

## EXPLORING ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS OF ELPHABA AND GLINDA INTERACTION IN *WICKED* FILM

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts in the interaction between Elphaba and Glinda in the musical film *Wicked*, and to explain their functions in shaping character relationships, development, and narrative progression. The research applies a qualitative descriptive method with Austin's Speech Act Theory, using selected utterances of the two characters as the data source. The analysis reveals a total of 84 illocutionary acts, consisting of 24 expositive, 17 exercitive, 17 verdictive, 15 commissive, and 11 behabitive acts. Among these, expositive acts appear as the most dominant because they are frequently used to clarify, elaborate, and construct reasoning, while behabitive acts are found to be the least. The illocutionary acts identified not only convey communicative intentions but also reveal emotional dynamics, psychological development, and their crucial role in advancing the plot. These findings affirm that Austin's theory can be effectively applied to fictional works to uncover the pragmatic dimensions of character interaction. The study carries implications for teaching pragmatics, discourse analysis, and literary studies, and it may also serve as a reference for material development, translation practice, and further research in broader contexts.

**Keywords:** Speech Act; Illocutionary Acts; *Wicked* Film

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi jenis tindak ilokusi dalam interaksi antara tokoh Elphaba dan Glinda pada film musikal *Wicked*, serta menjelaskan fungsinya dalam membentuk hubungan antartokoh, perkembangan karakter, dan jalannya cerita. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teori tindak tutur Austin. Sumber data berupa tuturan terpilih dari kedua tokoh sepanjang film. Hasil analisis menunjukkan terdapat 84 tindak ilokusi, terdiri atas 24 ekspositif, 17 ekseritif, 17 verdiktif, 15 komisif, dan 11 behabitive. Dari keseluruhan data, ekspositif menjadi jenis yang paling dominan karena banyak dipakai untuk menjelaskan, mempertegas, dan membangun penalaran, sedangkan behabitive merupakan yang paling sedikit ditemukan. Tindak ilokusi yang teridentifikasi tidak hanya berfungsi menyampaikan maksud komunikatif, tetapi juga memperlihatkan dinamika emosional, proses perkembangan psikologis tokoh, serta kontribusi penting dalam menggerakkan alur cerita. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa teori Austin dapat diterapkan secara efektif pada karya fiksi untuk mengungkap dimensi pragmatik interaksi tokoh. Implikasi penelitian ini dapat digunakan dalam pengajaran pragmatik, analisis wacana, maupun kajian sastra, serta menjadi rujukan dalam pengembangan bahan ajar, praktik penerjemahan, dan penelitian lanjutan dengan perspektif yang lebih luas.

**Kata kunci:** Tindak Tutur; Ilokusi; Film *Wicked*

## INTRODUCTION

The musical film *Wicked*, adapted from Gregory Maguire's novel and released in 2007, presents a retelling of *The Wizard of Oz* by portraying the complexity of its two central characters, Elphaba and Glinda (Fox, 2021). Instead of portraying them simply as good and evil, the film emphasizes their moral struggles, their search for identity, and the life choices that define who they become. Elphaba, long known as the antagonist, is given a tragic yet dignified background that shows her as a determined fighter for justice even though she is marginalized because of her physical difference. Glinda, who is often regarded as the embodiment of goodness, experiences her own moral growth as she moves from naivety toward an awareness of the injustice around her (Peabody, 2024). This duality shows that the ideas of good and evil are not fixed but can shift according to experience and perspective.

The dialogues between Elphaba and Glinda are at the center of this transformation. Their conversations do more than move the storyline forward; they show processes of identity formation, conflict, and acceptance. Each exchange demonstrates how both characters influence one another, shaping their moral awareness and contributing to their psychological development (Febiola et al., 2022). In this way, dialogue functions not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of growth and change.

The above example shows that language has an essential role in shaping relationships and character development in *Wicked*. Each utterance spoken by Elphaba and Glinda is not only a transmission of information but also carries an illocutionary force that can explain, persuade, or confront. These utterances also reveal the characters' inner conflicts and serve as important elements of transformation

within their relationship (see Ifantidou, 2022; Harida et al., 2023; Erdianto & Arifin, 2024; Ningtyas & Arifin, 2025). Therefore, language in *Wicked* should be understood not only as a communicative medium but as a means of forming psychological dynamics, constructing meaning, and representing the complexity of human interaction.

Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962) provides a useful framework for analyzing this dimension (see Paundrianagari & Arifin, 2025; Milantina et al., 2025; Lailiaturohmah et al., 2023). Austin distinguishes between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, with illocutionary acts being central because they emphasize the action performed through an utterance. In *Wicked*, illocutionary acts are particularly significant since the characters' utterances consistently express intentions that influence their interactions and the progression of the narrative. This explanation corresponds with Cahyani's findings that media, especially film, can create a communicative setting that helps learners or audiences understand the meaning behind utterances (2024). Therefore, films such as *Wicked* function not only as a form of entertainment but also as a linguistic medium that shows how utterances produce specific meanings and effects.

Previous studies on *Wicked* have mainly examined emotional and feminist perspectives. Foreman (2013) investigated Elphaba's emotional journey using Kenneth Burke's cycle of guilt, purification, and redemption, offering insight into the rhetorical aspects of her character. Fox (2021) analyzed how *Wicked* reinterprets the traditional fairy tale by restoring female agency, especially in its representation of Elphaba. Although these studies provide valuable contributions, they do not address the pragmatic aspect of how dialogue acts as speech acts that shape

relationships and character development (Budiasih, 2020). This limitation leaves room for the present research.

The purpose of this study is to fill that gap by examining the illocutionary acts found in the dialogues between Elphaba and Glinda. By applying Austin's Speech Act Theory, this research identifies the types of illocutionary acts that appear in their conversations and explores how these acts function in building their relationship, contributing to character development, and moving the story forward. Through this focus, the study emphasizes language not only as a medium of communication but also as an action that conveys meaning, decisions, and transformation in the characters' lives.

Beyond the film itself, this study has broader implications. The analysis of illocutionary acts in fictional dialogue offers an understanding of the important role of language in real communication. In everyday interactions, whether social, political, or professional, utterances shape relationships, influence decisions, and affect how people respond to one another. For this reason, the study is relevant not only to film and literary analysis but also to communication studies, as it demonstrates how language serves as both a tool of meaning and a form of action.

## **METHOD**

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach because it aimed to describe how language performs actions in real communication rather than to measure or calculate patterns statistically. The qualitative design made it possible to observe how meaning is produced through interaction and how speech functions within the dialogue of the film *Wicked*.

The data consisted of utterances spoken by the two main characters, Elphaba and Glinda. Their conversations were chosen since they display a wide range of social functions such as arguing, persuading, expressing emotions, and showing solidarity. To collect the data, the researcher watched the film several times and transcribed the dialogue carefully. During this process, attention was also paid to tone, pauses, and emphasis so that the transcript could represent the communicative situation as naturally as possible. Observation and note-taking techniques were used to record every line that potentially carried illocutionary force (Safarudin et al., 2023).

Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962) provided the main analytical framework. The study focused on his classification of five types of illocutionary acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. Each utterance in the transcript was identified and categorized according to these types. After that, the function of each utterance was examined to see how it contributed to the interaction—whether it served to command, promise, explain, or express feelings.

The analysis followed the pragmatic identity method, which emphasizes the role of utterances as communicative actions. By using this method, the researcher was able to describe how the types of illocutionary acts appear in the film and how they help shape the development of the characters and the progress of the story.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the analysis of *Wicked* (2024), a total of 84 utterances were found to contain illocutionary force in the exchanges between Elphaba and Glinda. These utterances were then grouped according to Austin's classification, which includes five categories:

expositive, exercitive, verdictive, commissive, and behabitive acts. Each type represents a different way in which language performs an action within their interactions. The distribution of these categories and their frequencies is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of illocutionary acts

Types of Illocutionary	Freq.
Expositive	24
Exercitive	17
Verdictiveo	17
Commissives	15
Behabitive	11
Total	84

Part of the distribution of illocutionary acts in the interaction between Elphaba and Glinda in *Wicked* (2024), as presented in Table 1, shows that the use of behabitive and commissive acts plays an important role in building and maintaining their interpersonal relationship. Artati (2020) explains that behabitives are speech acts expressing the speaker's social attitude, such as sympathy, appreciation, or recognition. This is evident when Glinda says, "Can I call you Elphie?" (*Wicked*, 2024, 1:19:56). The request to use a nickname reflects Glinda's attempt to reduce social distance and shift their interaction from a formal level to a more personal one. According to Mudjiono (2020), linguistic expressions of this kind often signal the beginning of emotional involvement within a social relationship. Therefore, this moment can be considered a significant point in the development of their interaction.

