

Illocutionary Acts in the Conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande

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Abstract: Pragmatics is learned so that one's communication skills become better. The meaning of an utterance cannot be understood only through its linguistic form, but also through the context of its use. This phenomenon has become increasingly common with the advancement of technology, which provides various forms of public communication, including talk show programs. This study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts, determine the dominant type, and analyze the functions of illocutionary acts in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon episode entitled "Ariana Grande Talks Eternal Sunshine and Wicked, Teases Penn Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)". This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the types of illocutionary acts to employed by Ariana Grande in her interviews with Jimmy Fallon, published in June 2024. The data consisted of utterances from the conversation and were analyzed using Bach and Harnish's theory of illocutionary acts. The findings revealed 43 illocutionary acts categorized into four types: constatives with 21 data, directives with 6 data, commissive with 2 data, and acknowledgments with 14 data. Constatives are the most dominant. In addition, 12 functions were identified, including informing, recounting, agreeing, disagreeing, confirming, describing, requesting, offering, promising, thanking, complimenting, and congratulating. These findings indicate that illocutionary acts play an important role in creating communicative and dynamic interactions in talk show conversations.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Illocutionary acts, Bach and Harnish, Talk Show

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is learned so that one's communication skills become better. Often people misinterpret the words of the interlocutors, therefore the speaker and listener must understand the language used is the right language for the situation. The speaker or the interlocutor must learn the pragmatics specifically the speech act so that the words to be conveyed are truly communicative. Speech act is one of the pragmatics scopes that studies language with its actual usage aspects. Yule Stated that first speech act introduced by linguistic philosopher Austin. The term speech act was later developed by another philosopher

Searle. Speech acts are actions that result from words. Speech acts are divided into three namely location, illocution, and perlocution.

This phenomenon has become increasingly common along with digital advances that present various forms of public communication. According to (Zahra, Nayla, and Suyoto 2025), along with technological advancements, communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but is also evolving through various media and public platforms. One form of communication media is talk show programs. Talk shows are a form of interactive public communication among hosts, guest stars, and audiences that generally take place in spontaneous, relaxed, and entertaining

situations. According to (Amanda and Jufrizal 2024), reciprocal communication in a talk show demonstrates the presence of meaning in every utterance because the interaction occurs spontaneously between the host and the guest. One of the programs that shows these characteristics is *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. The talk show features a relaxed, spontaneous, and communicative interaction involving the host and a guest star. In these interactions, the participants use various forms of speech to provide information, ask questions, express compliments, and express feelings. One interesting episode to study is the one titled "Ariana Grande Talks *Eternal Sunshine and Wicked*, Teases Penn and contains various communicative intentions. *Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)*." The episode features a conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande that demonstrates diverse language use.

To understand the meaning contained in a speech, studies are needed that pay attention to the link between language and its context of use. In linguistics, the study is discussed in pragmatics, a linguistic field that explores how the meaning of speech is understood through context. One of the studies in pragmatics that focuses on the speaker's intent is illocutionary acts. Illocutionary acts emphasize that every utterance delivered by the speaker contains a specific purpose or function, such as declaring, asking, commanding, promising, apologizing, or expressing feelings.

A number of previous studies have explored speech acts in diverse communication contexts. However, research on illocutionary acts in the context of talk shows is still relatively limited. According to (Bahrani et al. 2024), speech act analysis is still relatively limited in the context of talk show episodes where important figures speak honestly and share their opinions. In addition, the application of the framework proposed by Bach and Harnish to media discourse remains relatively limited. In fact, Bach and Harnish's theories offer a more detailed classification and a perspective that emphasizes the communicative intention of the speaker in delivering a speech.

This research is urgently required to give a deeper knowledge of how the meanings and functions of utterances are used in modern communication, especially in digital media such as talk shows. In everyday

communication, many utterances are not conveyed directly, so their meaning needs to be understood through the context of their use to avoid misunderstandings during interaction. Therefore, understanding the function of speech is important to help explain how speakers convey their intended meanings and how utterances are understood by the interlocutors.

Thus, this study focuses on the analysis of illocutionary acts in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* entitled "Ariana Grande Talks *Eternal Sunshine and Wicked*, Teases Penn *Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)*." This study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts, determine the dominant types of illocutionary acts, and analyze the function of illocutionary acts based on Bach and Harnish's theories.

Pragmatics

According to (Leech 2016), pragmatics refers to the study of how the meaning of utterances is interpreted in certain situations. This means that pragmatics does not only study the meaning expressed in an utterance, but also how that meaning is influenced by the context, situation, and conditions when the utterance is produced.

