

Illocutionary Acts in Movie “She’s The Man” By Andy Fickman

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Abstract:

This study investigates the types and functions of illocutionary acts performed by characters in Andy Fickman’s *She’s the Man* (2006), applying Searle’s (1979) taxonomy within a qualitative descriptive framework. The research aims to identify, classify, and interpret how illocutionary acts construct the film’s narrative, gender dynamics, and comedic tension. Data were collected through detailed transcription of dialogues, triangulated between subtitles and original audio, and coded according to five categories: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. This study addresses two research questions: (1) Identify and classify the types of illocutionary acts present in the movie *She’s the Man* by Andy Fickman (2) Determine which type(s) of illocutionary acts are dominant in the film dialogue. The findings indicate that directives (35,8%) and assertives (32,6%) dominate the film’s illocutionary landscape, reflecting characters’ attempts to influence actions and express beliefs. Expressives, commissives, and declaratives occur less frequently but serve pivotal functions at emotional or narrative turning points.

Keywords: Illocutionary Acts, Pragmatics, Film Discourse, *She’s the Man* Movie

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji jenis dan fungsi tindak ilokusi yang dilakukan oleh para tokoh dalam film *She’s the Man* (2006) karya Andy Fickman, dengan menerapkan taksonomi Searle (1979) dalam kerangka deskriptif kualitatif. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan menafsirkan bagaimana tindak ilokusi membentuk narasi film, serta ketegangan komedi. Data dikumpulkan melalui transkripsi mendetail terhadap dialog film, yang diverifikasi silang antara teks terjemahan (subtitle) dan audio asli, kemudian dikodekan berdasarkan lima kategori: representatif, direktif, ekspresif, komisif, dan deklaratif. Penelitian ini menjawab 2 pertanyaan: (1) Mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan jenis-jenis tindak ilokusi yang terdapat dalam film *She’s the Man* karya Andy Fickman. (2) Menentukan jenis tindak ilokusi apa yang paling dominan dalam dialog film tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur direktif (35,8%) dan asertif (32,6%) mendominasi lanskap ilokusi dalam film, mencerminkan upaya para tokoh untuk memengaruhi tindakan dan menyatakan keyakinan mereka. Sementara itu, tindak ekspresif, komisif, dan deklaratif muncul lebih jarang, namun memainkan peran penting pada momen emosional atau titik balik naratif.

Kata kunci: Tindakan Ilokusi, Pragmatik, Wacana Film, Film *She’s the Man*



INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a medium for conveying information but also a locus for performing actions. In pragmatics, speech act theory explores how utterances carry illocutionary force that is, what speakers do in saying something rather than merely what they say. Illocutionary acts encompass statements, promises, requests, apologies, and more, which are central to discourse, interaction, and meaning beyond the literal level. This theoretical foundation, rooted in the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), provides a lens for understanding how speakers negotiate intentions, identities, and social relationships through linguistic behavior.

The phenomenon that motivates this study is the increasing use of English language films as sources of linguistic input, especially in non-native English contexts such as Indonesia. Films serve not only as entertainment but also as authentic data for examining language in action. Within film dialogues, utterances often reflect social relations, power dynamics, emotional states, and cultural values. Thus, examining illocutionary acts in film dialogues offers insight into how characters construct meaning, manage conflicts, build relationships, and drive the narrative forward.

In this context, *She's the Man* a 2006 comedy directed by Andy Fickman presents especially rich material for illocutionary analysis. The film, loosely adapted from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, features complex interpersonal interactions, gender disguise, conflict, romance, and comedic miscommunication. These elements generate a wide range of utterances that embody diverse illocutionary functions: directives, assertions, promises, expressive acts, declarations, and more. The reason this film is chosen is because its unique theme of gender swapping introduces layers of deception, identity negotiation, and role playing that naturally influence the types and frequency of speech acts performed by characters. This makes the film a fertile site for exploring how language reflects social performance, concealment, and comedic tension.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in Speech Act Theory, especially Searle's classification of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. These categories provide a framework for identifying how characters' utterances function in various contexts of the film, including moments of disguise, conflict, persuasion, and emotional revelation. The theory also allows an analysis of how illocutionary forces contribute to narrative progression, character motivation, comedic effect, and audience perception.

