

## AN ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACT USED BY TAYLOR SWIFT IN NYU's 2022 COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

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### Abstract

Illocutionary speech acts are actions used by speaker not only to convey utterances, but also have other purposes for conveying meaning. Meanwhile, motivational elements are used by speaker to arouse the enthusiasm of their listeners. This study aims to find out and analyse illocutionary speech acts and how the utterances conveyed motivational elements in New York University (NYU)'s 2022 commencement speech. The data used is a transcript of a video entitled New York University (NYU)'s 2022 Commencement Speaker Taylor Swift. In this research, the researcher uses Searle's theory to classify and analyze sentences and Daniel Goleman's theory to classify and analyze motivational elements. This study used qualitative method with descriptive results based on the researcher's analysis. Bowen's theory is used as technique analysis in categorizing, describing and drawing a conclusion. The results of illocutionary speech act show that there are 37 data of representative, 9 data of directive, 12 data of expressive, 6 data of commissive and no sentences stated as declarative. The results of motivational elements show that there are 4 data of personal drive motivation, 3 data of commitment motivation, 3 data of initiative motivation and 3 data of optimism motivation. It can be concluded that representative was the most commonly found data because speaker told their life stories, also related to personal drive motivation as the most commonly found data to motivate graduates to improve themselves to achieve their goals.

**Keywords:** Speech act, Illocutionary speech act, Motivational elements.

### 1. Introduction

As a tool to communicate, language has a very important role as communication means to process and to share ideas, information and message to others in a certain time and place, (Merl in Jumanto, 2017). Every society has their own language and they used a certain language to communicate, worked together, ask for help and many other things as we know the function of a community. It is called interpersonal communication, which is a communication that most often occurs between humans, in the same place and time. The most basic form called dyadic communication, a communication between two people. It is also happened in a big group like a speaker in front of their audience. However, the audience has limited responses, clapping hand, nodding head, whistle, make a "boo" sound, or just stay silent. A speaker usually has a persuasive purpose, so good word choice skills are needed in order for the listener to do what the speaker says.

The communication function is in line with pragmatic definition according to (Nunan in Jumanto, 2017), pragmatic is study concerned with the use of a language in certain contexts to achieve a certain goal. In order to be successful in communicating, speech act is one of the theories studied in pragmatics.

This could happen in everywhere, daily life, chit-chat between a wife and a husband, teamwork in an organization, also in entertainment industry.

Talking about entertainment, Taylor Swift, a pop singer from the United States who is also a songwriter, producer, director, actress, pioneering and influential advocate for artists' rights and philanthropist. It's been 18 years since starting her career, Taylor Swift has been able to maintain her throne as one of the rulers of the music industry. Therefore, it is not surprising that Swift is made a role model by young people today thanks to her success.

With so much life experience, this immediately made not only the New York University graduates who attended the stadium, but also the more than one million viewers who watched via the YouTube platform feel a positive effect after hearing how Swift delivered her speech. Swift made many people believe that dreams and small things that we do in life we should always give effort that comes from the heart and also not half a day doing it. She also has fearlessly challenged the exploitation of music artist and successfully championed their right to be compensated for their work, these things are what would have made New York University give her the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts honoris causa. She was also given the opportunity to be the commencement speaker at the graduation ceremony which was held on Wednesday 18 May 2022 at Yankee Stadium.

In expressing her words, Swift hopes that her listeners can understand her intended message. Searle (1969), stated that speech act stands for what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the listener understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are. There are three types of speech act according to Searle (1969), locutionary act (the act of saying something, illocutionary act (the act of doing something), and perlocutionary act (the act of affecting someone).

Based on this theory, there is a need for research on types of illocutionary act and motivation elements used by Taylor Swift to motivate the graduates of New York University class of 2022 also viewers of the video uploaded by New York University Youtube account.