According to (Yule 1996), pragmatics examines how a speaker or writer conveys meaning and how a listener or reader interprets it based on context, including who is speaking, when, where, and under what conditions, to influence how and what they say. Thus, pragmatic analysis focuses on understanding the meaning behind a person's words rather than the words themselves in a literal sense.

Furthermore, (Levinson 1983) states that pragmatics covers various topics such as deixis, presupposition, implicature, speech acts, and conversational structure. Deixis concerns words or expressions that can only be understood through the context in which they are used. Presupposition refers to background information that speakers assume to be known or accepted before producing an utterance. Implicature is related to meanings that are conveyed indirectly rather than explicitly expressed. Speech acts concern the actions or intentions expressed through spoken language. Conversational structure examines how speakers and listeners arrange and maintain the flow of interaction during communication.

Speech Acts

One of the main concepts in pragmatics is the speech act. This concept was first introduced in the book *How to Do Things with Words* by J. L. Austin. He argued that “in saying something, we are doing something” (Austin 1962). According to Yule (1996: 47), speech acts is an activity carried out through speech (Octavianna et al. 2024). These statements show that people can perform an action when they say something.

Austin distinguishes three primary categories of speech acts. First, locutionary acts are speech acts related to what is literally spoken or written by the speaker. Second illocutionary acts are a type of speech act that refers to the intention or goal that the speaker wants to achieve when uttering a sentence. Third, perlocutionary acts refer to the effects produced by an utterance on the listener. In summary, locutionary acts deal with the actual words spoken, illocutionary acts concern the speaker's intended meaning, while perlocutionary acts focus on the consequences or responses that occur after the utterance is heard, according to Austin (1962) at (Putri, Ahmadi, and Nuriadi 2023).

John Searle further developed speech act theory by classifying illocutionary acts into several types. He categorized illocutionary acts based on their speech functions. The evolution of the theory of speech acts did not stop with Searle but continued through the contributions of Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish in their book *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*.

Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary acts are an important sort of speech act to examine since they are directly tied to the intention and function of the utterance made by the speaker (Rais et al. 2026). According to Austin's theory, illocutionary acts are utterances that possess a conventional force (Austin 1962). In line with this, (Yule 1996) states that the illocutionary act is carried out through the communicative force of an utterance, where a speaker can use an utterance to express various communicative purposes, such as stating, offering something, or giving an explanation. Therefore, illocutionary acts involve not only what is said, but also what the speaker intends to do through the utterance.

Furthermore, according to (Nisa et al. 2022), illocutionary acts are actions performed through speech that possess illocutionary force, including informing, ordering, warning, complaining, requesting, and denying. This force

reflects the speaker's communicative intent, making it crucial to analyze it within its contextual usage.

In practice, illocutionary acts can be found in various forms of communication, both formal and informal, including in conversations in media such as talk shows. In these interactions, speakers perform acts such as asking questions, providing information, expressing opinions, and responding to statements. In the context of talk shows, the analysis of illocutionary acts becomes important for revealing how the meaning and purpose of communication are constructed through the interaction between the speaker and the listener. **Bach and Harnish's Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts**

The type of illocutionary act depends on the attitude expressed in the utterance (Bach and Harnish 1983). Bach and Harnish identify four types of illocutionary acts in their book *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. These four types are constatives, directives, commissives, and acknowledgments.

Constatives are the expression of the speaker's belief, along with the intention that the hearer hold a similar belief. In other words, the speaker conveys information, opinions, assumptions, or statements that are considered true and expects the hearer to believe them.

Directives are a type of illocutionary act intended to serve as a reason for the listener to act. In other words, the speaker intends to influence the listener's behavior through their utterance.

Commissives are illocutionary acts that show the speaker's intention and belief that their utterance creates an obligation to do something. In other words, a commissive act binds the speaker to carry out a future action.

Acknowledgments are statements that express the speaker's feelings toward the listener or simply fulfill social expectations to express certain feelings.

Function of Illocutionary Acts

The illocutionary act's function is reflected in the speaker's intention when uttering a statement. According to (Bach and Harnish 1983), the types of illocutionary acts are classified in accordance with the illocutionary intent, namely the communicative goal or effect the speaker wishes to achieve through their utterance. Illocutionary acts are categorized by Bach and Harnish into four types, namely, constatives, directives, commissives, and

acknowledgments. These categories have various functions, such as informing, recounting, affirming, confirming, predicting, describing, agreeing, disagreeing, asking, requesting, prohibiting, excusing, promising, offering, thanking, apologizing, complimenting, congratulating, greeting, condoling, and bidding.

