

A Study of Speech Acts of the Main Villains in the Animated

Movies of Walt Disney Animation Studios

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the illocutionary acts produced by the main villains in the animated movies of Walt Disney Animation Studios. This study employed the qualitative research methods to characterize the nine villains' illocutionary acts in Disney animations and specify the frequency of the illocutionary acts produced by the nine villains. The analysis was based on Searle (1969) regarding five types of illocutionary acts comprising representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. From 361 utterances, the result showed that directives were found the most for 132 utterances (36.6%), followed by 112 utterances of representatives (31%). The next 60 utterances were expressives (16.6%); 46 utterances of commissives (12.7%), and 11 utterances of declaratives (3%). Regarding the directive act, which the main villains used in the highest frequency, it is conceivable that the villains in the movies were in a high position, so they mostly used the directive act to achieve their desires.

Keywords: Speech Acts, Villains, The Animated Movies, Walt Disney Animation Studios

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาวัจนกรรมของวายร้าย 9 ตัว ในภาพยนตร์แอนิเมชันของวอลต์ดิสนีย์แอนิเมชันสตูดิโอ การศึกษานี้ใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพเพื่อระบุวัจนกรรมของวายร้าย 9 ตัว ในภาพยนตร์แอนิเมชันของวอลต์ดิสนีย์ และระบุจำนวนความถี่วัจนกรรมที่พบ การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้เกณฑ์การจัดกลุ่มของเซิร์ล (1969) ซึ่งประกอบด้วยวัจนกรรมการบอกกล่าว (Representatives) วัจนกรรมการชี้แนะ (Directives) วัจนกรรมผูกมัด (Commissives) วัจนกรรมแสดงความรู้สึก (Expressives) และวัจนกรรมประกาศ

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(Declaratives) จากการศึกษพบว่าจำนวนถ้อยคำที่พบทั้งหมดจำนวน 361 ถ้อยคำ โดยวจนกรรการขึ้นพบมากที่สุด จำนวน 132 ถ้อยคำ (36.6%) ตามด้วยวจนกรรการบอกกล่าว จำนวน 112 ถ้อยคำ (31%) ตามด้วยวจนกรรการแสดงความรู้สึก จำนวน 60 ถ้อยคำ (16.6%) ตามด้วยวจนกรรการผู้กม้ด จำนวน 46 ถ้อยคำ (12.7%) และ วจนกรรการประกาศ จำนวน 11 ถ้อยคำ (3%) จากวจนกรรการขึ้นที่วรายร้ายตัวหลักใช้มากที่สุดอาจสรุปได้ว่าตัวร้ายของวอลต์ดิสนีย์มีตำแหน่งทางสังคมสูงจึงมักใช้วจนกรรการขึ้นเพื่อบรรลุความต้องการของตน

คำสำคัญ: วจนกรรการ วรายร้าย ภาพยนตร์แอนิเมชัน วอลต์ดิสนีย์แอนิเมชันสตูดิโอ

1. Introduction

Language is a medium of communication for everyone (Dkhar, 2020). For various goals and reasons, people employ both spoken and written language to communicate ideas, feelings, or thoughts through sounds, gestures, and signs. Concerning the spoken language, according to Sari (2020), since what is said may have several implications, an interlocutor might not be able to grasp all the meanings that the speaker tries to communicate. As a result, the interlocutors must agree on communication to be successful.

In linguistics, a study of meaning in the context of use is called pragmatics. Yule (2006) defined pragmatics as "the study of what speakers intend," or "speaker meaning." The study of pragmatics can shed light onto the understanding of the meaning of the utterances that the speakers wish to express through various communication channels (Tayjasanant, 2022). Under pragmatics, one of the theories which has received a lot of attention from the linguists and scholars is speech act theory. Theoretically, speech act theory concerns human actions which were intentionally performed through language or utterances (Fitriana, 2013). Nevertheless, in the analysis of speech acts, many researchers have also paid attention to the language used in media, especially in books, music, poetry, stories, movies, etc.

Concerning movies, they are media that contain the authentic messages and utterances of the interlocutors in diverse settings and could be a valuable resource for the study of speech acts. Typically, there are several movie genres including action, comedy, drama, fantasy, etc. In addition, movies could be either animated or non-animated. The animated movie, sometimes known as animation, is the movie that has animated characters and humorous tales suitable for people of all ages. So far, there have been numerous studies on speech acts of the protagonists in the movies, especially in the animated ones. However, not just the protagonists, antagonists or villains are also crucial elements in the

story since the interactions between protagonists and antagonists will create conflicts that arouse the emotions of the audience. To the researchers' knowledge, the language used by the villains has not, so far, received much attention from the research community since most light has been given to the protagonists. Hence, to fill in the gap, this present study would examine the speech acts produced by the antagonists or villains in the animated movies in order to see how the villains use or manipulate the language to achieve the communicative goals. The main objective of this present study is as follows.

