

SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS ON *SINNERS* MOVIE TRANSCRIPT

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Abstract:

This study aims to find specific types of speech acts and their intended meanings in *Sinners* movie. The writer used a descriptive qualitative approach to conduct the research. The writer gathered data from a movie script which provided speech transcripts. *Sinners* is a 2025 American horror film produced, written, and directed by Ryan Coogler. From the analysis, the writer identified three different types of speech acts that the movie used. The data used Austin's theory, they are the locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. The writer also discovered that the illocutionary act can be grouped into five different types. They showed 4 assertive cases which most are affirming; 13 acts of directives including commanding and requesting; 8 commissives including promising, threatening, and vowing; 7 expressives, and 3 declarative ones are mainly used as statements. The most common kind of speech act is one where someone makes a direct statement to ask or to request, namely directives. Meanwhile, the most common type of illocutionary function the movie used is the promising function. From this study, we can see the different range of speech acts employed by the characters in *Sinners* and their impact on communication within the narrative.

Keywords:

Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Illocutionary Functions



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INTRODUCTION

People naturally talk and connect with others in society since they are part of a social group. While trying to connect with others, they will have communication. Communication is how people share ideas, information, messages, and talk with each other, as explained by Ruler in 2018. So, the person who shares the information always knows why that information is being given. Rabiah (2012) mentions that Gee (1999) says the main purpose of language is to share information. It means the speaker's intention is for the listener to understand the message by creating the right context for their conversation. In linguistics, the idea of pragmatic context and the situation in which something is said help decide what kind of action or message the speaker is trying to send (Wijana, 2021). One of the studies done in pragmatics is about speech acts. The speech-act theory is used in every everyday conversation, where the meaning depends on the situation and how people interact with each other. Speech production and perception are connected and use similar ways to process information. On the other hand, speech or public speaking is a way for someone to talk directly to a group of people in an organized manner, with the goal of informing, influencing, or entertaining them (Joy (2016) as cited by Abella & Cutamora in 2019).

English pragmatics in applied linguistics helps us understand how language is used in social situations, which influences how people express their race through their words and thoughts when communicating with others (Shiddiqui, 2018). According to Tutuarima et al (2018), the most important part of a speech act is what the speaker wants to communicate. Using language doesn't just create a sentence; it also does something. So, the person who hears the message understands what the speaker is trying to say. The way the message was presented was organized to help inform, persuade, or amuse the people it was meant for. In other words, speech acts are things we use in our daily lives to talk and communicate with other people. Speech act theory focuses on spoken communication and the actions that happen when someone speaks. It looks at how what people say can have effects, like making promises or giving orders, and how the way they say it matters. According to J.L. Austin in 1962, speech acts are actions that happen when someone says something.

Speech act theory thinks that when people speak and take turns talking, those actions are real and have meaning (Kiuk & Ghozali, 2018). Speech acts can be broken down into three types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, according to Searle in 1969. Locutionary or locution refers to how a speaker says something using grammar, meaning, and sound. The second type is illocutionary or illocution, which is about the meaning the speaker wants to convey. The third is perlocutionary or perlocution, which is the effect the message has on the listener (Giyatmi, 2021). According to Austin (1962), there are three types of speech acts. The first is called locutionary acts, which is basically when someone says a sentence with a specific meaning, similar to the traditional idea of 'meaning' (Austin, 1962: 108). Acts like telling someone something, giving a command, giving a warning, or making a promise, and so on, are types of speech that have a specific effect or meaning in a conventional way (Austin, 1962: 108). Perlocutionary acts are the effects or outcomes that happen when someone says something, like making someone believe, change their mind, avoid doing something, or even trick or shock them (Austin, 1962: 108).

Based on what Austin said earlier, we can explain it like this: A locutionary act is done through the actual words or sentences spoken, based on their language form. For example, saying "the room is so hot" is an example of a locutionary act. An illocutionary act is the meaning someone wants to show when they speak, like telling another person to take action. For example, it is the action of asking someone to switch on the fan. A perlocutionary act is when someone does something that makes an effect on the person listening or others, based on the meaning of the words spoken. For example, if someone stands up and turns on the fan, that is a perlocutionary act because it causes a reaction or change in the environment or the people around. There are five main types of illocutionary acts. One of them is assertives, which are statements that the speaker believes to be true and has reasons to back up that belief. This class has words such as accuse, criticize, complain, assert, state, deny, predict, and more. The basic assertive verb is to assert. Commissives are statements where the speaker promises to do something at some point in the future. The class includes promise, vow, pledge, guarantee, and more. The main commissive verb is to commit. Directives are when someone tries to get another person to do something in the future. The class covers request, question, order, comment, beg, suggest, urge, and more. The simple or basic command word is to tell someone what to do. Expressives are when a speaker shows a feeling, attitude, or mental state about a

situation. The class covers words like apologize, compliment, deplore, praise, complain, and more. No one basic action word is more important than the others. Declaratives are statements where the speaker creates or changes a situation, usually something official or formal, just by saying the words. Doing the act changes the world. The class includes actions like endorsing, resigning, nominating, naming, appointing, applying, and others. The simple or basic verb is to say something.