In the field of pragmatics, there has been research that discusses the relationship between pragmatics and meaning and many other things. First, conducted by Desi Novita Sari and Asep Purwo Yudi Utomo (2020), "Directive speech act in president Joko Widodo's speech related to handling coronavirus (covid-19) in Indonesia (Pragmatic review)", in conclusion, president Joko Widodo used directive speech act and most of them are commanding. Second previous study was conducted by Putri Indah Sari and Budi Eko Pranoto (2022), "An analysis of illocutionary act and perlocutionary act towards the queen Elizabeth's speech entitled *we will succeed and better days will come*". The first dominant type of illocutionary act was assertive, because queen Elizabeth wants to give a fact about the conditions of this pandemic. The third was conducted by Indrawan Hadi Syafi'I (2017), "The use of speech acts for giving motivation in the king's stuttering therapy in the "The king's speech" movie".

## 2. Literature Review

This research uses Searle (1976) speech act theory to find out the illocutionary speech act and motivational elements in the video chosen.

### Speech Acts

As a tool for communication, language has so many functions as stated before. Sharing opinion on a discussion, expressing themselves, communication within the organization among members so that work can be completed, teachers using persuasive utterances so the students do their homework. This is what speech act is.

In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances, (Yule, 1996). The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer. Generally, actions performed via utterances are called speech act, (Yule, 1996). In addition, John R. Searle (1969) (in Putri et al., 2019), define speech act as a theory that examined the meaning of language based on

speech relations with the actions taken by the speaker. Searle stated in (Searle, 1969), that as the basic of communication, speech act combined with the principle of expressibility, suggest that there are a series of analytics connection between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the listener understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are. Searle (1969) giving his examples, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on. Furthermore, according to Searle (1969), these actions are often made suitable by and carried out in line with a set of rules governing the use of linguistic components.

Furthermore, George Yule (Yule, 1996), stated that in general, speech act is actions performed via utterances. In expressing themselves, people need to produce utterances not only grammatical based and words, but the utterances that are made need to perform actions. Yule (1996) gives his specific examples, such as apology, complaint, invitation, promise, or request. These descriptions of various speech acts refer to the speaker's intended communication when making an utterance. The speaker typically assumes that the listener will understand his or her intended message.

According to the definition of speech act from several linguists, the researcher has concluded the definition of speech act which can be understood by readers. Speech act is a branch of pragmatics that discusses the meaning of utterances uttered by speakers which are then interpreted by listeners based on the existing context and several other supporting factors.

According to J.R. Searle (1969) speech act formed by three types that speakers can express to their hearers.

1. Locutionary act: the act of saying something

In speech act, locutionary act is the basic in speech act, speakers use speech in communication with hearer. A locutionary act can be said to be a locutionary act if it produces a meaningful linguistic expression, (Yule, 1996). In other words, someone who talks to a wall or to themselves in front of a mirror does not use speech in communication cannot be said to be a locutionary act. So, according to Searle, in general locutionary act is the act of saying something.

2. Illocutionary act: the act of doing something

Illocutionary act is a speech act that not only functions to say or inform something, but can also be used to make the listener do what the speaker says, Yule also added illocutionary force as the speaker's intention in producing that utterance. In general, Searle define illocutionary act as the act of doing something.

3. Perlocutionary act: the act of affecting someone

The third speech act according to Searle, Perlocutionary act. As a continuation of illocutionary act, as the speaker communicates, perlocutionary act is the influence exerted by the speaker on the hearer. In conclusion, perlocutionary act is the act of affecting someone, Searle (1976). This can be affecting the attitudes and physical behavior, or mental changes of the interlocutor in interpersonal interaction.

## Illocutionary Act

Illocutionary act is the second type of speech act introduced by Searle. Etymologically, illocutionary comes from in + locution. In conclude, illocutionary is what is in the locution or what the speaker does with the locutionary. Illocutionary act is a speech act that not only functions to say or inform something, but can also be used to make the listener do what the speaker says, Yule also added illocutionary force as the speaker's intention in producing that utterance. In general, Searle (1969) define illocutionary act as the act of doing something.