2. Objective of the study

To explore the illocutionary acts produced by the main villains in the animated movies of Walt Disney Animation Studios

3. Literature Review

3.1 Pragmatics

As stated by Yule (1996), pragmatics is a branch of linguistics which primarily analyzes the meaning intended by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. Unlike semantics which studies the logical aspect of meaning without taking contexts of use into consideration, pragmatics emphasizes the influence of context on what is said. Generally speaking, pragmatics is a study of meaning which mainly concerns the speaker's choice of words, how words are organized, who the speaker is talking to, as well as place and time in which the utterances are produced.

Since it was introduced in the 19th century, pragmatics has constantly received much interest from linguists and scholars. The topics which are generally studied within the realm of pragmatics can be varied and most of them arise from the difficulties in the investigation of language extracted from context (Slotta, 2020). The examples of the topics include the study of deixis, presupposition, implicature, politeness, as well as speech acts which is the focus of this present study.

3.2 Speech Acts

In mid-20th century, the emphasis of the study of meaning was placed upon the analysis of the truth condition of the sentence. That is to say, meaning of a sentence could be accounted by a truth condition or the condition under which a sentence is true. However, J.L Austin, an ordinary language philosopher, mentions in his book 'How to do Things with Words' (1962) that meaning is not restricted to only the truth condition since there are

sentences whose meanings are non-truth-conditional or could not be judged either true or false. Thus, Austin (1962) proposes that there should be a distinction between constative utterance and performative utterance. The meaning of a constative utterance, such as ‘The girl threw the coin into the wall,’ could be described based upon the truth condition to be either true or false. Nevertheless, the meaning of a performative utterance, such as ‘I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth II.’ could not be said as either ‘true’ or ‘false,’ yet it performs an action when being uttered. This notion gives rise to the speech act theory (Chiravate, 2021).

According to Austin (1962), people do not produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words only to describe the world, but those utterances are claimed to perform some actions. Under this theory, the actions which are performed via meaningful utterances are called ‘speech acts.’ For instance, a speaker might produce an utterance to perform an apology, compliment, invitation, promise, etc. This means that speech acts are associated with the communicative intention of a speaker in producing an utterance. Generally, in usual communication, it is expected that the communicative intention of the speaker would be recognized by the interlocutor, and the interpretation of the utterance will depend on the speech event (Yule, 1996).

Austin (1975) proposes that speech acts contain three dimensions, i.e., locutionary act, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. The first dimension, locutionary act, is the production of meaningful and grammatical utterances. The second dimension, or illocutionary acts, can be reckoned for the speaker’s implication or when the speaker produces an utterance with a specific intention in their mind. The last dimension or the perlocutionary act is the effect from the illocutionary force.

With reference to the illocutionary act, Searle (1979) mentions that it could be classified into five types including declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives.

Declaratives are speech acts that a speaker produce to change the world. As suggested by Yule (1996), in order to perform a declaration, the speaker needs to have a specific role or position. The speech acts under this type of illocutionary acts include firing, sentencing, naming, etc.

Representatives are speech acts that a speaker uses to describe the world as he or she believes it is. The speech acts under this type of illocutionary acts include describing, reporting, complaining, and hypothesizing.

Expressives are speech acts that a speaker uses to show the feelings or emotions of the speaker. The speech acts under this type of illocutionary acts include thanking, apologizing, complimenting, congratulating, etc.

Directives are speech acts that a speaker uses to get the listener to perform or do something. The speech acts under this type of illocutionary acts include ordering, commanding, requesting, suggesting, inviting, etc.

Commissives are speech acts that a speaker uses to commit him/herself to some future actions. The speech acts under this type of illocutionary acts include promising, threatening, offering, etc.

According to Cumming (2015), these five types of illocutionary act are different in terms of the 'direction of fit' between 'word' and 'world.' The direction of fit could be either 'make words fit the world' which includes declaratives, representatives, and expressive and 'make world fit words' which includes directives and commissives.