There are certain reasons that make the researchers pick this topic for their study. First, it is important to learn about the speech act. Hussein (2019) states that the speech acts are learned by EFL students to help them develop their ability to succeed in academic or social communication. It is clearly understood that the use of language functions plays a key role in carrying out speech acts (Widya, 2017). Moreover, it is considered in every part of life, and the different contexts of the world have various effects on illocutionary acts (Prastio, 2020). Second, there is a lot to praise in this movie. But the researchers want to focus on the speech act in the movie. Next, the researcher also aims to identify the speech act in the characters' speech of *Sinners* movie using Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts. It is thought that the speech-act theory is the best way to analyze the script of the movie, as it helps show what the speech is trying to make the audience understand and do (Fitria, 2019). Retnowaty (2017) says that people should try other things to improve their practical language skills, like watching English TV shows or movies and talking with friends who speak English. Most of the relevant studies from before mainly look at speech acts in movies (Syahputra, 2019; Putri, Ramendra & Swandana, 2019). The researcher hopes that the readers will be able to grasp the features of a particular type of speech act and its function within the context of illocutionary acts. The analysis looks at different sentence patterns, including normal sentences with subject and verb, and also inverted versions, to understand the meaning and context of what is being said (Syafitri, 2019). Besides learning grammar and words, people also need to understand the situation where the words are used (Rahmawati, 2021).

Whether they realize it or not, people use pragmatics when they talk to each other. They have specific reasons, either clearly stated or understood, for communicating. If they can understand the hidden meaning behind what someone says, they will learn a lot that wasn't actually spoken. So, the researcher is looking to observe how speech act theory applies to the characters' speech in *Sinners* movie.

METHOD

The study used qualitative research as its design because the data collected were explained in a detailed and thorough way. The explanation was based on the facts obtained. The researchers observed an analysis of speech acts made by the characters of *Sinners* movie. During the Jim Crow era in Mississippi, set in 1932, the story *Sinners* follows two twin brothers named Smoke and Stack as they come back home after working for bootleggers in Chicago. Both twins are played by Michael B. Jordan, he plays the brothers in a way that makes it easy to tell them apart because of their small, but clear, differences in how they act and move. The costume department uses colors to show which twin is which, with Smoke in blue and Stack in red. But by the middle of the story, you can tell which twin is which without needing the colors to help. The researcher looked at the subject's expressions, body position, and movements from the movie to help with the analysis the researcher did. The researcher also looked at the script of characters' speech and double-

check it with the movie to understand the utterances will be produced by the research subjects. It did this to obtain more accurate data that can help with the analysis of this research. The coding system helped identify the kinds of speech acts, the purposes of the illocutionary acts, and the visual aspects of body language in the characters' speech.

The data used in this study derived from the sentences or spoken parts in the movie *Sinners* by Ryan Coogler. These sentences included speech acts that the characters used during their conversations. Some sources connected to the main data, like literary theories, opinions from literary critics on the topic, online sources, books about speech acts, and other materials that were related to this research. The story's script was taken from the internet as the data collection method. Then the data was split into small parts of conversation, which were called fragments. Some parts included conversational hints, and speech actions were considered in the data being studied. The conversations that involved illocution were recorded and then included in the description of each group covering locution and perlocution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher presents the data collected (Table 1) from *Sinners* movie.

