

A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS IN THE NOVEL THE “MIDNIGHT LIBRARY” BY MATT HAIG

Inggrid Yossi Anna Sianipar¹, Bernieke Anggita Ristia Damanik²

English Departement^{1,2}

Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar^{1,2}

Inggridsianipar8@gmail.com , bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyses speech acts found in the novel *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze three types of speech acts used by the characters in the novel, namely locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method and applies the speech act theory proposed by J. L. Austin. The data were collected from dialogues in the novel that contain speech acts. The researcher collected the data by reading the novel carefully, selecting important utterances, classifying the data based on the types of speech acts, and analysing them using Austin's theory. The findings show that illocutionary acts are the most dominant type found in the novel because the characters often express intentions, feelings, requests, and responses in conversations. Locutionary acts are used to convey literal meanings, while perlocutionary acts can be seen from the effects of utterances on other characters. In addition, the speech acts in the novel also reflect the emotions, regrets, hopes, and psychological conditions experienced by the characters. Therefore, this study concludes that language in the novel functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a way to express meaning and emotion between characters. Keywords: Semantics, Speech Acts, Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, Perlocutionary Act, The Midnight Library

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis tindak tutur yang terdapat dalam novel *The Midnight Library* karya Matt Haig. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis tiga jenis tindak tutur yang digunakan oleh tokoh-tokoh dalam novel, yaitu tindak lokusi, ilokusi, dan perlokusi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan menerapkan teori tindak tutur yang dikemukakan oleh J. L. Austin. Data penelitian diambil dari dialog-dialog dalam novel yang mengandung tindak tutur. Peneliti mengumpulkan data dengan membaca novel secara teliti, memilih tuturan yang penting, mengelompokkan data berdasarkan jenis tindak tutur, dan menganalisisnya menggunakan teori Austin. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak ilokusi merupakan jenis tindak tutur yang paling dominan ditemukan dalam novel karena para tokoh sering menyampaikan maksud, perasaan, permintaan, dan tanggapan dalam percakapan mereka. Tindak lokusi digunakan untuk menyampaikan makna literal, sedangkan tindak perlokusi terlihat dari pengaruh tuturan terhadap tokoh lain. Selain itu, tindak tutur dalam novel juga menggambarkan emosi, penyesalan, harapan, dan kondisi psikologis para tokoh. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa bahasa dalam novel tidak

hanya berfungsi sebagai alat komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai cara untuk menyampaikan makna dan emosi antar tokoh.

Kata Kunci: Semantik, Tindak Tutur, Tindak Lokusi, Tindak Ilokusi, Tindak Perlokusi, The Midnight Library

INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial component of social existence since people employ it as a means of communication to transmit thoughts, emotions, ideas, and intentions from the speaker to the listener. The act of communicating involves sharing information between individuals, either directly or indirectly, and the information shared must be clear to the recipient. As a result, effective communication depends on how effectively the speaker communicates the message and how well the audience understands it.

The meaning of communication is derived from the words, the speaker's purpose, and the listener's reaction. The message delivered by the speaker is sometimes misinterpreted by the interlocutor in everyday conversation, though. A reciprocal connection between the speaker and the listener is essential for effective communication. This connection aids in comprehending each other's goals and actions throughout the course of the engagement. As a result, learning about speech acts is essential to comprehending the role of language in social interaction. J. L. Austin developed speech act theory, which John Searle later refined. Austin claims that there are three types of speech acts: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The literal meaning of a statement is known as the locutionary act, the intent behind the statement is known as the illocutionary act, and the impact of the statement on the listener is known as the perlocutionary act.

The speech acts in Matt Haig's book *The Midnight Library* are the subject of this investigation. The novel is full of insightful exchanges that capture the characters' psychological challenges, hopes, remorse, and emotions. Due to the abundance of these conversations, the book is a good candidate for speech act analysis.

This subject is selected by the researcher because speech acts assist readers in comprehending the underlying message of literary dialogues. By examining speech acts, readers may learn how individuals use language to express their motives and persuade others. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to examine the kinds of speech acts employed in the novel *The Midnight Library*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semantics

The discipline of linguistics that investigates meaning in language is semantics. It explores the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, as well as how people comprehend messages in conversation. John I. Saeed (2003) defines semantics as the study of the connection between linguistic forms and the concepts or thoughts they express. Semantics, for instance, clarifies how speakers of a language identify and comprehend that meaning, while the term tree describes a big plant with a trunk and branches. Furthermore, semantics investigates sentence meaning, ambiguity, synonyms, antonyms, and how context can affect how one perceives things.