3.3 Previous Studies on Speech Acts

So far, speech acts have been studied in various aspects and sources of data. There are many scholars and linguists who investigated speech acts in natural language such as in speeches of well-known persons. For example, Mulyawati (2020) investigated the speech acts in Kim Nam Jun's speech at the United Nation General Assembly in 2018 based upon Searle's classification of illocutionary acts. The results of the study revealed that Kim Nam Jun employed all types of illocutionary acts except for the declaratives. In addition, Gultum (2017) examined Hillary Clinton's speech delivered at the Annual NAACP convention in 2016 in order to find the speech act categories in the speech as well as to find the most dominant category of speech act used in the speech. The results showed that commissives were used in the highest frequency and declaratives were not used.

Aside from the speeches, a number of studies have been conducted in order to examine speech acts in the utterances produced by characters in the movies of different genres. For example, Kumala (2018) investigated the three dimensions of speech acts in 'The Croods' movie, and the results showed that all types of speech acts were produced by the characters in the movie and the effects of these speech acts were also visible. Another example is a study conducted by Wirastri and Ghozli (2017) who investigated the dialog of the famous movie 'La La Land' and they found that from five categories of speech acts, four categories were used by the main character except for the declaratives.

Not only the classifications of illocutionary acts, but there are also numerous studies which analyze speech acts along with other pragmatic frameworks and theories. For example, Suksakhon (2020) investigated the choices of politeness strategies the undergraduate students employed to perform the speech act of request towards their teacher. The results indicated that the strategies employed by the students tended to be direct which was contradict to the mainstream belief that Thai people would be polite towards the elders. In addition, the study of speech acts could be done to compare the similarities and differences in the choice of speech acts when various factors come into account. For example, Yang and Wannaruk (2019) who investigated the semantic formulae of complaints which the native Thai speakers and native Chinese speakers employed in different scenarios. The results were clear that the native Thai speakers and native Chinese speakers' choice of complaints was different in terms of explicitness.

From the aforementioned previous studies, particularly the investigation of illocutionary acts, some common characteristics in terms of the objectives and results are clearly noticeable. First of all, these previous studies tend to share the same research goal in the sense that they mainly want to examine the types of illocutionary acts in the utterances collected from the sources. The utterances could be either authentic language produced by actual human beings or the movie scripts. In addition, when the sources of data are movie scripts, it is found that most of the utterances selected for the analysis were produced by the protagonists or heroes. Furthermore, the results from these previous studies are quite alike since four types of illocutionary acts namely directives, commissives, expressives, and representatives were found pervasively in the utterances, and declaratives were rare. Therefore, in order to add more knowledge and understanding to the speech act theory, the present study would explore the illocutionary acts produced by the villains or antagonists in the well-known Disney's animated movies.

4. Research Methodology

In order to fulfill the proposed research objective, all utterances produced by nine villains from nine well-known Disney animations were collected. The selected villains included the Evil Queen from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Captain Hook from *Peter Pan* (1953), Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Cruella de Vil from *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961), Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Jafar from *Aladdin* (1992); Scar from *The Lion King* (1994), Hades from *Hercules* (1997), and Doctor Facilier from *The*

Princess and the Frog (2009). The total number of utterances collected was 361. These 361 utterances were thoroughly analyzed and classified into each type of illocutionary acts based upon the classification of illocutionary acts proposed by Searle (1969). The frequency of illocutionary acts discovered were then presented using percentage.

5. Results

Table 1. Types of illocutionary acts uttered by the nine main villains

Speech Acts	Representative	Directive	Commissive	Expressive	Declarative
Evil Queen (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs)	9	19	0	7	0
Captain Hook (Peter Pan)	18	24	5	7	0
Maleficent (Sleeping Beauty)	7	6	0	15	1
Cruella de Vil (One Hundred and One Dalmatians)	3	13	5	6	3
Ursula (The Little Mermaid)	12	13	7	1	1
Jafar (Aladdin)	13	10	6	9	0
Scar (The Lion King)	17	12	5	5	1
Hades (Hercules)	18	15	3	4	3
Dr. Facilier (The Princess and the Frog)	15	20	15	6	2
Total	112 (31%)	132 (36.6%)	46 (12.7%)	60 (16.6)	11 (3%)

Table 1 shows the illocutionary acts which are divided into 5 types: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The most found types of speech acts in the Walt Disney animation films included the directive type which was discovered in the highest frequency for 132 utterances, followed by the representative type which equaled to

112 utterances. The next types were the expressive for 60 utterances; the commissive was found for 46 utterances and the least found type was the declarative type in 11 utterances.

The details of each animation are described as follows:

The first one was “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” which comprised of three types of the illocutionary acts: the directive type was found the most for 19 utterances; representative type was found for 9 utterances; and expressive type was found for 7 utterances. The commissive and declarative types were not used in the film.

