanted the listener, in this case, the pianist, to maintain a consistent tempo. In this context, Jon was actively engaging in a directive act of advising, with the intention of influencing the pianist's behavior.

Another directive act is evident through Jon's words in data no. 54 in Table 2. Jon attempted to contact Susan, but instead of Susan, Beth, who was Susan's roommate, picked up the call. He told Beth that he wanted to talk to Susan, but through Beth, Susan said that she refuses to talk to him. In this situation, Jon used a directive act by saying, "Can you give her a message for me?" to Beth. This act of requesting clearly showed that Jon was performing a directive act whose aim was to influence Beth's action, to pass his message to Susan.

The three data above show that Jon performed directive utterances throughout the movie. It included the acts where Jon attempted to influence the listener's action by expressing his desires. For instance, when Jon told Michael, "No. Don't go. Hang out," he was expressing his desire for Michael to stay, performing a directive act of inviting. During the rehearsal, Jon commanded the pianist by saying, "Make sure you're not speeding up," to influence the pianist's behavior.

Another example is when Jon asked Beth, "Can you give her a message for me?" to ensure his message reached Susan, which was a directive act of requesting. These data from Table 2 show Jon's use of directive acts when communicating in the movie.

Commissive

Searle (1979) suggested that commissive acts are types of speech acts that commit the speaker to doing something in the future. When someone makes a promise or pledge, they are performing a commissive act. For instance, if someone says, "I'm coming to the party tomorrow,' they are committing themselves to attend the party being said. This act includes the act of promising, planning, vowing, etc. Examples below are how commissive acts are used by the character Jon in this movie.

In data no. 37 in Table 2, the use of a commissive act is shown. In this context, Michael was talking to Jon on the phone, bringing up the job Michael offered to him at the beginning of the movie. Jon, who initially rejected the offer, was currently in a condition where he needed to pay a few musicians for his workshop. Upon hearing the offer, he responded to Michael's offer without thinking, saying, "I'll be there." This expression showed that Jon committed himself to take the job his friend offered, showing a commissive act, which is promising.

Data no. 3 in Table 2 also shows the performance of the commissive act by Jon. In the middle of his argument with Susan, who rarely got his time because of his workshop, he said, "…I promise, after the workshop…" to her. Explicitly, Jon was performing the act of promising to Susan. He once again committed himself that after the workshop, he would talk with her, demonstrating a commissive act.

Jon used another commissive act when speaking with Michael, as seen in data no. 70 in Table 2. After finding that his best friend was HIV positive and might lose his friend again, Jon approached Michael and said, "Whatever comes next, I'm here. I promise." This sentence shows how Jon promises to stand by Michael's side no matter what might happen in the coming days. This gesture indicated that Jon was performing a commissive act, which was promising.

Throughout the movie, he frequently used commissive acts, particularly the act of promising. In data no. 37, Jon promised to take the job, showing that he committed himself to attending the meeting through the expression "I'll be there." Similarly, in data no. 43, Jon explicitly made a promise to Susan, and thus performed a commissive act. Again, in data no. 70, Jon promised to stand by Michael's side. The three examples of data provided above show how the character Jon performed commissive acts in this movie.

Expressive

In the view of Searle (1979), when a speaker conveys a psychological state, such as emotions and attitudes, it is considered an expressive act. It includes acts like thanking, congratulating, apologizing, welcoming, praising, etc. How expressive acts are used in this movie is explained below.

In the data, Michael came to the diner where Jon was currently working his shift. He came with a stack of papers in his hand, which were copies of his musical script. At that moment, Jon said, "You are an angel on earth," while handing a cup of coffee and a bag of takeaway to Michael. Expressives are utterances that the speaker aims to express a psychological state, such as feelings. From the situation above, it is shown that Jon was feeling thankful that Michael helped him, so he used the expression "You are an angel on earth" to thank Michael.

In data no. 28 in Table 2, Jon was heard saying "I love it. I love it," while listening to the musicians who would later perform the song he wrote for the

workshop. By saying "I love it. I love it," he showed his feelings, his satisfaction with their performance. This act of praising was another example of expressive act that was used by Jon in this movie.

In the last scene of the movie, Jon used another expressive act. Seeing data no. 74 in table 2, he used the expression "Okay, I'm happy for you" upon hearing Susan's decision to take the job. Through these words, Jon shared his positive feelings that he was happy to hear the news. By this, Jon also performed an illocutionary act, an expressive act.