In a similar vein, John Lyons (1977) argues that semantics is the methodical investigation of meaning. People can comprehend implied meanings in communication, in addition to literal meanings, through semantics. Because communication cannot be effective without shared understanding between speakers and listeners, meaning is seen as a crucial component of language.

Semantics is crucial since language serves not just to convey knowledge but also to communicate emotions, thoughts, intents, and social connections. The significance of any statement might vary depending on the context and circumstances in which it is made. In literary works like novels, where meaning is paramount, comprehending meaning is essential to analyzing communication.

Semantic analysis aids readers in literary studies in comprehending the underlying meaning of a character's speech. Language is frequently employed by the characters in an indirect, symbolic, or emotional way. Semantic analysis enables readers to understand how meanings are created via language and discourse. In addition to this, the study sheds light on the characters' mental and emotional states. Semantics is an essential method for analyzing the meanings conveyed in literary conversations since novels include a wide range of interactions and exchanges between characters.

Pragmatic

The study of meaning in connection to context is called pragmatics. Pragmatics, according to George Yule (1996), explores how speakers transmit meanings that are understood by listeners. In other words, pragmatics considers not just the literal meaning of words, but also the speaker's intent and the listener's understanding.

Since individuals frequently mean more than what they say, pragmatics is strongly tied to everyday communication. Sometimes, speakers communicate their message indirectly, and viewers have to infer the meaning from the context. As an illustration, the phrase "It's cold in here" could refer to the temperature at which it is, but in reality, it may be an invitation to shut the window.

Pragmatic analysis aids readers in comprehending the underlying motives, feelings, and goals behind the characters' speech in fiction. In literary works, dialogues typically mirror real-world interactions. As a result, pragmatics helps us understand how people use language to influence one another and how meanings are understood in particular contexts.

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory was first introduced by *J.L. Austin (1962)* in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin argued that language is not only used to convey information, but also to perform actions. When people produce utterances, they are simultaneously carrying out actions such as informing, apologizing, warning, requesting, promising, criticizing, thanking, or expressing emotions. In other words, speaking is considered a form of action within social interaction.

According to Austin (1962), communication involves more than the literal meanings of words because every utterance contains intentions and produces effects on listeners. Speech act theory explains that language functions as a tool for interaction between speakers and hearers. Therefore, understanding an utterance requires attention not only to grammar and vocabulary, but also to context, intention, and response.

This theory is closely related to pragmatics because the meaning of an utterance is influenced by the situation in which it is spoken. *George Yule (1996)* states that speech acts are actions performed through utterances. Yule explains that when speakers communicate, they usually intend listeners to recognize the function of their speech. For example, an utterance may function as a request, command, warning, or apology depending on the context.

In addition, *John R. Searle (1969)*, who further developed Austin's theory, explains that speech acts are fundamental units of communication. Searle emphasizes that language use cannot be separated from intention because every utterance is produced with a communicative purpose. His theory supports Austin's idea that speaking is not merely saying words, but also performing actions through language.

Speech act theory is important in literary analysis because dialogues in novels often contain emotional, psychological, and social meanings beyond literal expressions. Characters in novels use language to express feelings, influence others, build relationships, and reveal their thoughts. Through speech act analysis, readers can better understand character motivations and interpersonal communication within the story.

Austin divided speech acts into three main categories: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.

Locutionary Act

A locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of an utterance. It is the actual sentence spoken by the speaker and focuses on the direct meaning of words. According to Austin (1962), the locutionary act involves the production of sounds, words, and grammatical structures that form meaningful expressions.

Example:

“I’m tired.”

The locutionary meaning of the sentence is that the speaker feels tired.

Locutionary acts are important because they provide the basic meaning of communication before further interpretation is made. Without understanding literal meaning, listeners cannot fully interpret the speaker’s intention. In novels, locutionary acts help readers understand what characters directly say during conversations and how dialogues contribute to the development of the story.

Illocutionary Act

An illocutionary act refers to the speaker’s intention behind the utterance. It explains the communicative function or purpose of saying something. According to Austin (1962), illocutionary acts represent the force of an utterance, such as requesting, warning, promising, advising, or apologizing.

Example:

“Can you open the door?”

Although the sentence appears to ask about ability, the speaker’s intention is actually to request someone to open the door.

Illocutionary acts are considered the central aspect of speech act theory because they show what speakers intend to accomplish through language. John R. Searle (1969) explains that illocutionary acts reflect communicative intentions between speakers and listeners. In literary

works, illocutionary acts reveal emotions, desires, advice, criticism, warnings, and other communicative purposes expressed by characters.

