

ILLOCUTIONARY ACT ANALYSIS ON PIERS MORGANS' UNCENSORED SHOW EPISODE

“AM I A BLACK MAN IF I SAY I’M A BLACK MAN?”

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the types and functions of illocutionary acts employed by the host and guests in the Uncensored episode titled “Am I a Black Man If I Say I’m a Black Man?”, hosted by Piers Morgan, using Searle’s (1979) theoretical framework of speech acts. The primary objective of this study is to identify and examine the various illocutionary acts present in the show’s dialogues and to explore how these acts contribute to the dynamics of interaction among the participants. This study adopts a qualitative approach, with data collected through careful observation and transcription of the dialogues featured in the episode. A total of 73 data samples were collected for this study, which were then categorized into five types of speech acts: Assertive Acts, Directive Acts, Commissive Acts, Expressive Acts, and Declarative Acts. The types of illocutionary acts used in this episode, ranked by frequency, include Assertive Acts (32 instances), followed by Directive Acts (20 instances), Commissive Acts (12 instances), and Expressive Acts (6 instances). In addition, the writer also analyzed the illocutionary functions of the speech acts, which include Competitive, Convivial, Collaborative, and Conflictive functions. The findings indicate that there are (35) Competitive functions, (8) Convivial functions, (1) Collaborative function, and (31) Conflictive functions. The results of this study demonstrate how speech is used not only to convey information but also to perform actions in accordance with the functions of illocutionary acts.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Illocutionary Acts, Speech Acts Function, *Uncensored*

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is the scientific study of language that examines its structure, meaning, and use in human communication. It encompasses both microlinguistics, which focuses on the internal aspects of language such as phonetics, phonology, and semantics, and macrolinguistics, which studies how language interacts with social and cultural contexts. Language functions not only as a system of sounds and symbols used to convey ideas and emotions but also as a tool through which individuals perform actions and influence others. Therefore, linguistics provides a foundation for understanding how language operates as both a communicative system and a social practice.

Within linguistics, pragmatics plays an essential role in explaining how meaning is shaped by context, speaker intention, and shared knowledge between participants

in communication. Rather than focusing solely on the literal meaning of words, pragmatics examines how speakers convey implied meanings, use politeness strategies, and adapt their language according to different social situations. This perspective highlights that effective communication depends not only on grammatical knowledge but also on an understanding of contextual factors and interpersonal relationships. One important concept within pragmatics is speech act theory, developed by Searle, (1980) which explains how utterances function as actions. Speech acts operate on three levels: locutionary acts, which involve producing the utterance; illocutionary acts, which represent the speaker’s intended function, such as asserting, requesting, or expressing feelings; and perlocutionary acts, which refer to the effect of the utterance on the listener. This theory is widely used to analyze how speakers use language strategically to

express intentions, persuade others, and influence social interaction.

Based on this framework, the present study analyzes the use of types and functions of the illocutionary acts in the debate featured in the Uncensored episode titled “Am I a Black Man If I Say I’m a Black Man? Pride Debate.” The discussion addresses issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and the LGBTQAI+ community within contemporary media discourse. By examining the linguistic strategies used by the participants, this study aims to reveal how speech acts shape arguments, express attitudes, and construct meaning in public debates. Ultimately, the research highlights how language in media discussions reflects broader social debates about identity, representation, and the influence of so-called “woke” culture in modern society.

METHODOLOGY

According to Gall, M et al., (1983) the results of educational research can generally be grouped into four main purposes: description, prediction, improvement, and explanation. In this study, the writer applies the theory of speech acts proposed by Searle, (1976) to categorize the types of speech used in a discussion. The analysis focuses on five types of speech acts: assertive (representative), directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative, which help explain how speakers use language to perform different communicative functions.

This research uses a qualitative method to analyze speech acts found in a televised discussion. The data are collected by observing the dialogue in the program and identifying utterances that represent speech acts. The writer uses YouTube captions as the main transcript source and checks them again using an additional website to improve accuracy. After collecting the data, the utterances are categorized using a coding system: A (Assertive), DR (Directive), C (Commissive), E (Expressive), DC (Declarative), CM (Competitive), CV (Convivial), CL (Collaborative), and CF (Conflictive). This coding system helps organize the data and makes it easier to analyze the different functions of speech acts in the discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examines the types and functions of illocutionary acts used by the host and guests in the Uncensored episode titled “Am I a Black Man If I Say I’m a Black Man?”, hosted by Piers Morgan. The analysis is grounded in the speech act theory proposed

by John Searle (1979), which explains how utterances function not only as statements but also as actions that carry specific communicative intentions. By applying this theoretical framework, the study focuses on identifying different types of illocutionary acts, such as assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative, within the conversations that occur during the televised debate.