Conversation in talk shows

According to Stenstrom (1994: 189), conversation as a social activity in which two or more individuals discuss specific topics (Meilany and Nugroho 2024). Conversations can serve multiple purposes, such as building relationships, sharing information, and negotiating agreements.

In the context of talk shows, conversation is usually spontaneous and interactive because it involves direct communication between the host and guests. The interaction often includes asking and answering questions, giving responses, expressing opinions, joking, and using informal language naturally during the discussion. These characteristics show how participants use language to convey intended meanings in different situations.

The dynamic and spontaneous nature of talk show conversations creates opportunities to analyze how speech acts are used to express intentions, respond to other speakers, and deliver implied meanings (Bahrani et al. 2024).

METHOD

Research Design

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach since it focuses on identifying, analyzing, and describing linguistic phenomena, especially illocutionary acts in conversational contexts. The data analyzed consist of utterances in conversation, making a qualitative approach the most appropriate method for the analysis. According to (Sugiyono 2019), qualitative research can be defined as a method for studying the natural conditions of items where the researcher serves as the primary instrument.

According to Heryana & Putra (2023), descriptive qualitative research focuses on identifying the characteristics of a phenomenon rather than describing its causes or mechanisms (Wahyuni, El Firdausi, and Fitriyah 2025). This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to identify, classify, and describe the types and functions of illocutionary acts present in the conversation.

Research Object

The object of this research is the linguistic

phenomenon of illocutionary acts, namely actions performed by speakers through utterances with specific intentions, such as informing, asking, offering, or complimenting. This study focuses on identifying the types of illocutionary acts and their functions based on the theory proposed by Bach and Harnish (1983), so that the speaker's intended meaning in each utterance can be determined.

This linguistic phenomenon appears in a conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande on the talk show *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* titled "Ariana Grande Talks *Eternal Sunshine* and *Wicked*, Teases Penn Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)." The program features spontaneous and natural communication between the host and the guest, making it a relevant data source for analyzing the use of illocutionary acts in a real-world context. to be achieved.

The linguistic aspects analyzed in this study include the types of illocutionary acts employed in the conversation and the functions of each type.

Data Source

1. Primary data

The primary data in this study consists of speech or utterances spoken by Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande in a video conversation on the official YouTube channel of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. The data was taken from the video titled "Ariana Grande Talks *Eternal Sunshine* and *Wicked*, Teases Penn Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)" uploaded on June 7, 2024. The conversation was transcribed into text by the researcher to facilitate the analysis. The data collection was conducted from April to May 2026.

2. Secondary data

The secondary data in this study consist of supporting references, such as the theories of Bach and Harnish.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process followed the observational method and note-taking technique as outlined by (Sudaryanto 2015). The primary data source is taken from a YouTube interview with Ariana Grande, published in June 2024. The researchers conducted non-participant observation, which means observing the linguistic exchanges in the videos without interfering or participating. During this observation, instances of figurative language were recorded using a note-taking

technique to capture the context and wording of each figurative expression in the interviews. This method allowed the researchers to systematically gather data while maintaining the authenticity of the spoken interactions.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was conducted through the following stages:

1. Data Identification

The researcher identified utterances that contained potential illocutionary acts in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande. The video was watched repeatedly, and the utterances relevant to the research objectives were identified and recorded in the data table. At this stage, the researcher focused on the utterances that conveyed a particular communicative intention rather than merely selecting all utterances in the conversation.

2. Data Classification

After identifying the relevant utterances, the researcher classified them based on the types of illocutionary acts proposed by Bach and Harnish (1983), namely constatives,

directives, commissives, and acknowledgments. The classification was determined by examining the communicative intention expressed through each utterance and matching it with the characteristics and indicators of each type. Each utterance was then grouped into the appropriate category and recorded in the data table.

3. Theoretical Analysis

After the data were classified, each utterance was analyzed using Bach and Harnish's (1983) theory of illocutionary acts. This stage focused on determining how the utterance represented a particular type of illocutionary act and identifying its communicative function based on the theoretical classification. The analysis was conducted by relating the utterance to the relevant indicators of the type and function proposed by Bach and Harnish.