Through illocutionary analysis, readers can understand hidden meanings and emotional intentions behind dialogues. This helps explain why certain utterances create tension, conflict, comfort, or emotional closeness between characters.

Perlocutionary Act

A perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance on the listener. It shows how the listener reacts emotionally, psychologically, or behaviourally after hearing the statement. Austin (1962) explains that perlocutionary acts concern the consequences or impacts produced by speech.

Example:

“Be careful!”

The effect may cause the listener to become more alert or stop doing something dangerous.

Perlocutionary acts focus on the impact of communication. The listener may feel happy, sad, angry, motivated, offended, frightened, or persuaded after hearing an utterance. In novels, perlocutionary acts are important because they help readers understand emotional reactions and relationships between characters.

Perlocutionary effects also contribute to character development and plot progression. A single utterance may influence another character’s decisions, emotions, or behaviour. Therefore, analysing perlocutionary acts helps reveal how communication affects interpersonal relationships in literary works.

Austin’s theory is important in analysing literary works because dialogues in novels often contain intentions and emotional effects beyond literal meanings. Through speech act analysis, readers can understand how characters communicate emotions, influence others, and create interpersonal relationships in the story. In *The Midnight Library*, the dialogues between Nora Seed and other characters contain various speech acts that reflect regret, hope, sadness, motivation, and self-discovery. Therefore, Austin’s speech act theory is highly relevant for analysing meanings, intentions, and effects found in the novel.

Novel

A novel is a lengthy fictional prose narrative that organizes characters, events, conflicts, and settings into a cohesive tale. Through imaginative writing, novels represent human experiences and social realities, according to M. H. Abrams (1999).

Emotions, conflicts, and social interactions are frequently depicted in novels in a way that resembles real life. Writers can convey the thoughts, values, and psychological states of their characters via discourse and narrative. As a result, novels are not only literary amusement but also representations of how people interact and behave.

The way people communicate in real life is reflected in novel dialogues. For this reason, novels are excellent subjects for speech act analysis since they involve characters communicating via statements that convey meaning, purpose, and emotional impact.

In *The Midnight Library*, Matt Haig depicts a number of discussions between the characters that are both philosophical and emotional. The novel is about Nora Seed, a lady who feels regret, despondency, and uncertainty over her life decisions. Nora examines various life alternatives that she might have led via dialogues in the *Midnight Library*. These conversations include a variety of speech acts that express remorse, optimism, sorrow, drive, and introspection.

Previous Studies

Numerous earlier studies have examined speech acts in literary works, particularly novels, by concentrating on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

To begin, I. Fathurohman, A. Afyani, and M. N. Ahsin (2023) published a study titled *Analysis of the Function of Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Speech Acts in the Novel Ingkar by Boy Candra*. The functions of speech acts in the novel *Ingkar* were examined by the study. Researchers discovered that speech acts were used to communicate emotions, intentions, and interpersonal ties between individuals. The study highlighted how speech acts aid readers in comprehending the implied meanings and communicative patterns of literary interactions.

Second, Yuwartatik and D. A. W. Nurhayati published a study in 2016 titled *Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts on Main Characters Dialogues in John Milne's Novel The Black Cat*. The study examined the main characters' use of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the book. According to the results, characters often employed speech acts to convey feelings, issue warnings, and psychologically manipulate other characters.

Third, F. Setiawan and S. Djajanegara (2020) looked at the speech acts in John Connolly's novel *The Book of Lost Things*. Their investigation centered on illocutionary and perlocutionary actions in the discourse of fantasy novels. According to the researchers, speech

acts were essential in creating emotional tension, establishing character interactions, and conveying the tale's message.

Fourth, in their study titled *Analyzing the Use of Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts of Dilan in an Indonesian Teen Novel*, I. A. Fata et al. (2022) analyzed the usage of these acts. The study looked at the speech actions employed by the protagonist in the novel *Dilan*. According to the data, illocutionary acts were more common because the protagonist conveyed love, humor, persuasion, and emotional intent via conversations.

Fifth, E. Edel (2017) published a book titled *Khaled Hosseini's The Mountains Echoed and the Illocutionary Acts in the Novel*. The novel included a variety of illocutionary acts, which the research discussed in terms of how the characters utilized language to communicate their feelings, desires, and interpersonal connections.

In conclusion, K. Widiani and I. K. Sutrisna (2024) published a study with the title *Analysis of Locutionary Speech Acts in the Novel 5 CM by Donny Dhiringantoro*. The study examined locutionary acts in particular, as well as how the novel's character conversations built up literal meanings.

