

## COMMISSIVE SPEECH ACTS FOUND IN “ONWARD” MOVIE BY DAN SCANLON

Desica<sup>1,\*</sup>, & Ambalegin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Putera Batam University, Batam  
Pos-el korespondensi: [pb181210001@upbatam.ac.id](mailto:pb181210001@upbatam.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out the types of commissive acts found in the movie entitled Onward as the data source. The utterances uttered by the characters in the movie were taken as the data of the research and classified them by using the theory of commissive acts proposed by Searle. This research is a descriptive qualitative research, as to describe the data in words and sentences. To collect the data, researchers conducted observational method and non-participatory technique. The researchers used the method of pragmatic identity to analyse the data and pragmatic competence – in equalizing technique to equalized the data based on the theory used. The research result showed that there were 17 utterances of commissive acts found in Onward movie. They were 2 data of promising, 4 data of threatening, 2 data of accepting, 6 data of refusing, and 2 data of offering. The act of refusal was the frequently used type of commissive acts since the character had the habit of not wanting to bother other people.

**Keywords:** commissive acts, pragmatics, speech acts

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu jenis tindakan komisif yang ditemukan dalam film berjudul “Onward” sebagai sumber data. Ucapan yang diucapkan oleh beberapa karakter dalam film diambil sebagai data penelitian dan mengklasifikasikannya dengan menggunakan teori tindakan komisif yang diusulkan oleh Searle. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, untuk mendeskripsikan data dalam bentuk kata-kata dan kalimat. Untuk mengumpulkan data, para peneliti menggunakan metode observasional dan teknik non-partisipatif. Para peneliti menggunakan metode identitas pragmatik untuk menganalisis data dan teknik kompetensi pragmatik - dalam menyamakan untuk menyamakan data berdasarkan teori yang digunakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada 17 data ujaran tindakan komisif yang ditemukan dalam film “Onward”. Hasilnya yaitu 2 data menunjukkan perjanjian, 4 data menunjukkan pengancaman, 2 data menunjukkan penerimaan, 6 data menunjukkan penolakan, dan 2 data menunjukkan penawaran. Tindakan penolakan adalah jenis tindakan komisif yang sering digunakan karena salah satu karakter dalam film memiliki kebiasaan untuk berusaha tidak mengganggu orang lain.*

*Kata kunci: tindakan komisif, pragmatik, tindakan pengucapan*

## A. INTRODUCTION

In the world filled with people, communication is required in daily life because humans are social creatures who cannot live alone. As social beings, humans need a way to communicate with each other, which is language. People use language to reveal what they want to say, what they want to share to other people. Language is used to express human’s feelings, thoughts and ideas, whenever they have the chance to communicate with other people. For sure, in the middle of conversation, people tend to talk and state something that is related to a future action. There is a phenomenon as stated below.

Speaker 1: “Should we all go to Starbucks on Saturday evening?”

Speaker 2: “I don’t have car.”

The conversation stated above is found in one of messenger apps used nowadays, WhatsApp. From what we can see above, we know that the first speaker suggested the members from the group chat to gather in a place on specific time. The statement of the second speaker may not be understood to other people, other than the group chat’s members. The statement by the second speaker literary means he does not own a car. However, what they understood is not so, but they understood his statement as he does not have his car with him, either it was borrowed or broken. Thus, the purpose of the second speaker stating that statement in the group chat is to tell them that he cannot fetch each of them from their house as he usually did. This is a dialogue example that we can usually found in our daily life.

Well communication must be understandable by all related parties. A well-communicated conversation occurs between speakers and it requires them to analyse and understand the context when the conversations go on. It is done so to lead a conversation between two parties. A study which analyses the context and finding out the meaning of communicative intentions is known as pragmatics. According to Yule (2014), pragmatics is a study of speakers’ meaning of words in an utterance. It declared that communication is not just depending on the literal meaning of words, but also recognize the context and the words’ meaning uttered by the speakers.

In conveying a message through utterances, we have to be able to interpret the meaning of the utterances. In daily conversations, we usually can recognize the type of the utterances, which refers to an action. An action which performed by the speaker through utterances can defined as speech act (Yule, 2014). Speech act is classified into five types, they are declarative, representative, expressive, directive, and commissive (Yule, 1996). In this journal, researcher decided to analyse commissive speech act. In a conversation, speakers apply commissive speech act when they commit themselves from the utterances for the action in the future. As mentioned by Yule (1996), speech act is used to express what the speakers intend to do, which can be promising, refusing, threatening, accepting, and offering. Commissive speech act not only can be found in society, but also medias such as

communication apps, social media, TV shows, radio, news, and especially in film or movie.