This illocutionary act types according to Searle (in Yustitiayu & Agustina, 2021), there are, representative, directive, expressive, commissive and declarative.

1. Representative

Representative is used to show the fact or event uttered by the speaker. Representative according to Yule (1996), are utterances that are believed by speakers, which may be true or false. Yule states that there are statements of fact, assertions, conclusions and descriptions. Example: stating, explaining, reporting, showing, mentioning, admitting and convincing.

2. Directive

In directive, it is stated the speaker asks the hearer to do what is asked through the utterances conveyed. In addition, Yule (1996) stated directives are the illocutionary speech act used by the speaker to get someone else or hearer to do something. Directive is the speaker's intention to ask the hearer to do things throughout the words uttered. Example, ordering, requesting, suggesting, inviting, challenging and advising, Searle (1976).

3. Expressive

Expressive is illocutionary types that state what the speakers feels, it is used to express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy or sorrow. Searle (1976) gave the example such as, praising, thanking, criticizing, complaining, congratulating, flattering and blaming.

4. Commissive

According to Searle (1976), commissive are the types of illocutionary act that shows by the speakers performing an action, to express what the speaker intends. Example, example: promise, swear, threaten and declare commitment.

5. Declarative

Declarative is the types of illocutionary act which shows the utterance conveyed by the speaker to take action that can change a reality. In addition, Yule stated that declarative or declarations are those kinds of speech act that uttered by the speaker via their utterance. A priest who says "I now pronounce you husband and wife", this can change the status between a man and a woman to become husband and wife. According to Searle (1976), declarative is utterances uttered by the speaker to take action that can change a reality, examples such as: decide, cancel, allow, forbid, grant and forgive.

### Motivational elements

Motivation comes from "motive" means needs, desires, wants or drives within the individuals. It is said as the process of stimulating people to take action to achieve the goals. Giving motivation is very important to do to someone who get under pressure or low motivation. In this case, Taylor Swift gave her speech to graduates of New York University where these graduates cannot experience normal college life, they have to study at home, in dormitories via zoom by taking various covid test.

Goleman (1995) (in Syafi', 2017), developed the concept of Emotional Intelligence, different with IQ (Intelligence Quotient) that designed to measure intellectual intelligence, indicating cognitive abilities like learning and understanding, Emotional Intelligence measures an ability to identify and manage emotions both internally and externally. Goleman developed and identified four elements that make up motivation: our personal drive to improve and achieve, commitment to some goals, initiative or readiness to act on opportunities as well as optimism and resilience.

1. Personal drive motivation

In order to achieve, desire, improve and meet certain standard in life, personal drive motivation is needed. It is to make a better life for him or herself.

2. Commitment motivation

Motivation is something that pushes us in order to achieve something, commitment motivation is built to achieve personal or organizational goals.

3. Initiative motivation

When someone is motivated by a motivation from someone, they ready to take action to achieve their goals. Initiative motivation also called as “readiness to act on opportunities”. They ready to take the risk in because the motivation is something that makes them ready to take an action, it is can change them to a better life.

4. Optimism motivation

In order to keep going to pursue goals in life, optimism motivation is needed. People feels that it gives them more confidence and they believe that every problem can be solved better.

### 3. Research Method

The design of this research is qualitative method and descriptive analysis approach was used in order to understand the illocutionary speech act. According to Mantra (in Sandu & Sodik, 2015), qualitative method as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words or spoken words from people and observed behaviour. In conclusion, the qualitative method uses descriptive analysis form of sentences instead of numerical data.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The source of data used in this research is Taylor Swift’s utterances at the 2022 New York University graduation ceremony which was held at Yankee Stadium. Apart from serving as a 2022 commencement speaker, Swift was also awarded the honorary title of Doctor of Fine Arts, for her work and services in music. In her speech, Taylor Swift told many of her stories which she hoped could become lessons and provide motivation for graduates.