4. Interpretation of Meaning

After determining the type and function of each utterance, the researcher interpreted its meaning based on the conversational context. This stage focused on explaining what the speaker intended to communicate through the utterance in the specific interaction. The interpretation considered the surrounding utterances, the situation of the conversation, the relationship between the speakers, and the communicative purpose. Thus, while theoretical analysis determined the classification of the utterance based on Bach and Harnish's theory, interpretation of meaning explained how the utterance functioned and what it meant within the actual conversational context.

5. Conclusion

Concluding the results of the analysis to answer the research question regarding the types of illocutionary acts and their functions in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Table 1. Types and Dominant Type of Illocutionary Acts

No	Types of Illocutionary Acts	Frequency
1	Constatives	21
2	Directives	6
3	Commissives	2
4	Acknowledgments	14

Table 2. Functions of Illocutionary Acts

No	Functions	Frequency
1	Informing	6
2	Recounting	7

3	Describing	2
4	Disagreeing	4
5	Agreeing	1
6	Confirming	1
7	Requesting	6
8	Offering	1
9	Promising	1
10	Thanking	4
11	Congratulating	3
12	Complimenting	7

Discussion

The results of this research show that all types of illocutionary acts based on Bach and Harnish's classification, namely constatives, directives, commissives and acknowledgments appear in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande in *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* entitled "Ariana Grande Talks *Eternal Sunshine* and *Wicked*, Teases Penn Badgley Music Video Cameo (Extended)." This is because communicative interactions in talk show are spontaneous and interactive so that the resulting utterances have various meanings and communicative purposes.

Constatives appear when the speaker expresses his or her belief in a proposition, such as conveying information, explaining a past experience, or expressing an opinion. Directives appear when the speaker intends the listener to take an action, such as through requests, questions, or directions. Commissives appear when the speaker states a commitment to future action, such as promises and offers. Acknowledgments appear when the speaker expresses feelings and acts as a social response to the listener, such as expressing thanks, praise, and congratulations. Thus, each type has its own role in building interactions at the program.

The results of this study support the theory put forward by Bach and Harnish, which states that the type of illocutionary act depends on the attitude expressed in the utterance. In the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande, each utterance demonstrates a different communicative attitude, resulting in various types of illocutionary acts, such as constatives, directives, commissives, and acknowledgments.

Compared to research by (Syakila, Shahrudin, and Harun 2022), which also

used Bach and Harnish's theory, constatives, directives, and commissives were found in the context of student leadership. This study demonstrates similarities in illocutionary acts function to convey information, provide direction, and express commitment. by the communication context. However, this study found additional types of acknowledgments not found in that study. This difference suggests that variations in illocutionary acts are influenced by the communication context.

These differences can be explained through pragmatic theory, which states that language use and utterance meaning are influenced by the communication context, social relationships, and interactional situations. In the context of talk show, interactions tend to be relaxed, spontaneous, and expressive, resulting in more acknowledgments, such as praise, congratulations, and expressions of feelings. Meanwhile, communication in the context of student leadership is more formal and oriented toward conveying information and direction. Therefore, the patterns of illocutionary acts that emerge are different.

Constatives were the most dominant type with 21 data. This dominance indicates that most of the utterances in the talk show were used to express beliefs, information, opinions, or explanations of a proposition. In the context of talk show, this is natural because the interaction focuses on the exchange of information between the host and the guest, whether in the form of personal experiences, opinions, or clarification of an issue.

This finding aligns with Bach and Harnish's theory, which states that constatives are used to express the speaker's beliefs along with their intention to share those beliefs. In this study, constatives were widely used because Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande

frequently share experiences and convey information during conversations.

Furthermore, acknowledgments came in second place with 14 data, indicating that the utterances in the talk show also displayed various feelings of the speaker and social responses to the speech of the interlocutor, such as thanking, congratulating, giving praise, and expressing feelings. Bach and Harnish explain that acknowledgments function to express the feelings of the speaker to the hearer and fulfill social expectations in communication. Thus, the high use of acknowledgments in this study indicates that interactions in talk show are not only informative, but also interpersonal and emotional. Following this, directives were the third most

frequently encountered item in talk show conversations, with six data. In this study, directives served to guide the conversation. They often appeared in the form of questions aimed at eliciting information from the listener. Lastly, it is commissives with two data. Commissives are rare because the talk show context does not require speakers to make long-term promises or commitments.

These findings have similarities and differences with previous research. For example, research by (Giasi, Dako, and Haris Danial 2026), which analyzed illocutionary acts in *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* using Yule's theory. In the study, the dominant types were representatives and expressives. Despite using different theories, this study produced similar findings. Conceptually, representatives in Yule's theory can be linked to the constatives category in Bach and Harnish's framework because both are used to convey information or the speaker's beliefs, while expressives can be linked to acknowledgments because they are used to express the speaker's feelings. Thus, this difference in theoretical terms does not change the essence of the findings, but rather strengthens the validation that media and social expression.