The essential elements of a movie can be used as the object analysis. As the analysis on speech act is related with action through utterances, then the element of the movie and the object of this journal’s analysis is the utterances or dialogues of the characters in movie. In the movie of ‘Onward’, there is a phenomenon depicted through the utterances between Laurel and Ian in the beginning scene of the movie.

Laurel: “I know you’re a little scared to drive sweetie-pie, but –.”

Ian: “I am not scared, mom. I’m gonna move Barley’s game.”

(00:04:13 – 00:04:20)

The dialogue above shows refusal by the answer of Ian. Ian here is just having his sixteenth birthday, which general known that in US, teenagers in their sixteenth can hold driving license. However, as he is a timid high school student and has struggle in self-confidence, he refused to sign up in his school’s driving practice. Therefore, Ian’s answer to Laurel’s statement is a refusal speech act which is his effort in shifting the topic he did not want to talk about.

The researchers took two researches to be compared and to be references. Gea (2020) conducted an analysis of commissive speech act types that are uttered by Donald Trump in speech campaign. The research used descriptive qualitative method with Fox Business’ video through Youtube as the data source. The result of the analysis showed the speech act of promising is the most frequently used in the data source.

Then, Devi and Degaf (2021) analysed commissive speech act types and functions uttered by the characters in the movie entitled *Knives Out*. The method used to conduct the analysis is qualitative descriptive method, which the utterances found are classified based on the theory of Searle onto the types of commissive speech act. The analysis resulted the refusing commissive speech act is mainly uttered by the characters from the movie.

The researchers analysed the types of commissive speech act proposed by Searle (1979) which is the same theory as the previous researches explained. However, present research conducted the analysis on different data source as to compare with two previous researches. This research will analyse the types of commissive speech act, which are promising, refusing, threatening, accepting, and offering. From the explanation above, the aim of this journal is to analyse and investigate the commissive speech acts performed by the characters in ‘Onward’ movie.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Commissive Speech Acts**

As stated by Searle (1979), commissive acts are those acts which are used by speakers to commit themselves to certain future course of actions. The actions can be performed by the speaker to self or acted as a part of a social group. Searle and Vanderveken (1985) also declared that commissive acts are essentially hearer-directed, which a speech act must be aimed to specific hearer, and it can be addressed to anyone or no one. However, hearer-directed acts where the hearer is

not identical with speaker are required to performed to acts for overt public, which means the intention of those acts is directed to anyone.

### Types of Commissive Acts

#### a) Promising

Promising is a type of commissive speech acts which has uncommon features to other types. The act of promising is especially performed for hearer to do something for the hearer’s benefit, and involves obligation, which increases the strength of commitment of speaker (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). Obama: “**You’ll hear the deep patriotism in the voice of a military spouse** who’s working the phones late at night to make sure that no one who fights for this country.” (Kristiina & Ambalegin, 2019)

#### b) Threatening

This type of commissive acts differ from previous act, as it is not done for the hearer’s benefit, but rather to loss or detriment (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). The absence of obligation is detected in this act, so it is counted as independent. Other than performed in speech act, threatening has hybrid meaning thus it can be performed only using threatening gestures at someone. Prabowo: “If there is a member of Gerindra who corrupts, **I will put him in prison by myself.**” (Husain, Hamamah, & Nurhayani, 2020)

#### c) Accepting

An act of acceptance is determined as a response of what have the speaker said or committed to do. The context of commissive in accepting is considered simply as the acceptor lets the speaker do what he commits himself to doing so (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). In term of commissive acceptance, it is supposed to be not good for the speaker, since the speaker offered to do and its responsibilities and obligations is to accepted by the acceptor.

#### d) Refusing

The negative contrast of acceptance is refusal or rejection. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), the act of refusing is an illocutionary contradiction which is found in utterance of supposed acceptance performed in that context and the speaker presupposed it into refusal. Thus, the illocutionary contradiction of an acceptance is refusal, which then has the additional preparatory when is given an option of either acceptance or refusal.