Table 1. Data collection

N O.	SPEAKER	HEARER	TOPIC	SETTING	LOCUTION	ILLOCUTION	PERLOCUTION	CLASSIFICATION	FUNCTION
1	Delta Slim	Sammie	Origin of Blues	Juke Joint at night	Africa, Preacherboy.	Explaining where he is from.	Sammie understands the situation.	Assertive	Stating
2	Delta Slim	Sammie	Blues vs Religion	Juke Joint	Blues wasn't put on us like that religion.	Explaining the relationship between blues and religion.	Sammie understands the distinction.	Assertive	Stating
3	Smoke	Others	Death of Stack	Hallway	Stack's dead.	Informing others of Stack's death.	Others become aware of the death.	Declarative	Stating
4	Delta Slim	Sammie	Belief Reinforcement	Juke Joint	Don't let nobody tell you no different.	Encouraging independent belief.	Sammie gains confidence in his views.	Directive	Stating
5	Annie	Smoke	Moving Body	Back room	We gotta move him outside.	Requesting help moving the body.	Smoke may help Annie.	Directive	Requesting
6	Smoke	Annie	Protect Body	Back room	Don't touch him!	Ordering Annie not to touch the body.	Annie refrains from touching it.	Directive	Ordering
7	Bo Chow	Lisa	Calling Grace	Store	Go get your mom.	Ordering Lisa to call her mother.	Lisa goes to get her mother.	Directive	Ordering
8	Mary	Al	Threat	Back room	We gonna kill all of you...	Threatening others.	Others react to the threat.	Commissive	Threatening
9	Smoke	Al	Protection	Juke Joint	I ain't gon let it happen.	Promising protection.	Others feel protected.	Commissive	Stating
10	Delta Slim	Al	Sacrifice	Battle of Juke Joint	I'll keep them here.	Committing to hold the vampires.	Others rely on him.	Commissive	Stating

11	Pearline	Sammie	Fear	Hallway	I'm scared to go out there.	Expressing fear.	Sammie understands her fear.	Expressive	Stating
12	Sammie	Al	Regret	Back room	I coulda stopped it.	Expressing regret.	Shows remorse.	Expressive	Regretting
13	Annie	Smoke	Apology	Back room	I can't... I'm sorry...	Apologizing.	Smoke understands her regret.	Expressive	Apologizing
14	Stack	Smoke	Surprise	Upper level of Juke Joint	Goddamn!	Expressing surprise.	Seeks explanation.	Expressive	Surprising
15	Sammie	Remmick	Shock	Battle of Juke Joint	NO!	Expressing shock.	Rejects the situation.	Expressive	Shocking
16	Delta Slim	Al	End of Event	Hallway	Party's over.	Ending the event.	People stop the activity.	Declarative	Stating
17	Grace	Smoke	Agreement	Store	Done.	Accepting an agreement.	Agreement is completed.	Declarative	Stating
18	Joan	Bert	Permission	Farmhouse	Go on...	Allowing an action.	Bert may proceed.	Directive	Stating
19	Injured Man	Bert	Asking for Help	Farmhouse door	You gotta help.	Requesting help.	Bert helps him.	Directive	Requesting
20	Chayton	Joan	Peace Intention	Outside farmhouse	We don't want any trouble.	Assuring peaceful intent.	Joan understands.	Assertive	Affirming
21	Chayton	Joan	Searching Suspect	Outside farmhouse	Have you seen anyone recently?	Requesting information.	Joan responds.	Directive	Requesting
22	Smoke	Sammie	Performance	Juke Joint	You better play your ass off tonight.	Requesting strong performance.	Sammie performs.	Directive	Requesting
23	Stack	Delta Slim	Hiring Musician	Railroad station	I'll give you \$20 to come play...	Offering payment.	Delta Slim considers it.	Commissive	Offering
24	Delta Slim	Stack	Declining Offer	Railroad station	I wish I could, but...	Declining an offer.	Offer is rejected.	Assertive	Declining
25	Stack	Delta Slim	Negotiation	Railroad station	I'll pay you \$40 tonight...	Negotiating with a better offer.	Delta Slim may accept.	Commissive	Offering
26	Joan	Bert	Complaint	Farmhouse	You got some nerve.	Complaining.	Bert understands the criticism.	Expressive	Complaining
27	Joan	Bert	Instruction	Farmhouse	Set him up in the nursery.	Giving an order.	Bert follows the instruction.	Directive	Ordering
28	Joan	Injured Man	Inquiry	Nursery	What did you do?	Asking a question.	The man explains.	Directive	Asking
29	Injured Man	Joan	Emotional Control	Nursery	Oh don't cry...	Requesting emotional control.	Joan calms down.	Directive	Requesting
30	Smoke	Hogwood	Buying Property	Lumber mill	We'll take it.	Committing to buy property.	Agreement progresses.	Commissive	Planning
31	Hogwood	Smoke	Secrecy	Lumber mill	Secrets safe with me.	Promising secrecy.	Smoke trusts him.	Commissive	Promising
32	Smoke	Hogwood	Warning	Lumber mill	We'll kill them where they stand.	Issuing a warning/vow.	Hogwood takes it seriously.	Commissive	Vowing

33	Sammie	Ruthie	Greeting	Shack	Mornin, Ma.	Greeting politely.	Ruthie responds.	Expressive	Expressin
34	Ruthie	Sammie	Warning	Shack	Don't put that on your body.	Warning against an action.	Sammie obeys.	Directive	g Warning
35	Sammie	Jedidiah	Requesting Information	Church	I was wondering if you seen my guitar.	Requesting information.	Jedidiah returns the guitar.	Directive	Requestin g

The result from the data analysis based on the script of the movie found there are 35 speech act sentences with the possible meaning, classification, and the use of speech acts. There are five categories of illocutionary acts: 4 assertives, 13 directives, 8 commissives, 7 expressives, 3 declaratives, most of them are directives. There are also many functions of the speech acts which include stating, requesting, ordering, and so on. However, stating and offering are the most used in this classification of the speech acts.