In this movie, Jon also often used expressive acts to convey his feelings. When Michael brought him his musical script, Jon implicitly expressed his gratitude by saying, "You are an angel on earth," highlighting his thankfulness for Michael's help. His response to the musicians' performance, "I love it. I love it," also shows the act of praising. In the final scene, Jon also said, "Okay, I'm happy for you," upon hearing the news coming from Susan, reflecting his genuine happiness for her. Based on the three data above, Jon used expressive acts throughout the movie.

The dominant types of illocutionary speech acts performed by John Larson

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the analysis reveals that directive illocutionary acts are the most frequently used by the character Jon in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*, with a total of 33 utterances, accounting for 42.5% of all identified speech acts. This high frequency indicates that Jon often used language to influence the behavior of others, particularly through requesting, which emerged as the most dominant function within this category. This pattern reflected Jon's active role as a composer, collaborator, and friend—roles that required him to guide, instruct, or persuade others throughout the film. His frequent use of directives demonstrated his effort to manage situations, express urgency, and assert control, particularly during scenes involving rehearsals, creative discussions, and interpersonal tensions.

The next most frequent category is assertive speech acts, with 21 utterances or 27.6% of the total. These include acts such as informing, claiming, and describing, which suggest that Jon also uses language to share his thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. This is consistent with the narrative style of the film, in which Jon often reflected on his life and aspirations, either through direct dialogue or narration. Expressive acts follow closely, with 17 utterances (22.3%). These acts mainly include thanking, apologizing, and expressing emotions, highlighting Jon's emotional vulnerability and his responsiveness to social relationships. The relatively high use of expressive acts suggests that Jon was not only assertive and directive but also emotionally engaged with the people around him.

The least frequent category is commissive acts, with only 5 utterances (6.6%). These include actions such as promising and intending, which indicate that Jon rarely committed to future actions verbally—possibly reflecting his internal conflict, indecisiveness, or fear of failure, as portrayed in the film. Notably, there are no declarative acts found in the data. This absence suggests that Jon's role in the narrative did not involve formal or institutional authority (e.g., declaring someone married or announcing official decisions), which aligned with his position as a struggling artist rather than someone in a position of power.

Overall, the distribution of speech acts reflects Jon's dynamic character—assertive and goal-driven, yet emotionally expressive and at times hesitant to

commit. The prominence of directive and expressive acts also emphasizes the dual nature of his communication: managing external tasks while revealing internal emotional states.

Conclusion

Through the linguistic behavior of the main character, Jonathan Larson, this study has shed light on how illocutionary speech acts play a crucial role in character development and interpersonal communication in *Tick, Tick… Boom!*. The analysis brings to light the complex ways in which Jon uses language to negotiate the narrative's emotional, creative, and social conflicts by applying Searle's taxonomy. His speech habits are more than just informative or expressive. They reflect both internal conflict and external expectations and are situationally driven and performative. Nevertheless, this study solely examines illocutionary speech acts; it does not examine a wider range of pragmatic characteristics like conversational implicatures or perlocutionary impacts. To give a more thorough grasp of pragmatic dynamics in movie conversation, future research would benefit from looking at these further factors.

Based on the findings, the analysis reveals that Jon uses four different types of illocutionary acts. It includes assertive It includes assertive, directives, commissive, and expressive. Among these types, it is also found that the most frequently used type of illocutionary used by Jon throughout the movie is directives. The implications of this study extend beyond the categorization of speech acts. It demonstrates that cinematic dialogue, especially in biographical or emotionally charged narratives, serves as a rich site for pragmatic inquiry, capable of revealing the psychological and relational dynamics of a character. By focusing on illocutionary acts, this study contributes to a growing body of research that links speech act theory with media discourse, affirming that film language deserves greater attention in pragmatic and discourse analysis.

For future research, scholars may expand this investigation by including locutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of speech acts to better understand how utterances are not only intended but also received and interpreted by others within the narrative. Additionally, comparative studies between characters or across different film genres may yield deeper insights into how speech act strategies vary with context, personality, and communicative intent. This kind of research can further enrich our understanding of the interplay between language, identity, and meaning in audiovisual storytelling.

References

Adawiyah, R. A., Diani, I., & Azwandi, A. (2021). Illocutionary acts used in the *Dead Poets Society* movie. *Silampari Bisa: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia, Daerah, dan Asing*, *4*(1), 122–132. https://doi.org/10.31540/silamparibisa.v4i1.1175

Asykin, B. A. P., Suyadi, S., & Silfia, E. (2021). An analysis of illocutionary act in *Ratatouille* a movie by Brad Brid. *JELT: Journal of English Language Teaching,* *5*(2), 175-179. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.33087/jelt.v5i2.93