The research findings identify 12 functions of illocutionary acts in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. These functions include six functions of constatives, namely informing, recounting, agreeing, disagreeing, confirming, and

describing. Then, there is one function of directives, namely requesting (requesting information and requesting confirmation). Next, there are two functions of commissives, namely promising and offering. Finally, there are three functions of acknowledgments, namely thanking, complimenting, and congratulating.

The functions of illocutionary acts identified in this study play a role in building interactions in talk show. The functions of informing and recounting are used to convey personal experiences and stories, making the conversation more informative for the audience and also assisting the host in introducing the topic. The functions of confirming serves to clarify information to avoid misunderstandings in the conversation, while the functions of agreeing and disagreeing demonstrate responsiveness and engagement between speakers, making the interaction feel more natural. Furthermore, the functions of requesting information and requesting for confirmation play a role in maintaining ongoing interactions, as they allow the host to dig deeper into the guest's information, making the conversation more dynamic and engaging. Moreover, the functions of complimenting, thanking, and congratulating contribute to creating a warm atmosphere between the host and guest. Meanwhile, conversations. the functions of promising and offering demonstrate an effort to maintain the relationship and open up the possibility of further communication. Thus, all the functions of illocutionary acts found not only serve to convey messages, but also to build communicative, natural, and harmonious interactions in talk show conversations.

The findings related to the functions of illocutionary acts in this study support Bach and Harnish's theory, which states that the types of illocutionary acts are classified based on the illocutionary intent. Functions such as informing, requesting, thanking, complimenting, and promising demonstrate the various communicative intentions used by speakers in building interactions during talk show.

This finding also supports previous research, namely research conducted by (Hastuti, Utami, and Oswari 2021) which

analyzed illocutionary acts of the main character in the movie *Fear of Rain* based on the theory proposed by Searle. If the research found that various functions of illocutionary acts play an important role in building interactions between characters, this study shows a similar result in the context of interactions between the host and guest star. However, this study has differences in theory and data sources. The research uses Searle's theory with a structured film object, while this study uses Bach and Harnish's theory, which emphasizes communicative intention in talk show conversations that are more spontaneous and interactive. Thus, this study not only supports previous research but also adds novelty by applying the theory of Bach and Harnish and using talk show data that are more natural and interactive in oral communication.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings to answer the research questions. First, all types of illocutionary acts, as defined by Bach and Harnish, were found in the conversation between Jimmy Fallon and Ariana Grande on

The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. These types include constatives with 21 data, directives with 6 data, commissives with 2 data, and acknowledgments with 14 data. The occurrence of these four types indicates that talk show conversations are spontaneous and interactive, allowing speakers to convey different communicative intentions through their utterances.

Second, constatives were the most dominant type because speakers in talk show conversations tend to convey information, personal experiences, and opinions. This was followed by acknowledgments, with 14 data, indicating that talk show conversations not only involve the exchange of information and experiences but also include expressions that maintain social interaction, such as thanking, complimenting, and congratulating. Directives,

with 6 data, were mainly used to keep the conversation flowing through questions and requests. Meanwhile, commissives appeared the least, with 2 data, because entertainment talk show conversations do not frequently require speakers to make promises or long-term commitments.

Third, this study identified 12 functions of illocutionary acts in the conversation. These functions consist of informing with 6 data, recounting with 7 data, agreeing with 1 data, disagreeing with 4 data, confirming with 1 data, describing with 2 data, requesting with 6 data, offering with 1 data, promising with 1 data, thanking with 4 data, complimenting with 7 data, and congratulating with 3 data. These functions demonstrate that illocutionary acts play an important role in conveying information, expressing opinions and experiences, and maintaining interpersonal interaction during the conversation.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature on illocutionary acts by providing an additional application of Bach and Harnish's theory to talk show conversations. The findings show that their classification can be used to examine how speakers express different communicative intentions in spontaneous media interactions. In particular, the findings demonstrate that talk show communication involves not only the exchange of information but also the expression of personal experiences, attitudes, and interpersonal intentions. Therefore, this study contributes to a broader understanding of illocutionary acts by highlighting how communicative intentions function simultaneously to convey content and build interaction in media discourse. This also implies that understanding illocutionary acts is important for interpreting how speakers communicate meaning and maintain interpersonal relationships in media interactions.

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