John Wick: “**Find someone else.**” (Juniartha, 2020)

### e) Offering

The act of offering is distinctive to other commissive speech acts, which is considered as conditional illocution of commissive acts. An offer is defined as a promise that is conditional only when accepted by the hearer (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). It is then the form of an offer is bind only when it is accepted and one can accept an act of offer if it is made and has not withdrawn. Ransom: “Calm down, are you hungry? **Do you want to eat?**” (Devi & Degaf, 2021)

## C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research, as proposed by Creswell (2014), which the data was analysed by describing in sentences. The researchers focused on finding the utterances of commissive speech acts found in the movie “Onward” by Scanlon (2020). To collect the data, researchers conducted observational method which is done by observing the language used between the characters in the movie (Sudaryanto, 2015). The research conducted a non-participatory technique as the researchers are not involved in the data source. In order to collect the data from the source, several steps are done in order. First, the researchers downloaded the movie and the movie script. Then, the researchers watched the movie while highlighting the utterances which related to the object of the analysis.

To analyse the data, the researchers used the method of pragmatic identity by Sudaryanto (2015). The utterances found from the movie then were analysed and used pragmatic competence – in equalizing technique by Sudaryanto (2015), to equalized the data based on types of commissive speech acts by Searle (1979). First, the researchers started to analyse with reviewing the collected utterances. Next, researchers classified them into the theory suggested. Finally, the analysed data of utterances were drawn into a conclusion.

## D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research showed that there were 17 utterances of commissive acts found in the movie. There are the acts of promising, threatening, accepting, refusing, and offering showed by the characters. They were 2 data of promising, 4 data of threatening, 2 data of accepting, 6 data of refusing, and 2 data of offering. The total of the data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Commissive acts found in “Onward” movie

Types	Commissive Acts	Total
Promising	“I’ll sew that later tonight, okay?”	2
	“I am gonna meet my dad.”	
Threatening	“Let him go.”	4
	“I will not let you tear this down this fountain!”	

	“So why don’t you let me save her life before it costs you yours?”	
	“Do it again, and you’ll see me in your nightmares!”	
<b>Accepting</b>	“Oh yeah! We don’t have any plans.”	2
	“Yeah! See you there!”	
<b>Refusing</b>	“I’m not scared, mom.”	6
	“I don’t.”	
	“Oh, that’s okay... I gotta get going!”	
	“That’s okay.”	
	“Well, don’t try to help me!”	
	“No way!”	
	“Don’t need ‘em!”	
<b>Offering</b>	“You want to play?”	2
	“Hey, want to come with me to pick up your cake?”	
<b>Total</b>		17

**DATA 1**

Laurel: “I know you’re a little scared to drive sweetie-pie, but...”

Ian: “**I’m not scared, mom.** I’m gonna move Barley’s game.”

(00:04:14 – 00:04:19)

The utterance produced by the hearer, who is Ian is considered as an act of refusing. The hearer is just having his sixteenth birthday, which general known that in US, teenagers in their sixteenth can hold driving license. However, as he is a timid high school student and has struggle in self-confidence, he refused to sign up in his school’s driving practice. Therefore, the hearer’s answer to Laurel’s statement, who acted as a speaker, is a refusal speech act which is his effort in shifting the topic he did not want to talk about.

**DATA 2**

Laurel: “**Let him go.**”

(00:04:39 – 00:04:41)

Barley: “Okay, but I know you’re stronger than that. There’s a mighty warrior inside you. You just have to let him out. Right, Mom?”

The statement uttered by the siblings’ mother, the speaker, is considered as the act of threatening, intended for the hearer, Barley. The situation showed Ian was grabbed by hearer tightly when he was about to have breakfast. As she knows that Ian has a small body, the speaker obligated hearer to let him go. The speaker here also was known to be strong as she exercised every morning. The utterance by the speaker was intended to threaten hearer before she did anything to him.

**DATA 3**

Barley: “**I will not let you tear this down this fountain!** Ancient warriors on grand quests drank from its flowing waters!”

(00:05:20 – 00:05:28)

Construction workers: “(dragged Barley down)”

The willingness of Barley, acted as a speaker, to protect his so-called ancient fountain was showed when the government about to tear and crash it down. He threatened the contractor to not tearing down the build, as he was determined to protect the old fountain in the town. Thus, the utterance above showed the act of threatening.

**DATA 4**

Barley: “Well, Ian, you could definitely learn a lot from quests of Yore. **You want to play?**”

(00:06:10 – 00:06:13)

Ian: “I don’t.”

From the dialogue, the act of offering was performed by Barley, the speaker. He is a fan of a history-based board game which called Quests of Yore. He offered Ian, the hearer, to play and at the same time learn as the game was based on what really happened in the past.