Seventh, in 2025, C. Azhar and M. Ridho published a study titled *Analysis of Locutionary Speech Acts of the Main Character in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's Novel Bumi Cinta*. The study examined how the novel's communication style and characterization were represented by locutionary acts.

In the novel *Home Fire*, A. Ahmad et al. analyzed the characters of Aneeka Pasha and Isma Pasha using illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. According to the research, speech acts in contemporary literary pieces are closely related to emotional expression, social conflict, and character development.

Speech act analysis has been extensively utilized in literary works, notably novels, according to earlier research. Only a few prior studies examined all three elements of Austin's speech act theory in detail, with the majority concentrating on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Furthermore, the majority of earlier research focused on Indonesian novels set in Indonesia or fantasy novels with varied themes and character backgrounds.

As a result, this study deviates from others by applying J. L. Austin's speech act theory to Matt Haig's novel *The Midnight Library*, concentrating on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary actions. This research not only investigates literal meanings, but also considers the intended meanings and emotional impacts of the characters' speech. Additionally, the study

highlights the role of semantic interpretation in comprehending the psychological experiences, emotional challenges, remorse, hope, and interpersonal interactions depicted in the book.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Type

This study employed descriptive qualitative research methodology in light of the research questions. Earlier studies on speech acts in literature, particularly novels, have concentrated on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

Firstly, I. Fathurohman, A. Afyani, and M. N. Ahsin (2023) released a work titled *Analysis of the Function of Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Speech Acts in the Novel Ingkar by Boy Candra*. The study looked at the roles that speech acts play in the novel *Ingkar*. According to researchers, speech acts are used to express feelings, goals, and interpersonal relationships between people. The research emphasized how speech acts help readers grasp the underlying meanings and communication patterns of literary interactions.

Second, in 2016, Yuwartatik and D. A. W. Nurhayati released a book titled *Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts on Main Characters Dialogues in John Milne's Novel The Black Cat*. The study analyzed how the protagonists in the novel employed illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The findings revealed that characters frequently used speech acts to express emotions, deliver warnings, and psychologically control other characters.

Third, F. Setiawan and S. Djajanegara (2020) analyzed the speech acts in John Connolly's book *The Book of Lost Things*. They concentrated on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in fantasy literature discourse. Speech acts, according to the researchers, were crucial to establishing emotional conflict, building character relationships, and communicating the message of the narrative.

I. A. Fata et al. (2022) examined the usage of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of Dilan in an Indonesian adolescent novel in their study, *Analyzing the Use of Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts of Dilan in an Indonesian Teen Novel*. The protagonist's speech behaviors in the book *Dilan* were examined in the research. The data indicates that illocutionary acts were more prevalent because the protagonist communicated love, humor, persuasion, and emotional intent through conversation.

Fifth, E. Edel released a book in 2017 with the title *Khaled Hosseini's The Mountains Echoed and the Illocutionary Acts in the Novel*. The novel featured a number of illocutionary

acts, which the study examined in light of how the characters employed language to express their emotions, wants, and relationships with others.

In conclusion, K. Widiani and I. K. Sutrisna (2024) released an article titled *Analysis of Locutionary Speech Acts in the Novel 5 CM by Donny Dhirgantoro*. Specifically, the research looked at locutionary acts and how the literal meanings of the novel's dialogues were developed.

Seventh, in 2025, C. Azhar and M. Ridho released a study titled *Analysis of Locutionary Speech Acts of the Main Character in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's Novel Bumi Cinta*. The study looked at how locutionary acts depicted the novel's language and characterization.

A. Ahmad et al. employed illocutionary and perlocutionary speech actions in the novel *Home Fire* to examine the personalities of Aneeka Pasha and Isma Pasha. The study revealed a strong link between speech acts in modern literature and emotional expression, interpersonal conflict, and character development.

Prior studies have made extensive use of speech act analysis in literary works, particularly novels. The majority of earlier research focused on illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, while only a few examined all three components of Austin's speech act theory in depth. Moreover, the majority of past studies have concentrated on Indonesian novels that take place in Indonesia or fantasy novels with a wide range of plots and characters.

Consequently, in contrast to other studies, this one uses J. L. Austin's speech act theory to Matt Haig's book *The Midnight Library*, with an emphasis on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In addition to examining the literal meanings of the characters' words, this study also takes into account their intended meanings and emotional effects. Furthermore, the research emphasizes how important semantic interpretation is for understanding the psychological experiences, emotional difficulties, remorse, hope, and interpersonal relationships portrayed in the book.

Data and Data Sources

According to Sidiq and Choiri (2019), data are collections of important information used to solve research problems, while data sources are the origins from which the data are obtained. In qualitative research, data can be obtained from literary works, conversations, documents, or social interactions.