Previous studies on illocutionary acts in films have examined various popular titles, such as *Frozen II*, *Inside Out 2*, *In Time*, *Midway*, and *Yowes Ben 2* (Lutviana & Hendar, 2024). Research on *Frozen II* identifies the dominance of representative and directive acts among main characters (Wati et al., 2025). Similarly, Muliartawan (2023), in his study *The Illocutionary Acts Analysis of Will Salas' Utterances from In Time Film*, analyzes the distribution of assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives in a character focused approach. These studies demonstrate that genre, narrative structure, and character roles significantly affect the frequency and functions of illocutionary acts. Moreover, most previous literature focuses on main characters, leaving secondary characters less examined, even though they often contribute to conflict development, comedic escalation, and narrative balance.

However, despite the availability of such studies, research specifically examining *She's the Man* remains scarce, especially regarding how its theme of gender disguise shapes the pattern and dominance of illocutionary acts. This unique context offers opportunities to explore questions that have not been addressed in earlier research. For instance, disguise and gender-role reversal may increase the frequency of expressive acts (e.g., confusion, embarrassment), intensify directives (e.g., commands during conflict), or even introduce declaratives (e.g., utterances that alter identity status). These possibilities highlight a gap in existing literature.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on *She's the Man* as a case study for understanding how gender-swapping narratives influence illocutionary patterns, including both main and secondary characters, thus offering a more comprehensive analysis than studies that only consider protagonists. This research also contributes by linking illocutionary distribution to broader thematic concerns such as identity, deception, social hierarchy, and romance elements not extensively explored in previous speech act analyses of film.

Based on the gaps identified above, the central research problem of this study is: What types of illocutionary acts occur in *She's the Man*, and which types are most dominant? Furthermore, how do these acts contribute to the narrative, character relations, and thematic construction of elements such as identity confusion, deception, and comedic effect?

To achieve these objectives, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. What types of illocutionary acts are present in the movie *She's the Man* by Andy Fickman?
2. Which type(s) of illocutionary acts are dominant in the film dialogue?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of language and its functions in communication is deeply rooted in Speech Act Theory, first introduced by Austin (1962). He explained that when people use language, they are not only saying something but also doing something through their words. According to Austin, every utterance involves three types of acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. A locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of an utterance, while an illocutionary act concerns the intention behind the speech. The perlocutionary act, meanwhile, refers to the effect that the utterance has on the listener. Among these, the illocutionary act is the central focus of pragmatic studies because it reveals the speaker's true intention in communication.

Searle (1976) later refined Austin's ideas by classifying illocutionary acts into five main categories, namely representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Representative or assertive acts are utterances that express the speaker's beliefs about the truth of a proposition, such as stating, asserting, or reporting. Directive acts are intended to make the listener perform an action, including requests, commands, or advice. Commissive acts commit the speaker to a certain future action, such as promising or offering. Expressive acts reveal the speaker's psychological state, for instance in thanking, apologizing, or congratulating. Finally, declarative acts bring about a change in the external situation through speech, such as declaring, naming, or resigning. These categories help researchers identify and analyze the functions of utterances in different contexts.

Leech (1983) also contributed to the understanding of speech acts by introducing the concept of pragmatics as the study of how meaning is influenced by context. He emphasized the Politeness Principle and Cooperative Principle as essential factors in successful communication. Through these theories, the analysis of illocutionary acts can reveal how speakers use language strategically to express intentions, maintain relationships, and achieve communicative goals. In movie dialogues, the use of illocutionary acts often reflects the characters' personalities, emotions, and relationships, making it a valuable field of study for pragmatic analysis.

Several studies have been conducted on illocutionary acts in movie dialogues using Searle's theoretical framework. One of them is a thesis by Siahaan (2021) entitled *An Analysis of Illocutionary Act in the "Amazed by You" Movie: Pragmatics Approach*. This study aimed to identify and classify types of illocutionary acts in the film by using Searle's five categories as the main analytical tool. The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive method, collecting data from the movie script and analyzing the utterances according to their illocutionary force. The findings showed that representative acts were the most dominant type in the movie, indicating that the characters often expressed facts and beliefs rather than requests or emotions. Siahaan's research demonstrated how film dialogue can serve as a reflection of characters' intentions and communicative strategies.