Commissive acts, in contrast, illustrate the transition from personal concern toward active participation in each other's experiences. Puspakartika (2024) defines commissives as speech acts that bind the speaker to a

future action, often in the form of promises or offers. This can be observed when Glinda says, "Perhaps I could help" (*Wicked*, 2024, 0:16:39). The statement indicates Glinda's readiness to engage in matters that had previously been Elphaba's burden alone. Supri (2021) states that commissive acts establish a relationship of responsibility between the speaker and the hearer. By offering her help, Glinda implicitly expresses her willingness to become involved in Elphaba's life. This change shows that their closeness is not based on a shared background but develops through commitments that gradually evolve into mutual trust.

The transformation of their relationship becomes clearer when Elphaba explicitly acknowledges the emotional bond that has formed between them by saying, "You are the only friend I have ever had" (*Wicked*, 2024, 2:07:13). This utterance can be categorized as a behabitive because it communicates social recognition and acceptance. Interestingly, this line occurs after several expositive and verdictive acts, for example when Elphaba responds to Glinda's behavior by saying, "Offering to help someone that you do not know with skills that you do not have" (*Wicked*, 2024, 0:16:54). Although the statement sounds critical, it is through this process of evaluation and response that emotional openness begins to appear. Sihombing et al. (2021) emphasize that interpersonal closeness often develops through the negotiation of meaning and reciprocal evaluation before it grows into emotional attachment. In this sense, the relationship between Elphaba and Glinda progresses from cognitive interaction to emotional connection expressed through their speech acts.

Elphaba's character development throughout *Wicked* (2024) is reflected in the speech act patterns she uses, particularly

expositive, verdictive, and commissive acts. At the beginning of the film, Elphaba frequently employs expositive acts to express her reflective and visionary thinking. Hermawan & Saksono (2021) explain that expositives are used to present reasons, arguments, or intellectual perspectives. One example appears when she says, "Think of what we could do together" (*Wicked*, 2024, 2:23:12). The utterance does not directly demand action but rather presents an idea based on her values and aspirations. Hajar et al. (2022) argue that such expositive utterances indicate a cognitive process in which the speaker is constructing a new framework for understanding herself and her environment. At this stage, Elphaba begins to move from a reactive position to a more self-aware and purposeful one.

This transformation is followed by the use of verdictive acts that reveal the growth of Elphaba's self-awareness. Austin (1962) describes verdictives as evaluative judgments through which the speaker establishes a stance toward something. This can be seen in her statement, "I'm not that girl" (*Wicked*, 2024), which expresses a rejection of the identity once imposed upon her. The utterance shows that Elphaba no longer measures herself by external standards but begins to define who she is on her own terms. Holmes (2013) notes that the formation of identity often occurs through evaluative speech acts that distinguish oneself from others, and this shift is evident in Elphaba's changing language. Through verdictives, she distances herself from the dominant narrative that confines her and begins to affirm a more autonomous sense of self.

Elphaba's character reaches its peak when she employs commissive acts that declare personal commitment to the future. Artati (2020) explains that commissives are

utterances in which speakers bind themselves to future actions. This is clearly reflected in the line, "It's time to try defying gravity" (*Wicked*, 2024). The statement conveys not only determination but also liberation from the constraints she once accepted. According to Azimah (2022), commissives signify agency because they position the speaker as an active subject who determines her own path. By choosing to "defy gravity," Elphaba redefines herself as an autonomous individual free from external control. The shift from reflective expositives, to verdictives of rejection, and finally to commissives of commitment illustrates her progression from uncertainty toward independent self-assertion.