Auliya, K. (2022). Illocutionary acts by Lara Jean's utterances in *To All the Boys* movie trilogy. *Mahakarya: Jurnal Mahasiswa Ilmu Budaya, 3*(1), https://doi.org/10.22515/mjmib.v3i1.5500

Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Chen, G., Li, Y., & Sun, Y. (2023). How YouTubers make popular marketing videos? Speech acts, move structure, and audience response in YouTube influencer marketing videos. *SAGE Open, 13*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231152227

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Demuyakor, J. (2021). An analysis of speech acts in the inaugural address of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo as the President of the Republic of Ghana. *Shanlax International Journal of English, 9*(3), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v9i3.3978

Devi, R. S., & Ambalegin, A. (2022). Flouting maxim types found in *Thor Ragnarok* movie. *Humanitatis : Journal of Language and Literature, 8*(2), 249–260. https://doi.org/10.30812/humanitatis.v8i2.1648

Downe-Wamboldt, B. (1992). Content analysis: Method, applications, and issues. *Health Care for Women International*, 13(3), 313–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/07399339209516006

Ekoro, D. E., & Gunn, M. (2021). Speech act theory and Gricean pragmatics: A review. *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, *18*(4), 130-143. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/lwati/article/view/219692

Fasold, R. W., & Connor-Linton, J. (2014). *An introduction to language and linguistics*. Cambridge university press.

Griffiths, P. (2006). *Introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.

Haucsa, G. M., Marzuki, A. G., Alek, A., & Hidayat, D. N. (2020). Illocutionary speech acts analysis in Tom Cruise's interview. *Academic Journal Perspective*: *Education, Language, and Literature, 8*(1), 11-19. https://jurnal.ugj.ac.id/index.php/Perspective/article/view/3304

Huang, Y. (2017). *The Oxford handbook of pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

Hutajulu, F. S. L., & Herman, H. (2019). Analysis of illocutionary act in the movie *You Are My Home* English subtitle. *JEES: Journal of English Educational Study*, *2*(1), 29-36. https://doi.org/10.31932/jees.v2i1.371

Jucker, A. H. (2021). Features of orality in the language of fiction: A corpus-based investigation. *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics, 30*(4), 341–360. https://doi.org/10.1177/09639470211047751

Leech, G. (2011). *Prinsip-prinsip pragmatik* (M. D. D. Oka, Trans.). Universitas Indonesia Press.

Mahowald, K., Ivanova, A. A., Blank, I. A., Kanwisher, N., Tenenbaum, J. B., & Fedorenko, E. (2024). Dissociating language and thought in large language models. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, *28*(6), 517–540. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2024.01.011

Mulatsih, D. (2021). The illocution functions in *Twilight* movie dialogues: From politeness study point of view. *Jurnal Lingua Idea, 12*(1), 14–26. https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jli.2021.12.1.2773

Puranjani, N.W.N. & Rajeg, I. . (2022). Directive illocutionary acts of the characters' utterances in *The Desperate Hour* movie. *Humanis: Journal of Arts and Humanities, 26*(4), 321–328. https://doi.org/10.24843/JH.2022.v26.i04.p01

Ratri, A., & Bram, B. (2022). Illocutionary acts and contextual utterances in the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. *Journal of Language and Literature, 14*(1), 58–74. https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v14i1.1523

Rokhmah, D. E. L., & Santoso, D. E. P. M. (2022). A deixis analysis of song lyrics in Jeremy Zucker's *You Were Good to Me* and *Comethru*. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(3), 447–452. https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v5i3.21606

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.

Searle J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*, *5*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500006837

Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge University Press.

Sembiring, W. A., & Ambalegin, A. (2019). Illocutionary acts on *Aladdin* movie 2019. *Jurnal Basis: Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, 6*(2), 277–284. https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v6i2.1419

Susanto, A. (2022). The illocutionary and perlocutionary acts produced by the main characters of *Moxie* movie. *Kata Kita: Journal of Language, Literature, and Teaching, 10*(3), 564–570. https://doi.org/10.9744/katakita.10.3.564-570

Tutuarima, Z., Nuraeningsih, N., & Rusiana, R. (2018). An analysis of speech act used in *London Has Fallen* movie. *Vision: Journal for Language and Foreign Language Learning, 7*(2), 122-131. https://doi.org/10.21580/vjv7i23022

Veres, C. (2022). Large language models are not models of natural language: They are corpus models. *IEEE Access, 10*, 61970–61979. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2022.3182505

Yudha, N. K. S. S. A. (2022). Directive speech act analysis in *I Still Believe* movie's utterances. *The Art of Teaching English As a Foreign Language (TATEFL), 3*(1), 68–76. https://doi.org/10.36663/tatefl.v3i1.247

Yule, G. (1966). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.