Another relevant study was conducted by Wardani (2011), who examined illocutionary acts in *Prince of Persia: The Sand of Time* movie. The objective of this study was to describe the types and functions of illocutionary acts used by the main characters. By applying Searle's framework and using a descriptive qualitative design, the researcher analyzed the dialogues and categorized them according to their illocutionary functions. The study revealed that directive and expressive acts occurred most frequently, showing that characters often gave instructions or expressed emotions throughout the film. Wardani's work highlighted how the type of movie genre could influence the frequency and function of particular speech acts, as the film's action and emotional scenes required direct and expressive communication.

A more recent study by Rohimajaya and Novari (2025) analyzed illocutionary acts in *A Man Called Otto* movie. Their research focused on how the main character's utterances reflected emotional depth and interpersonal relations. Using a qualitative pragmatic method, the authors identified and classified the types of illocutionary acts based on Searle's theory. The results showed that expressive acts were the most dominant, representing the protagonist's emotional responses and empathy toward others. This study emphasized that the analysis of speech acts can uncover psychological and social aspects of characters in film dialogues. It also illustrated that movie genres with strong emotional narratives tend to display a higher frequency of expressive speech acts.

Although the studies by Siahaan (2021), Wardani (2011), and Rohimajaya and Novari (2025) have contributed valuable insights into the analysis of illocutionary acts in different movie genres, there are still areas that have not been explored thoroughly. Most previous research has focused on romantic or action films, which often portray formal or

dramatic language use. In contrast, the film *She's the Man* belongs to the teen comedy genre, where language use tends to be humorous, casual, and socially dynamic. Moreover, the film presents themes of gender disguise and identity, which create interesting layers of pragmatic meaning in the characters' utterances. These aspects have not yet been widely examined through the lens of speech act theory. Therefore, this research intends to fill that gap by analyzing how illocutionary acts are used by the main characters in *She's the Man* to express intentions, maintain relationships, and perform gendered identities.

This research focused on analyzing illocutionary acts in the dialogues of the movie *She's the Man* (2006) by applying Searle's (1976) five categories of illocutionary acts. The analysis was limited to the spoken dialogues of the main characters as found in the movie script. Non-verbal communication, such as gestures or facial expressions, was not included because the study concentrated solely on verbal language. Furthermore, the perlocutionary effects, or the listeners' reactions, were not analyzed, as the primary objective was to identify and interpret the illocutionary forces contained in the utterances. This limitation allowed the researcher to focus deeply on the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of speech acts rather than their psychological or social effects. The findings were therefore expected to illustrate how illocutionary acts functioned in shaping the interactions and comedic elements of the film.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suitable for exploring the subtle and nuanced ways in which language is used to convey meaning and achieve communicative goals within a specific context. By focusing on the illocutionary acts found in the dialogues of the film *She's the Man*, this research emphasizes interpretation and in-depth analysis rather than depending on numerical data or statistical measurements. The qualitative approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between language and narrative, capturing the complexity and richness of speech acts as they function within the film's social and comedic framework.

The process of data collection consists of several steps to ensure accuracy and depth. First, the film was watched multiple times to familiarize the researcher with the storyline, character dynamics, and thematic elements. In subsequent viewings, specific scenes and dialogues were identified as relevant to the research focus, especially those involving significant interactions between characters. These dialogues were then transcribed directly

from the movie, and when available, the written script or screenplay was consulted to verify transcription accuracy. This dual method guarantees that the data collected are both accurate and comprehensive, encompassing the full context of each speech act, including its situational and relational nuances.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of Illocutionary Act Types

After transcribing and coding all utterances from main and supporting characters, the following distribution of illocutionary acts was obtained:

Table 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts in *She's the Man*

Illocution Type	Number of Utterances	Percentage (%)
Assertives	30	32,6%
Directives	33	35,8%
Expressives	22	23,9%
Commissives	5	5,4%
Declaratives	2	2,1%
Total	92	100

From Table 1, Directives emerged as the most dominant type (35,8%), followed by Assertives (35.5 %). Expressives (23,9%) stood in third place, with commissives (5,4%) and declaratives (2,1%) being relatively rare.

Declarative

A speech act intended to bring about a change in institutional or social status through utterance. Its function is to **alter reality by declaring or legitimizing something** (e.g., appointing, pronouncing, or validating).

Viola : Mom, Dad... Hey! Why don't we go to dinner? As a family? Maybe tomorrow?