The data in this research were in the form of utterances, dialogues, words, and sentences containing locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts in the novel *The*

Midnight Library. The researcher focused on dialogues that reflected meanings, intentions, emotional expressions, warnings, advice, criticism, requests, and psychological responses between characters.

The data source of this research was the novel *The Midnight Library* written by Matt Haig and published in 2020. The novel was chosen because it contains many emotional and philosophical dialogues that are relevant to speech act analysis.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are important steps in research because the main purpose of research is to obtain valid and relevant data. According to qualitative research principles, researchers must use appropriate techniques to collect data systematically and accurately.

In this research, the researcher used reading and note-taking techniques to collect the data. These techniques were considered suitable because the object of the study was a literary work in the form of a novel. Through reading activities, the researcher was able to identify dialogues and utterances containing speech acts.

The researcher collected the data through several steps:

1. Reading the novel carefully and repeatedly to understand the storyline and context of conversations.
2. Identifying dialogues containing locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.
3. Underlining important utterances related to speech act theory.
4. Taking notes and classifying the selected data into categories based on Austin's theory.
5. Organizing the data into tables for easier analysis and interpretation.

The reading and note-taking techniques helped the researcher understand the meanings and emotional expressions contained in the characters' dialogues.

Reading and Note-Taking Technique

Data is gathered using the reading and note-taking method, which is often used in literary study. Researchers cannot collect data without going through a meticulous reading process, according to D. Fatimatuzzahro and M. N. Ahsin (2022). Researchers gain a deeper understanding of the research subject through reading tasks.

Furthermore, Murtono, E. Listyaningsih, and M. N. Ahsin (2021) note that readers and note-takers use specific strategies to find and document crucial data about research issues.

In order to comprehend the context of the discussions and the meaning of the statements, the researcher in this work read the entire text of the novel *The Midnight Library*. The researcher also made note of significant talks pertaining to locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

Between characters, the note-taking procedure included recording words with literal meanings, intended meanings, and emotional impact. Based on Austin's speech act theory, these data were subsequently categorized and evaluated.

Data Analysis Techniques

In qualitative research, data analysis is an important process because the data are obtained from various sources and collected through different techniques. According to V. Annisa, N. Fajrie, and M. N. Ahsin (2021), qualitative data analysis is often considered challenging because there are no fixed formulas or absolute guidelines in determining the amount of data and depth of analysis needed to support conclusions. Therefore, researchers must analyze the data carefully, objectively, and systematically in order to ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings.

Similarly, Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2014) explain that qualitative data analysis is an interactive and continuous process involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process is cyclical because researchers often return to the data repeatedly to obtain deeper understanding and interpretation.

Based on those opinions, it can be concluded that data analysis techniques are methods used to classify, interpret, and explain data systematically. In this research, the researcher analyzed the data using J. L. Austin's speech act theory by identifying locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts found in the novel *The Midnight Library*.

The data analysis process in this research was conducted through several steps:

1. Reading and understanding the dialogues in the novel carefully.
2. Identifying utterances containing speech acts.
3. Classifying the data into locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.
4. Analyzing the literal meanings, intended meanings, and emotional effects of the utterances.
5. Interpreting the meanings of the speech acts semantically based on the context of the story.
6. Drawing conclusions based on the analysis findings.

Through these analysis techniques, the researcher was able to understand how speech acts reflected emotions, meanings, intentions, psychological conditions, and interpersonal relationships between characters in the novel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this research, the researcher found 45 utterances containing locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts in the novel *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. The findings show that the characters frequently used speech acts to express emotions, regrets, motivation, psychological struggles, and interpersonal relationships.

The analysis revealed that illocutionary acts appeared most dominantly because the characters often expressed intended meanings such as advising, comforting, criticizing, motivating, and explaining. Meanwhile, locutionary acts reflected the literal meanings of utterances, while perlocutionary acts showed emotional and psychological effects on listeners.

The findings are presented in the following table:

No	Text Excerpt	Approx. Page	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
1	“You could be anything you want to be, Nora.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 3</i>	Mrs Elm says Nora can become anything.	Encouraging and motivating Nora.	Nora feels hopeful about her future.
2	“Dad thinks I’ve thrown everything away.” — Nora	<i>p. 4</i>	Nora says her father thinks she wasted her future.	Expressing disappointment and insecurity.	Mrs Elm comforts Nora.
3	“I’m afraid I think he’s dead.” — Ash	<i>p. 14</i>	Ash informs Nora that her cat is dead.	Delivering bad news sympathetically.	Nora becomes shocked and sad.
4	“My cat died.” — Nora	<i>p. 18</i>	Nora says her cat died.	Explaining why she came late to work.	Neil listens seriously.