The researcher found 64 data in Taylor Swift’ utterance in the video chosen and then classified them into illocutionary speech act sub-type.

**Table 1.** Types of illocutionary speech act

No.	Type of speech act	Sub type	Amount
1.	Representative	Stating	14
		Explaining	5
		Reporting	0
		Showing	1
		Mentioning	12
		Admitting	1
		Convincing	4
		Amount:	37
2.	Directive	Ordering	4
		Requesting	2
		Suggesting	2
		Inviting	0
		Challenging	0
		Advising	1
		Amount:	9
3.	Expressive	Praising	3
		Thanking	3
		Criticizing	0
		Complaining	2
		Congratulating	0
		Flattering	4



		Blaming	0
		Amount:	12
4.	Commissive	Promise	5
		Swear	0
		Threaten	0
		Declare commitment	1
		Amount:	6
5.	Declarative	Decide	0
		Cancel	0
		Allow	0
		Forbid	0
		Grant	0
		Forgive	0
		Amount	0
Total number of data			64

### Types and how illocutionary act used by Taylor Swift in NYU's 2022 commencement speech

In analyzing how is the illocutionary speech act used in *the* video chosen, the researcher analyzed based on the sub-types.

#### 1. Representative

**"The first of which is...life can be heavy, especially if you try to carry it all at once.** Part of growing up and moving into new chapters of your life is about catch and release."

The data above is included in the representative, precisely state. It can be seen from the use of sentences, Taylor Swift as the speaker at the graduation ceremony showed her various experiences of ups and downs to achieve her glory. Swift delivered her speech in the context that we do not need to think about all things, sometimes we need to sort and throw away a lot of things if they are not too important. The use of the word *especially* marks an explanation of the expression she conveys, which is about what things that can make life heavy according to Taylor's belief.

#### 2. Directive

**"Maybe they aren't with us anymore, and in that case, I hope you'll remember them today.** If they are here in this stadium, I hope you'll find your own way to express your gratitude for all the steps and missteps that have led us to this common destination."

The data above is included in directive, precisely requesting. The context in the sample of data above is Taylor talked about the help from loved ones who have helped the graduates so that they can go through many difficulties. The utterance is included in requesting can be seen from the use of the sentence *I hope you'll remember them*, from the use of the word *I hope* marks an explanation of the expression she conveys, she hoped that her listeners would do what she asked, which was to remember loved ones who has helped the graduates.

#### 3. Expressive

**"I will, however, give you some life hacks** I wish I knew when I was starting out my dreams of a career, and navigating life, love, pressure, choices, shame, hope and friendship."

The data above is included in commissive, precisely promising. It can be seen from the use of sentence *I will, however, give you*. From this sentence it shows that the utterance of promise is marked by a modal verb will, it indicates to use in all aspects of future tense. The context Taylor talking about is that even she's not going to rule, Taylor will provide hacks she wished she had known before starting her career. Taylor directly says it to the hearer, the graduates.

4. Commissive

“Anyway...hard things will happen to us. **We will recover. We will learn from it. We will grow more resilient because of it.**”

The data above is included in commissive, precisely promising. It can be seen from the use of sentences *We will recover. We will learn from it. We will grow more resilient because of it*, from the sentence it shows the promise utterance is marked by will recover it states something is about to happen. The context of the sentences is Taylor talked about even things getting harder, she and the graduates will always find a way.

5. Declarative

The researcher not found any declarative utterances uttered by Taylor Swift in the video chosen.

### What kinds of motivational elements used by Taylor Swift in NYU’s 2022 commencement speech

Goleman’s theory (1995) (in Syafi’I, 2017) about four elements that make up motivation, Goleman identified and classified it into, personal drive motivation, commitment motivation, initiative motivation and optimism motivation.

In NYU’s 2022 commencement speech, personal drive motivation is the most dominant uttered by the speaker with 4 data.