**DATA 5**

Barley: “Well, Ian, you could definitely learn a lot from quests of Yore. You want to play?”

Ian: “**I don’t.**”

(00:06:14)

The dialogue showed the offer by Barley, the speaker towards Ian, the hearer. However, Ian answered with refusal. He kindly refused the speaker’s offer to play the game is not without reason. Firstly, it is about the time for hearer to go to school, and second hearer gave the impression of uninterested in the game. Therefore, the answer uttered by the hearer is considered as refusing act.

**DATA 6**

Ian: “You know what, I’m just gonna get some food on the way to school.”

Laurel: “**I’ll sew that later tonight**, okay?”

(00:06:48 – 00:06:50)

The statement uttered by Laurel as a hearer is considered as the act of promising. It was performed so to console the speaker, Ian who was sad because of his ripped sweater. The sweater belonged to his late father, and he treasured it a lot even though he finally fit it in. However, due to the clumsiness of his older brother, the sweater accidentally was ripped. The utterance is promising act because the hearer pledge to sew the ripped sweater once speaker got back from school in the night.

**DATA 7**

Barley: “Wait, wait, wait, wait! By the laws of Yore, I must dub thee a man today! Kneel before me.”

Ian: “**Oh, that’s okay...** I gotta get going!”

(00:06:50 – 00:06:58)

The answer by the hearer, Ian towards speaker’s desire is considered as refusing act. As it is known that hearer had his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, which his brother wanted to congratulate him by doing old way of appointing the age of a man. As hearer was rushed to leave for school, he refused speaker’s intention and went out.

**DATA 8**

Sadalia: “Are you inviting us to a party?”

Ian: “That’s the one.”

Sadalia: “**Oh, yeah! We don’t have any plans.**”

(00:10:58 – 00:11:04)

The dialogue above was the conversation between Ian, as a speaker and his not so close friend from school. He intended to invite some of them to the house and had a party to celebrate his birthday. One of them named Sadalia, as the hearer answered to his invitation with acceptance, which they accepted gladly because they don’t have any plans after school.

**DATA 9**

Laurel: “Hey, **want to come with me** to pick up your cake?”

(00:18:58 – 00:19:02)

Ian: “That’s okay. Thanks, mom.”

The utterance which showed the act of offering by Laurel, the speaker was for Ian as the hearer. It was after Barley’s attempts on using the magic wand given by their father. It was not working as what is written on the sheet along with the wand. The hearer here was disappointed as it did not go smoothly as the way explained on the sheet. To console disappointed Ian for the last gift given by his father, speaker offered hearer to accompany her in getting his birthday cake.

**DATA 10**

Laurel: “Hey, want to come with me to pick up your cake?”

Ian: “**That’s okay.** Thanks, mom.”

(00:19:02 – 00:19:05)

The statement of refusing produced by Ian, hearer was towards Laurel’s offer, who acted as a speaker. Hearer was disappointed by the gift given by his late father, which it was not successful to summon his father by using magic wand. He sat on the bed weakly and stared at the magic wand. A lot of things span around his thought so he refused to go along with speaker in getting his cake. He stayed and continued to study and read the sheet which is placed side by side with the magic wand.



#### DATA 11

Barley: “It’s there. Look, my years of training have prepared me for this very moment. And I’m telling you... this is the only way to find a Phoenix Gem. Trust me.”

Ian: “Whatever it takes, **I am gonna meet** my dad.”

(00:23:39 – 00:23:43)

The statement uttered by Ian as the hearer showed the act of promising, as he was determined and promised himself to accomplish his wish to meet his father. He found out that he was the one who is gifted to use magic. In his attempt to say the spell, he failed as he only summoned his father’s torso to legs. He was then determined to search for another gemstone so he could summon his father entirely.

#### DATA 12

Laurel: “See! She’s already losing her grip on reality. **So why don’t you let me save her life before it costs you yours?”**

(00:36:12 – 00:36:18)

Officer Avel: “Okay!”

The utterance produced by Laurel, as the speaker is considered as the act of threatening. The situation was about the speaker in search for her sons, who went on the search of gemstone. She encountered the Manticore, coincidentally knew what Ian and Barley wanted. When she said she can help speaker to save her sons from the gemstone’s curse, the speaker threatened the police, acted as the hearer in site to let her cure the Manticore’s wound before the Manticore started to lose grip of self and made a chaos, which obviously is a lie.

#### DATA 13

Barley: “I was trying to help you!”