Mom : I suppose I could fit that in. Would you like to have my cell phone number?

Father : Let me give you my e-mail.

Mom : All right.

Viola and sebastian : Yay!

(She's the Man, 2006; 1:33:26)

This could be included declarative because Viola had mentioned that her family, namely her father and mother, who were divorced and did not live in the same house and in here viola state and changed the status of each of them, where we know from the video analysis that they were, came to see the performance of her children, namely Viola and Sebastian, which touched her heart and finally took advantage of the opportunity to invite

her family to eat together. Apart from being a family sentence, where this happens because previously a family that had been divorced has now become harmonious or united again.

Expressive

A speech act that conveys the speaker's psychological state or feelings. Its function is to **express emotions such as gratitude, apology, praise, or regret.**

Viola as Sebastian: You know what? Speaking as a completely objective third-party observer with absolutely no personal interest in the matter, I'm not so sure that you and Duke are a good idea after all.

Olivia: Well, thank you for your concern. And if you're so worried, maybe you should come to Cesario's tonight, just to keep an eye on me. We could double.

(She's the Man, 2006; 1:00:21)

This can be included in the expressive because here Olivia makes a subtle insinuation to Viola who disguised herself as Sebastian to come to Cesario's to meet him again. As we know, in this film Olivia is attracted to Viola who is disguised as Sebastian. And Olivia expresses gratitude to Viola, who disguises herself as Sebastian, because she was worried about her.

Directive

A speech act aimed at getting the hearer to perform an action. Its function is to **command, request, suggest, or encourage** future behavior.

Mom : Where are you going?

Viola : Mom, I told you! I'm going to Dad's house for two weeks.

Mom : No, you didn't. And you're not going. We've hardly spent any time together this summer. Now go upstairs and unpack.

(She's the Man, 2006; 11:24)

This could be included in the directive because both mother and daughter are family or close people who know each other. Where the directive came in which was alerting. When Viola's mother told her to go back upstairs and take out the packaging. The mother ordered and forbade her child to go to his father's house. even though Viola, had already brought a suitcase and was getting ready to go, but her mother had forbidden it.

Assertives

A speech act used to state facts, beliefs, or descriptions of the world. Its function is to **express propositions that can be evaluated as true or false**, such as reporting or asserting.

Coach : I know. If there's anything I can do, just say the word.

Viola : Matter of fact, there is. We wanna try out for the boys team.

Coach : Anything besides that.

Viola : Coach, come on! You know that we're good enough.
Coach : I don't know that. that's a thing that I know.
(She's the Man, 2006; 4:02)

This could be included in the assertive because the coach of the soccer team said that indeed the fact that can play in the league match later is the men's team. because it is certain that the women's soccer team will not be able to play as well as the men. and here when the coach said this. there was a feeling of disappointment and unacceptance from the players of the women's soccer team.

Commissive

A speech act that commits the speaker to a future course of action. Its function is to **promise, vow, or threaten**, indicating responsibility for upcoming actions.

Sebastian : I'm a boy. I promise.
Sir Lads : Prove it.
Sebastian : OK.
(She's the Man, 2006; 1:19:18)

This could be included in the commissive because when the original sebastian was accused of being a fake sebastian then. sebastian denied it and said and promised that he was not a woman. because it just so happened that the one who was entering the field and playing was the original sebastian or viola's younger brother. this happened viola was late to arrive so her clothes were worn by the younger brother.

CONCLUSION(S)

This study concludes that illocutionary acts play a significant role in how She's the Man develops its characters, drives the storyline, and represents themes of identity and gender disguise. The film demonstrates that language, through its illocutionary force, becomes a key tool in expressing complex emotions, negotiating gender roles, and shaping social interactions.

The findings reveal that directive and assertive acts dominate most conversations, while expressive, commissive, and declarative acts appear strategically during critical narrative moments. These patterns show that speech acts should be interpreted in relation to genre conventions, character intentions, and contextual cues rather than as isolated linguistic categories. Such analysis also highlights how communication styles and intonation reflect shifts in authority, emotion, and social relationships.

Ultimately, speech acts serve as a fundamental linguistic mechanism that enables characters to construct and maintain identity. The study emphasizes that understanding illocutionary acts not only deepens our interpretation of cinematic dialogue but also broadens our awareness of how language functions in representing identity, power, and human connection within film narratives.

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