5	“Listen, Nora, I like you.” — Neil	<i>p. 18</i>	Neil says he likes Nora.	Softening criticism before firing her.	Nora becomes nervous.
6	“It’s never too late to pursue a dream.” — Neil	<i>p. 20</i>	Neil says dreams can still be pursued.	Advising and motivating Nora.	Nora reflects on her failed dreams.
7	“I’m going to have to let you go.” — Neil	<i>p. 22</i>	Neil tells Nora she is fired.	Dismissing an employee.	Nora feels hopeless and upset.
8	“I think he’s depressed.” — Ravi	<i>p. 26</i>	Ravi says Joe is depressed.	Informing Nora about Joe’s condition.	Nora becomes worried about her brother.
9	“Your problem was life fright.” — Ravi	<i>p. 28</i>	Ravi says Nora is afraid of life.	Criticizing Nora.	Nora feels emotionally hurt.
10	“I just feel complete.” — Kerry-Anne	<i>p. 30</i>	Kerry-Anne says motherhood makes her complete.	Expressing pride and satisfaction.	Nora feels pressured and uncomfortable.
11	“I miss you, friend.” — Nora	<i>p. 32</i>	Nora tells Izzy she misses her.	Trying to reconnect emotionally.	Izzy reads the message but does not reply.
12	“He’s been thinking about giving up altogether.” — Doreen	<i>p. 34</i>	Doreen says Leo wants to quit piano lessons.	Informing Nora.	Nora feels disappointed and sad.
13	“I love you, Joe.” — Nora	<i>p. 39</i>	Nora tells Joe she loves him.	Expressing affection and farewell.	Creates emotional

					impact through voicemail.
14	“Be kind to each other.” — Nora	<i>p. 40</i>	Nora asks people to be kind.	Advising/requesting kindness.	Leaves an emotional impact on readers.
15	“Between life and death there is a library.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 48</i>	Mrs Elm explains the Midnight Library.	Informing and explaining.	Nora becomes curious and confused.
16	“Would you have done anything different?” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 48</i>	Mrs Elm asks Nora about regrets.	Encouraging self-reflection.	Nora thinks deeply about her past.
17	“You have to decide how you want to live.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 54</i>	Mrs Elm tells Nora to choose a life.	Directing and advising Nora.	Nora starts considering alternate lives.
18	“I want to die.” — Nora	<i>p. 52</i>	Nora says she wants to die.	Expressing despair and hopelessness.	Mrs Elm explains why she is still alive.
19	“Death comes to you.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 52</i>	Mrs Elm explains death philosophically.	Correcting Nora’s understanding of death.	Nora becomes reflective and unsettled.
20	“It’s natural to worry about your future.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 2</i>	Mrs Elm says worrying is normal.	Comforting Nora.	Nora feels understood.

21	“Maybe you should be an astronaut.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 4</i>	Mrs Elm suggests Nora become an astronaut.	Giving a suggestion playfully.	Nora smiles and continues talking.
22	“The rain is even worse on other planets.” — Nora	<i>p. 4</i>	Nora comments about rain on planets.	Responding humorously.	Creates a relaxed conversation.
23	“I hate the cold and wet.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 3</i>	Mrs Elm expresses dislike of weather.	Expressing opinion and feeling.	Nora responds scientifically.
24	“What are you doing here?” — Nora	<i>p. 11</i>	Nora asks Ash why he came.	Asking for information.	Ash explains the situation.
25	“It’s good to see you.” — Nora	<i>p. 11</i>	Nora says she is happy to see Ash.	Expressing friendliness.	Creates warmth in the conversation.
26	“Pressure makes us.” — Neil	<i>p. 20</i>	Neil says pressure builds character.	Advising and motivating Nora.	Nora silently disagrees.
27	“I need this job.” — Nora	<i>p. 21</i>	Nora says she needs her work.	Indirectly pleading to keep her job.	Neil continues the dismissal seriously.
28	“You need freedom.” — Neil	<i>p. 21</i>	Neil says Nora needs freedom.	Advising Nora to change her life direction.	Nora becomes defensive.
29	“Bands don’t last.” — Nora	<i>p. 28</i>	Nora says bands are temporary.	Justifying her past decision.	Ravi becomes frustrated.