Several speech acts in the dialogue between Elphaba and Glinda do more than reveal character or relationship; they also move the story forward. The transition from conflict to resolution is frequently triggered by exercitives, which serve to give directions and sustain the narrative momentum. A clear example appears in Glinda's line, "Let's just say you're sorry" (*Wicked*, 2024), delivered when their disagreement reaches a deadlock. Kartyka (2023) defines exercitives as utterances that establish social decisions or rights, while Larasati (2020) emphasizes their role in repositioning interlocutors during interaction. In this exchange, Glinda's words are not mere advice but an attempt to redirect the interaction toward reconciliation. The directive shifts the dispute from the ideological to the practical level, enabling the story to progress beyond stalemate.

When reconciliation becomes possible, the narrative reaches an emotional climax through the utterance, "I hope you're happy" (*Wicked*, 2024, 2:16:45), spoken simultaneously by both characters. This expression is a behabitive, conveying the speakers' emotional stance toward each

other. Azimah (2022) states that behabitives express social and emotional attitudes, while Holmes (2013) observes that dramatic peaks often involve heightened emotional language to evoke audience empathy. At this point, language serves not to reason or negotiate but to express an unbridgeable emotional divide. The utterance signals a turning point where their conflict transforms into a painful separation, propelling the narrative into its falling action.

The falling action is reinforced through another verdictive, seen when Glinda declares, "No one mourns the *Wicked*" (*Wicked*, 2024, 2:20:13). Saputri et al. (1962) describe verdictives as acts that deliver final judgments, while Searle (1979) underlines their ability to create social reality through symbolic authority. Glinda's line functions not only as her personal statement but also as a collective judgment that erases Elphaba from the social order. It closes off any possibility of reopening the conflict, marking the moral conclusion of the story. The use of Austin's framework allows a reading of language as more than communication; it becomes a means of constructing identity, embodying emotion, and directing narrative movement.

When compared with Kustiyarantini & Putra's (2023) analysis of *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, which employed Searle's taxonomy, a difference in orientation becomes clear. Their study found that representative acts dominated, functioning to state facts, defend oneself, and construct rational strategies. Searle's model focuses on propositional content and psychological intent, presenting language as a pragmatic tool for managing action and maintaining legitimacy. In contrast, the present study using Austin's perspective views language as performative, a medium for building relationships, expressing emotion, and affirming moral stance. This

contrast demonstrates how the chosen theoretical framework shapes interpretation. Searle's classification highlights strategic and argumentative dimensions, while Austin's framework reveals relational and transformative dimensions. In this light, language in fiction appears not only as an instrument for driving action but also as the symbolic force that shapes meaning and determines the moral trajectory of the narrative.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the types of illocutionary acts that appear in the interaction between Elphaba and Glinda in the film *Wicked* and to analyze their functions in shaping relationships, character development, and the storyline. From the analysis of 84 utterances using Austin's classification, five types of illocutionary acts were identified: expositive (24 instances), exercitive (17), verdictive (17), commissive (15), and behabitive (11). The predominance of expositive acts indicates that language is primarily used to express opinions, clarify meanings, and frame perspectives, while verdictive and commissive acts highlight important moments of psychological transformation and moral decision-making. Although behabitive acts appeared the least, they still played a symbolic role in signaling social recognition and interpersonal closeness. Overall, these findings demonstrate that speech acts in the film function not only as a means of communication but also as narrative devices that enrich character dynamics and drive the progression of the story.

The results of this research carry both theoretical and practical implications. Academically, the application of Austin's speech act theory proves effective in uncovering

the pragmatic dimensions of fictional texts and can serve as a valuable reference in the study of pragmatics, discourse analysis, and literature. Pedagogically, film dialogues such as those in *Wicked* can be used by teachers to illustrate how language reflects emotions, social relationships, and moral values, thereby helping students develop pragmatic competence and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, this study offers benefits for material developers and cross-cultural translation practitioners, as understanding the functions of illocutionary acts enables translations to preserve the emotional force and character integrity of the original text. In this way, language in film emerges not only as a tool of communication but also as a medium for constructing symbolic meaning, connecting characters, and deepening the audience's narrative experience.

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