Ian: “**Well, don’t try to help me!**”

(00:40:17 – 00:40:19)

The statement of refusing was done by Ian, the hearer as he insisted to not let the speaker, Barley help. It was when speaker’s van ran out of gas, and he had an idea to ask hearer to cast the growth spell. While the hearer was asked to focus, but speaker kept talking and guiding him loudly that made Ian lost focus. As a result, instead of enlarging the gas can, the speaker was the one who got shrunk. Ian then blamed Barley for being too loud which made him lost focus and stated that he did not need speaker’s help.

#### DATA 14

Dewdrop: “Hey! Did you just bump into me?”

Gas Station Victim: “Oh, I’m terribly sorry, I didn’t see you there...”

Dewdrop: “**Do it again, and you’ll see me in your nightmares!**”

(00:40:38 – 00:40:16)

The statement uttered by Dewdrop; the speaker was to threaten a man who bumped into him who acted as a hearer. The speaker is a punk fairy that has the size of a butterfly. He was intended to go in to the store, but was hit by the opened door. The hearer did not see the fairy there, hence say sorry. The speaker refused to accept

his apology, instead he threatened the hearer if he messed with him again, he would make the man have nightmare with him in it every night.

#### DATA 15

Barley: “Hey, I wanted to be the front.”

Ian: “**No way**, I’ll do the talking.”

(00:49:17 – 00:49:20)

The situation showed Ian, as the hearer and Barley, as the speaker tried to get away from the police’s chase, because they were speeding on the road. Hearer transformed both of them to Colt, who was a centaur with the body of human and legs of horse, at the same also was a police officer. Hearer became the body and speaker acted as the bottom. They often mimicked the way Colt talking, especially the speaker. Barley was confident to do the talking, however hearer was afraid that speaker would mess up, so he did the talking instead. The utterance produced by hearer is considered as the act of refusing.

#### DATA 16

Gurge: “You going to the park later?”

Ian: “**Yeah! see you there!**”

(01:30:58 – 01:31:02)

The utterance made by Ian, acted as hearer, was showing the act of accepting. One of his school friends, as the speaker invited him to play in the park after school, which was accepted by hearer as he agreed to meet them at the park after the school ended.

#### DATA 17

Laurel: “You forgot your keys!”

Colt: “**Don’t need ‘em!** I was born to run!”

(01:31:22 – 01:31:36)

The statement produced by Colt, as the hearer is considered as the act of refusing. As always, Colt would go to work by driving a car. Once he realized that he was wasting his real self of being a centaur, he refused to drive a car suggested by Laurel, acted as the speaker and chose to run with his own foot instead.

## E. CONCLUSION

The research result showed there were 5 types of commissive acts performed by the characters in the Onward movie. The data found in the movie were 17 utterances, which showed 2 data of promising, 4 data of threatening, 2 data of accepting, 6 data of refusing, and 2 data of offering. The frequently type of commissive acts performed by the characters was refusal, with 6 data out of 17 in total, referred to the act of refusing or unwillingness to accept what is offered or given. In the movie, the character named Ian was the one who frequently used this expression of act. He was known to have low self-esteem and shy towards other people, even his own family. The act of refusal was used frequently by him because he felt the burden to accept what others offered for him.

## REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). United States of America: SAGE Publications.
- Devi, M. F., & Degaf, A. (2021). An analysis of commissive speech act used by the main character in the “Knives out” movie. *Paradigm*, 4(1), 10.
- Gea, D. (2020). Commissive speech act in Donald Trump’s speech campaign. *JURNAL ILMU BUDAYA*, 8(2), 350–356. <https://doi.org/10.34050/jib.v8i2.11781>
- Husain, A., Hamamah, H., & Nurhayani, I. (2020). Commissive speech act in Indonesian presidential debate. *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 14(1), 81. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v14i1.3141>
- Juniartha, I. W.-. (2020). Commissive speech act in the movie John Wick Chapter 2. *Lingual: Journal of Language and Culture*, 10(2), 31. <https://doi.org/10.24843/LJLC.2020.v10.i02.p06>
- Kristiina, L. N., & Ambalegin, A. (2019). Illocutionary acts on president Obama’s election night speech. *JURNAL BASIS*, 6(2), 267. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v6i2.1416>
- Scanlon, D. (2020). *Onward*. United States: Walt Disney Studios.
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of illocutionary logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sudaryanto. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University Press.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (2014). *The study of language* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