30	“Meteor showers are fucking beautiful.” — Ravi	<i>p. 28</i>	Ravi praises meteor showers.	Defending dreams and passion.	Nora becomes emotionally affected.
31	“I’m having a pretty shit time too.” — Nora	<i>p. 27</i>	Nora says she also suffers.	Seeking understanding and sympathy.	Ravi dismisses her feelings.
32	“The world’s smallest violin is playing.” — Ravi	<i>p. 27</i>	Ravi mocks Nora sarcastically.	Criticizing and belittling Nora.	Nora becomes irritated.
33	“Cheer up, love, it might never happen.” — Stranger	<i>p. 33</i>	A stranger tells Nora to cheer up.	Attempting humor and comfort.	Nora internally feels worse.
34	“I have nothing to give.” — Nora	<i>p. 40</i>	Nora says she has nothing to offer.	Expressing hopelessness and self-hatred.	Strengthens the tragic tone of the note.
35	“This is abnormal.” — Nora	<i>p. 43</i>	Nora says the situation is strange.	Expressing confusion.	Shows her fear and uncertainty.
36	“Be careful.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 45</i>	Mrs Elm warns Nora.	Warning and instructing Nora.	Nora stops pulling the book.
37	“Am I dead?” — Nora	<i>p. 46</i>	Nora asks whether she is dead.	Asking for clarification.	Mrs Elm explains the Midnight Library.

38	“This is your opportunity, Nora.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 56</i>	Mrs Elm says Nora has a chance to change her life.	Encouraging Nora to explore possibilities.	Nora begins reconsidering her choices.
39	“We did it.” — Nora	<i>p. 70</i>	Nora says they achieved the dream.	Expressing amazement and happiness.	Nora becomes hopeful in the new life.
40	“Things will get better, Nora.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 46</i>	Mrs Elm says Nora’s situation will improve.	Comforting and reassuring Nora.	Nora feels emotionally supported.
41	“Did you do anything wrong?” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 55</i>	Mrs Elm asks Nora about mistakes.	Encouraging self-evaluation.	Nora reflects on her regrets.
42	“Yes. Absolutely everything.” — Nora	<i>p. 55</i>	Nora says she did everything wrong.	Expressing guilt and self-blame.	Mrs Elm introduces the regret system.
43	“Tissues are like lives. There are always more.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 56</i>	Mrs Elm compares tissues to lives.	Philosophically explaining possibilities.	Nora becomes curious about alternate lives.
44	“Every life contains many millions of decisions.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 55</i>	Mrs Elm explains life choices.	Informing and philosophizing.	Nora understands the library system more deeply.

45	“You have as many lives as you have possibilities.” — Mrs Elm	<i>p. 55</i>	Mrs Elm explains alternate lives.	Informing and inspiring Nora.	Nora becomes interested in exploring other lives.
----	--	--------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------	---

Discussion

Locutionary Acts

Locutionary acts refer to the literal meanings of utterances spoken by the characters. In the novel, locutionary acts are used to convey information, feelings, and explanations directly. One example can be seen in the utterance:

“My cat died.” — Nora

The locutionary meaning of this utterance is that Nora informs Neil that her cat has died. Semantically, the sentence directly expresses factual information about her situation. The utterance reflects sadness and emotional loss experienced by Nora after losing her pet.

Another example is:

“Am I dead?” — Nora

The literal meaning of this utterance is Nora asking whether she is dead or not. This utterance reflects confusion and fear after Nora arrives in the Midnight Library. The sentence also emphasizes Nora’s psychological uncertainty and emotional instability.

From the findings, many locutionary acts in the novel contain literal meanings related to sadness, regret, confusion, and life struggles. These utterances help readers understand the emotional condition of the main character throughout the story.

Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary acts refer to the intended meanings behind the utterances. In the novel, the characters use illocutionary acts to advise, comfort, criticize, motivate, warn, and express emotions.

One example is:

“You could be anything you want to be, Nora.” — Mrs Elm

The illocutionary meaning of this utterance is encouragement and motivation. Mrs Elm intends to inspire Nora to believe in her potential and future possibilities. Although the sentence appears simple, it carries emotional meaning related to hope and self-confidence.

Another example is:

“Your problem was life fright.” — Ravi

The intended meaning of this utterance is criticism. Ravi criticizes Nora’s fear of taking risks and facing life decisions. This utterance reflects emotional tension between the characters and reveals Nora’s psychological struggles.

The findings indicate that illocutionary acts are the most dominant because the novel focuses heavily on emotional communication and philosophical reflection. Many utterances contain implied meanings connected to regret, hope, depression, and self-discovery.

Perlocutionary Acts

Perlocutionary acts refer to the emotional and psychological effects of utterances on listeners. In the novel, many utterances create emotional reactions such as sadness, hope, fear, confusion, and motivation.