The main objective of this research is to investigate how these illocutionary acts are used by the participants to express opinions, challenge opposing arguments, and shape the flow of discussion throughout the program. In addition to identifying the types of speech acts, the study also explores their communicative functions and how they influence the interaction between the host and the guests. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how language operates in televised debates, particularly in discussions involving sensitive social and political issues.

1. Types and Functions of Illocutionary Acts

A. Assertive Type (Statement) Collaborative Function



Fig. 1 Piers Morgan

00:56-1:05

Piers Morgan: Mothers, fathers, armed forces, veterans, fallen soldiers, women, patrons, Saints, all have one thing in common there's one calendar day per year.

In the utterance “Mothers, fathers, armed forces, veterans, fallen soldiers, women, patrons, Saints, all have one thing in common, there’s one calendar day per year,” the speaker performs an assertive speech act as described by (Searle, 1976). Through this statement, the speaker expresses a belief presented as a factual observation, claiming that each of the mentioned groups has a specific day of recognition. The utterance functions as stating information, where the speaker commits to the truth of the proposition while framing the discussion that follows.

From the perspective of politeness strategies, the statement reflects a collaborative function based on the framework proposed by Leech, (2014). The speaker acknowledges several respected social

groups, which demonstrates a respectful and neutral tone rather than imposing demands or creating confrontation. Because the utterance focuses on sharing information and reinforcing shared social values, it avoids impoliteness and helps establish credibility while preparing the audience for the broader debate.

B. Directive Type (Asking) Conflictive Function



Fig. 2 Piers Morgan
(14:20-14:22)

Ernest Owen: You don't even know what woke means, right?

In the utterance "You don't even know what woke means, right?" the speaker performs a directive speech act, as explained in the theory of Searle, (1976). Although the sentence appears as a question, its main purpose is not to seek information but to challenge the listener's understanding of the term "woke." The speaker uses this rhetorical question to provoke a response and push the interlocutor to reconsider or defend their use of the term.

From the perspective of politeness strategies, the statement can be interpreted as an impoliteness strategy because it directly questions the listener's knowledge and credibility. According to the framework of illocutionary functions proposed by Leech, (2014) this utterance reflects a conflictive function, where the speaker's intention is to criticize or challenge the opposing viewpoint. Therefore, the directive speech act not only encourages a response but also functions as a strategic argumentative move within a debate.

C. Assertive Type (Claims) Conflictive Function



Fig. 2 Piers Morgan

(01:38-01:43)

Piers Morgan: Clearly, there's a day for every letter, but the serious point here is that this kind of enforced celebration of sexual preferences is, I think, becoming a little bit counterproductive.

In the utterance "Clearly, there's a day for every letter, but the serious point here is that this kind of enforced celebration of sexual preferences is, I think, becoming a little bit counterproductive," the speaker performs an assertive speech act as described by Searle, (1976). Through this statement, the speaker presents a personal claim about Pride or LGBTQAI+ celebrations, suggesting that they may have become excessive and could undermine their original purpose. The illocutionary force of the utterance functions as claiming, where the speaker expresses a belief and commits to its truth while inviting further discussion or reflection.

From the perspective of politeness strategies, the speaker softens the criticism by using hedging expressions such as "I think" and "a little bit," which help reduce the directness of the statement.

According to the politeness framework proposed by Leech, (2014) these hedges function as politeness strategies that attempt to lessen potential offense when discussing sensitive topics. However, the phrase "enforced celebration of sexual preferences" may still act as a face-threatening expression, indicating a conflictive tone that challenges the opposing viewpoint. As a result, the utterance demonstrates a combination of politeness mitigation and potential impoliteness within a controversial public debate.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study analyzes the communicative interactions in the television program *Uncensored* using the speech act theory proposed by Searle, (1976). The analysis focuses on the use of assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative speech acts by the host, Piers Morgan, and several panelists, including Riley Gaines, James Barr, Esther Krakue, Ernest Owen, and Jordan Peterson. The findings reveal that assertive acts are the most frequently used, as participants often present claims, beliefs, and arguments to support their perspectives on controversial topics such as Pride Month, transgender participation in sports, and debates surrounding "woke" culture. Directive and expressive acts also play an important role in shaping the discussion, with participants using questions,

challenges, emotions, and criticism to influence the direction and tone of the debate.

Overall, the study demonstrates that speech acts function as important tools for persuasion, argumentation, and power negotiation within media discourse. The interactions in Uncensored show how different speech acts and illocutionary functions contribute to a confrontational yet dynamic debate environment that reflects broader social and cultural tensions. By applying speech act theory, this research highlights how language is used not only to communicate ideas but also to frame arguments and shape public perception of contemporary issues. The study, therefore, confirms the relevance of speech act analysis in understanding how media discussions influence audience interpretations and reflect ongoing debates in society.

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