Next was “Peter Pan” whose utterances belonged to “Captain Hook.” The illocutionary act found the most was the directive type for 24 utterances. The representative type was found for 18 utterances, followed by expressive type for 7 utterances and commissive type for 5 utterances. No declarative type was found in the animation.

In the “Sleeping Beauty,” the utterances found in the expressive type were 15 times. The representative type was found in 7 utterances, and the directive type was found in 6 utterances. Only one utterance was found in the declarative type. None of the commissive type was used in the film.

The next animation was “One Hundred and One Dalmatians” which comprised of the most found type of directive for 13 utterances. Expressive type was found for 6 utterances, followed by the commissive type for 5 utterances. The representative and the declarative types were found for utterances three, equally.

Another animated film was “The Little Mermaid” which the directive type was found the most in 13 utterances. The representative type was found for 12 utterances, and there were 7 utterances found in the commissive type. One utterance was found each in the expressive and the declarative types.

In the “Aladdin” animated film, the most found type of utterance using the representative one was for 13 times. The directive type was found for 10 times and the expressive was found for 9 times. Lastly, the commissive type was found for 6 times. The declarative type was not found in the film.

“The Lion King” was the next film which the representative type was found the most in 17 utterances. 12 utterances were found using the directive type. Equal amount of utterances were found in the commissive and the directive types for 5 times. Only one was found in the declarative type.

“Hercules” was the succeeding animated film to be analyzed for the use of illocutionary acts. The most found type was the representative with 18 utterances. The

directive type was found for 15 times and followed by four utterances of expressive type. The other two types of commissive and declarative were used for three times equally.

The last animated film from Walt Disney was “The Princess and the Frog.” The directive type was found the most for 20 times. The representative and the commissive types were both found for 15 times. The expressive type was found for 6 times and the declarative type was found for two times.

To illustrate some of the illocutionary acts aforementioned, examples are given as follows.

“Sleeping Beauty”

Example 1 (scene: Maleficent is using her magic to lure Princess Aurora)

Maleficent: *“Touch the spindle. Touch it, I say!”*

The first one is an utterance spoken by ‘Maleficent’ in the animation “Sleeping Beauty.” It is clear that the directive type from the paradigm case of commanding is used. She is ordering the Princess to follow her command under the magic enticement to touch the spinning wheel.

“Hercules”

Example 2 (scene: Hercules is at a well with Hades)

Hades: *No, no, no. Mustn’t touch....*

This is an utterance spoken by ‘Hades’ in the animation “Hercules.” It is also clear that the directive type from the paradigm case of commanding is used. He is ordering Hercules to stop putting his hands into the water or his hands will become old.

“The Little Mermaid”

Example 3 (Ursula is talking to Ariel)

Ursula: *Now swim, swim, swim! Swim for your life, human child! Ha ha ha....*

The utterance is spoken by Ursula ordering Ariel to swim away for life. Ursula is using the illocutionary act of directive type from the paradigm case of commanding.

“The Princess and the Frog”

Example 4 (Dr. Facilier is at the church at night with Larry)

Dr. Facilier: *Stay out of sight!*

The utterance is spoken by Dr. Facilier ordering Larry to go away, not getting in his way. Dr. Facilier is taking the necklace with the Prince’s blood inside, but Larry sees what happens. It is an illocutionary act of the directive type from the paradigm case of commanding.

“Hercules”

Example 5 (scene: Hades is talking to Hercules)

Hades: *Not so fast, because, ya see, I have a little leverage...You might wanna know about.*

This one is an utterance spoken by ‘Hades’ in the animation “Hercules.” It is the utterance in the representative type from the paradigm case of boasting. He is bragging about himself.

“One Hundred and One Dalmatians”

Example 6 (scene: Cruella is talking to Anita)

Cruella: *Fifteen. Fifteen puppies! How marvelous. How marvelous, how perfectly....*

This example is taken from the animation “One Hundred and One Dalmatians.” ‘Cruella de Vil’ is expressing her gratitude to Anita who catches the dogs for her. She is clearing using the expressive type of the paradigm case of thanking.

“The Little Mermaid”

Example 7 (Ursula is talking to King Triton)

Ursula: *Yes....Perhaps we can arrange a sort of tradeoff.*

The utterance is spoken by Ursula to King Triton offering a negotiation to him about Ariel’s imprisonment. Ursula is using the illocutionary act of commissive type from the paradigm case of offering.