One example is:

“I’m afraid I think he’s dead.”- Ash

This utterance causes Nora to become shocked and emotionally devastated after hearing about her cat’s death. The perlocutionary effect reflects grief and emotional pain experienced by the main character.

Another example is:

“This is your opportunity, Nora.”- Mrs Elm

The utterance motivates Nora to reconsider her choices and explore different possibilities in life. The perlocutionary effect is emotional encouragement and renewed hope.

The findings show that perlocutionary acts in the novel strongly influence the emotional atmosphere of the story. Many utterances affect Nora psychologically and contribute to her personal transformation throughout the novel.

Based on the findings, speech acts in the novel are closely related to emotional meaning and psychological experiences. The characters use language not only to communicate information, but also to express regret, hope, sadness, motivation, and self-reflection.

The dominance of illocutionary acts indicates that the novel emphasizes implied meanings and emotional intentions in communication. Meanwhile, perlocutionary acts reveal how utterances influence characters emotionally and psychologically. Therefore, speech act analysis helps readers understand deeper meanings and interpersonal relationships in the novel.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of speech acts in *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, the researcher concludes that the novel contains various locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts based on J. L. Austin's speech act theory. The study found 45 utterances that reflected literal meanings, intended meanings, and emotional effects in the conversations between characters.

The findings show that locutionary acts were used to express direct information, feelings, explanations, and factual statements. These utterances helped readers understand the literal meanings of the characters' dialogues and the situations experienced in the story.

Meanwhile, illocutionary acts appeared most dominantly in the novel because many utterances contained intended meanings such as advising, motivating, criticizing, comforting, warning, questioning, and expressing emotions. The dominance of illocutionary acts indicates that the novel emphasizes emotional communication, psychological struggles, and interpersonal relationships between characters.

In addition, perlocutionary acts reflected the emotional and psychological effects of utterances on listeners. Many utterances caused reactions such as sadness, confusion, fear, hope, motivation, and self-reflection. These effects contributed significantly to the emotional atmosphere and character development throughout the story.

From a semantic perspective, the analysis shows that meanings in the novel are not limited to literal expressions, but also include implied meanings and emotional interpretations. Through speech act analysis, readers can better understand how language is used to represent regret, hope, depression, self-discovery, and life choices experienced by the main character, Nora Seed.

Therefore, this study concludes that speech act theory is useful in semantic analysis because it helps reveal deeper meanings behind dialogues in literary works. The use of locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts in the novel demonstrates how language functions not only as communication, but also as a reflection of emotions, intentions, and human experiences.

REFERENCES

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

- Azhar, C., & Ridho, M. (2025). *Analysis of locutionary speech acts of the main character in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's novel Bumi Cinta*. Jurnal Multidisiplin. <https://ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/JMS/article/view/7766>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fata, I. A., et al. (2022). *Analysing the use of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of "Dilan" in an Indonesian teen novel*. English Education Journal. https://www.academia.edu/download/97399989/28423_98734_2_PB.pdf
- Fathurohman, I., Afyani, A., & Ahsin, M. N. (2023). *Analysis of the function of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts in the novel Ingkar by Boy Candra*. ICCCM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. <https://www.ejicccm.com/index.php/icccmjssh/article/view/158>
- Fatimatuzzahro, D., & Ahsin, M. N. (2022). Reading techniques in literary research.
- Haig, M. (2020). *The Midnight Library*. Canongate Books.
- Listyaningsih, E., Murtono, M., & Ahsin, M. N. (2021). Reading and note-taking techniques in qualitative research.
- Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Nurhayati, D. A. W., & Yuwartatik. (2016). *Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts on main characters dialogues in John Milne's novel The Black Cat*. Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics, 1(1). <https://ijotl-tl.solocls.org/index.php/ijotl/article/view/7>
- Rahardi, K. (2020). *Pragmatik: Kesantunan imperatif bahasa Indonesia*. Erlangga.
- Saeed, J. I. (2003). *Semantics* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Setiawan, F., & Djajanegara, S. (2020). *Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the novel The Book of Lost Things by John Connolly*. Inference: Journal of English Language Teaching. <http://www.journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/index.php/inference/article/view/5776>
- Sidiq, U., & Choiri, M. (2019). *Metode penelitian kualitatif di bidang pendidikan*. CV. Nata Karya.
- Sudaryanto. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Sanata Dharma University Press.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Widiani, K., & Sutrisna, I. K. (2024). *Analysis of locutionary speech acts in the novel 5 CM by Donny Dhargantoro*. International Journal of Language and Literature. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/IJLL/article/view/93046>
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.