Table 2. Types of motivational elements

No.	Types of motivational speech	Amount
1.	Personal drive motivation	4
2.	Commitment motivation	3
3.	Initiative motivation	3
4.	Optimism motivation	3
Total number of data:		13

1. Personal drive motivation

“One toxic relationship can outweigh so many wonderful, simple joys. **You get to pick what your life has time and room for. Be discerning.**”

The context in Taylor Swift’s utterance above classified as personal drive motivation, the context is Taylor talked about there are so many things happened in life, the bad one, the hurtful one, envious, jealous, however, we cannot keep them all of them in our life. We have to be smart in sorting out what things we can keep in our life and which things we should throw away.

The researcher classified sample of data of personal drive motivation above because in order to achieve and improve our life, we cannot keep looking at something that makes us forget the good one. So, we can focus on what we are going to do.

2. Commitment motivation

“Every choice you make leads to the next choice which leads to the next, and I know it’s hard to know sometimes which path to take. **There will be times in life when you need to stand up for yourself. Times when the right thing is to back down and apologize. Times when the right thing is to fight, times when the right thing is to turn and run. Times to hold on with all you have and times to let go with grace. Sometimes the right thing to do is to throw out the old schools of thought in the name of progress and reform. Sometimes the right thing to do is to listen to the wisdom of those who have come before us.** How will you know what the right choice is in these crucial moments? You won’t.”

The context in Taylor Swift's utterance in the sample of data of commitment motivation is Taylor talked about the many possibilities that we will do in the future; we do not always have to ignore the words of wisdom of those who have come before us just because we feel that we are better than them. Sometimes, we also have to listen to them.

The researcher classified sample of data of commitment motivation above because Taylor talked about things so personal, Taylor hoped that the graduates also have something committed in order to achieve their goals.

### 3. Initiative motivation

"Having label executives in Nashville tell me that only 35-year-old housewives listen to country music and there was no place for a 13-year-old on their roster made me cry in the car on the way home. **But then I'd post my songs on my MySpace and yes, MySpace, and would message with other teenagers like me who loved country music, but just didn't have anyone singing from their perspective.**"

The context in Taylor Swift's utterance in the sample of data of initiative motivation above is Taylor talked about when she was 13 years old, she really liked country music, however, at home she felt that there was no room for 13 years old girl to express themselves in country music, so she looked for ways to find people who are also interested in country music, by posting her music on Myspace and finally finding her community.

By sharing her experience, Taylor Swift hopes that the graduates will have an idea that we must be alert or do something to find ways to achieve our goals.

### 4. Optimism motivation

"This might sound like a very songwriter-centric line of discussion but in a way, **I really do think we are all writers. And most of us write in a different voice for different situations.** You write differently in your Instagram stories than you do your senior thesis. You send a different type of email to your boss then you do your best friend from home. We are all literary chameleons and I think it's fascinating.

The context in the Taylor Swift's utterances above is Taylor complimented the graduates on what they have done in years. Doing different things in every journey of life takes us to adapt to circumstances. Taylor credits it so well we do it. Taylor believes that each of the graduates is a writer for their own lives who have different storylines, difficulties and supporters. Because of this, Taylor convinced the graduates to be optimistic about the path they would choose after graduation. It can be seen from the use of sentences; *I really do think we are all writers. And most of us write in a different voice for different situations.*

Taylor talked about that life will always change and we will always be able to find a way to overcome existing problem. In her speech, Taylor hoped that the graduates hold the optimism to face life because as what she was told, we made it through yesterday's problems, we can also get through the problems to come.

## 5. Conclusions

The most dominant data found by the researcher is representative with 64 data. There are, (37) representative, (9) directive, (12) expressive, (6) commissive and the researcher not found any utterances that fit in declarative. In this research, by using Searle (1976) theory in classified illocutionary act, research could analysis how meaning behind each sentence. By using Daniel Goleman theory, researcher also find types of motivational elements behind sentences and meaning behind it.



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