“Sleeping Beauty”

Example 8 (scene: Maleficent appears at the Christening Day of Princess Aurora)

Maleficent: *“The Princess shall indeed grow in grace and beauty, beloved by all who know her. But before the sun sets on her 16th birthday, she shall prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and die!”*

The utterance is spoken by ‘Maleficent’ swearing the Princess under the declarative type from the paradigm case of cursing. She uses her supernatural power to create unfortunate events to Princess Aurora changing her fate in the future.

6. Discussions

As to directive act which was the most frequently used by the main villains, it could be possible that, with reference to the plots of all nine Disney animated movies, the

Disney's villains were portrayed to have their desires as their motivations. For instance, Scar from the Lion King desired to take over the kingdom of Pride Lands. Cruella de Vil from 101 Dalmatians wished to use the skins of 99 Dalmatian puppies to create a spotted fur coat. Dr. Facilier from The Princess and the Frog wanted to rule New Orleans, the main setting of the story, while Ursula from the Little Mermaid desired to have the power of the King's Trident and installed herself as the ruler of all the ocean creatures. The Evil Queen from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs determined to remain the fairest woman. Apparently, owing to their strong desires, these antagonists formulated the evil plans. Nevertheless, their plans could not be accomplished without the aids of their subordinates or servants who were commanded to satisfy their masters. For instance, Cruella de Vil from 101 Dalmatians pursued her wish by commanding her subordinates, Jasper and Horace, to commit wicked plan by kidnapping and killing the puppies. According to The Princess and the Frog, Dr. Facilier, the main villain, asked Lawrence serving as the secondary antagonist in the film to follow his plan to deceive Big Daddy into allowing Lawrence to marry her daughter. In addition, Fitri, Senowarsito, and Nugrahan (2021) who studied directive speech acts in the movie, "Among Us," stated that directive speech acts are frequently used by speakers in daily conversation and show a strong relationship between a speaker and a hearer. Therefore, in most movies, directive speech acts help to make the story relatable and tense to watch. Likewise, Muhartoyo and Kristani (2013) pointed that directive speech acts played very important roles in keeping the smooth flow of storylines of the movie. Without directive speech acts, the storylines will be monotonous and not attractive. Besides, the results of this study were consistent with the study of speech act used in "Maleficent" conducted by Putri (2017). The study focused on the main characters including Maleficent as the main villain in the movie. It was revealed that 145 utterances produced in "Maleficent" movie. The most dominant type of speech act was directive (50%).

In addition to the desires of the villains, the plausible reason why directive speech acts were found the most is that the villains in the movies were in a high position. For instance, Scar from the Lion King was the King of Pride Rock. Jafar from the Aladdin was introduced as a royal vizier, a high-ranking political advisor to the Sultan. Captain Hook from The Peter Pan was a pirate who commanded The Jolly Roger, the pirate ship. The Evil Queen from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was portrayed as the queen of the kingdom. Hades from Hercules was the God of the Underworld. Consequently, they were powerful and had the authorities to control and direct their subordinates or servants to do as they

directed. According to Wonata, Natsir and Ariani (2018) who studied illocutionary speech act of Miranda Priestly, a character in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie, it was discovered that the most dominant type of illocutionary acts found was directive. In directive illocutionary acts itself, command acts were dominantly used by Miranda Priestly. The directive speech acts usually arose when Miranda talked to her personal assistants, Andrea and Emily. In this movie, Miranda was an editor-in-chief of an influential fashion magazine; hence, her position was higher than the other characters. The higher position allowed her the privilege of having her hearer do things as she instructed.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This present study was conducted to investigate and analyze the types of illocutionary acts uttered by the main villains from nine animated movies produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios. The data were gathered from the utterances of these villains. The theoretical framework by Searle (1969) is applied to analyze the types of illocutionary acts in the animated movies. The results of the study suggested that directive speech acts were significantly uttered by the main villains in the movies. The results of the present study are able to be employed as evidence showing that the desires, together with the positions of the main villains are the key points contributing to the considerable uses of directive speech acts which are vital actions in the interactions between the main villains and their subordinates and servants. Additionally, directive speech acts are utilized as the devices to create exciting movie plots as well as to make the movie characters more intriguing.

On the basis of mentioned conclusion, for further studies, the research on speech acts in movies may focus on the different aspects of the villains especially genders, ages or positions. A study of speech acts of main villains from other animation production companies such as Dream Works Animation and Sony Pictures Animation could be conducted to shed some light onto more lucid understanding of speech acts uttered by these villains and to feasibly confirm the results of this study.

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