Previous studies on illocutionary speech acts have primarily focused on identifying and classifying speech-act categories based on Searle's taxonomy, such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. For example, studies conducted on movies such as *Moana*, *The Father*, *The Road*, and *Einstein and the Bomb* mainly concentrated on determining the dominant types of speech acts and calculating their frequencies of occurrence. Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of pragmatic phenomena in cinematic discourse, their analyses tend to be limited to categorization and quantitative description.

A significant limitation of previous research is the lack of comprehensive contextual analysis. Most studies identify the type of speech act without thoroughly examining the interaction between the speaker and hearer, the topic being discussed, the setting in which the utterance occurs, and the resulting perlocutionary effect. Consequently, the social and situational factors that influence the production and interpretation of speech acts remain underexplored. Since meaning in pragmatics is highly dependent on context, merely classifying utterances does not provide a complete understanding of how speech acts function within a narrative. Furthermore, previous studies have rarely integrated all three dimensions of speech-act theory—locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts—within a single analytical framework. Many researchers focus predominantly on illocutionary force while giving little attention to how utterances affect hearers and contribute to the progression of the story. As a result, the relationship between speech acts and narrative development has not been adequately addressed.

Another gap lies in the research objects selected by earlier scholars. Existing studies frequently examine animated films, family movies, romantic dramas, or historical dramas. In contrast, contemporary supernatural-horror films remain relatively unexplored in pragmatic research. Such films often contain unique communicative situations characterized by conflict, tension, fear, threats, persuasion, and survival strategies, which may generate distinctive patterns of speech-act usage. Therefore, investigating speech acts in this genre can provide new insights into how language functions under extreme circumstances.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comprehensive analysis of speech acts in the movie, *Sinners* (2025). Unlike previous studies, this research not only classifies speech acts according to Searle's taxonomy but also examines the speaker, hearer, topic, setting, locutionary meaning, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary effect of each utterance. Through this approach, the study aims to reveal how speech acts contribute to character relationships, emotional expression, conflict construction, and plot development. Consequently, this research offers a more holistic understanding of pragmatic functions in cinematic discourse and expands the scope of speech-act studies within the underrepresented supernatural-horror genre.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the problem statements focus on the significance of the forms of locution, illocution, and perlocution of speech acts and the intended meaning in *Sinners'* movie. The analysis cannot be separated because it is all connected to each other. The different types of speech acts are locution, illocution, and perlocution. The meaning that the speaker intends to convey is contained within the illocutionary form. So, the intended meaning or purpose of speaking is part of how the speech act is formed. The result from the data analysis based on the script of the movie shows there are 35 speech act sentences, including their forms, intended meanings, and classifications. From the problems mentioned, the dialogue in *Sinners'* movie includes different types of speech acts. Often, the characters use indirect ways of speaking, and these interactions happen between different speakers, listeners, and situations. The main idea is connected as a single unit with the way speech is used, and there are many hidden meanings spread throughout the conversation.

Analyzing speech acts is important because sometimes people do not fully understand the intended meaning behind what a speaker is saying. This paper aims to look at speech acts in certain sentences from *Sinner's* movie. In this study, the focus was on examining a specific spoken expression. The study focuses on certain speech parts in this brief story. The conversation about the movie was created to involve many participants. According to Searle's theory which applied in chapter four, there are three important points of speech acts in the this movie, namely locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. The utterances in *Sinners* can be classified into five general functions of illocutionary acts. From the illocutionary act, many directives are identified. The rest of the functions are also mentioned in the discussion, they are assertives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. According to Searle's theory, there are five categories of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Most of them fall under the category of expressives. Many of the expressives categories include feelings like anger, disappointment, impatience, upset, shyness, regret, and many others. In *Sinners'* movie, there are many layers of meaning in the dialogue because the conversations contain a lot of unspoken ideas that lead to clear reactions from both the people speaking and the ones listening.

Looking at the way people speak, what they intend to do with their words, and how their words affect others is not easy. But at least we know the right steps to follow when studying speech acts. A careful and detailed study can help us find the answer, as mentioned in the statements of the problems. This is also a good way for us to easily identify speech acts in sentences or spoken words.

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