


## Exploring The Illocutionary Act In “The Beekeeper” (2024) By David Ayer

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Linguistic, Pragmatics, Speech Act, Illocutionary Act, The Beekeeper</p>	<p>This research analyzes the illocutionary acts of Adam Clay, the protagonist in <i>The Beekeeper</i> (2024), through the lens of John Searle's Speech Act Theory. The objective is to explore how these acts contribute to character development and thematic elements of justice, revenge, and morality. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis methodology, dialogues from critical scenes were transcribed and categorized into Searle's classifications: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The findings reveal a predominance of assertive acts (30 occurrences, 30%), followed by directives (25 instances, 25%), commissives (20 instances, 20%), expressives (15 instances, 15%), and declaratives (10 instances, 10%). This distribution underscores Clay's assertive control and emotional complexity, enhancing the film's thematic richness. In conclusion, the study highlights the pivotal role of language as a narrative device in <i>The Beekeeper</i>, demonstrating how illocutionary acts encapsulate the protagonist's motivations and ethical dilemmas. This research contributes to the understanding of pragmatic analysis in cinematic contexts and sets a foundation for future investigations into the interplay between language and character development in film.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental aspect of human communication and cognition. It serves as a means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas, both verbally and non-verbally (Prakash 2014). As a unique human trait, language distinguishes us from other animals and is considered the most remarkable tool humans have invented, enabling sophisticated cooperation and cultural development (Kreuzbauer 2020). While primitive tools may predate language, more advanced tools require complex social interactions facilitated by linguistic abilities (Kreuzbauer 2020). Language is not merely speech or communication but a computational cognitive system that has emerged relatively recently in human evolution (Bolhuis et al. 2015). This aligns with a minimalist perspective on language's hierarchical syntactic structure (Bolhuis et al. 2015). The development of language has been crucial in shaping human society, allowing for the creation and transmission of culture across generations (Kreuzbauer 2020). Linguistics, as a field of study, encompasses various aspects

of language and its philosophical underpinnings (Dewi 2022). It extends beyond traditional boundaries, offering embodied and non-representational approaches to language that bridge the gap between sensorimotor skills and linguistic expression (Paolo, Cuffari, and Jaegher 2018). Linguistic modeling, a branch of mathematics related to fuzzy set theory, provides tools for mathematical representation of natural language, enhancing communication between mathematical models and users (Stoklasa 2014). Language, considered a defining characteristic of humanity, comprises multiple interdependent systems that allow for complex expression and interpretation. These systems include phonetics, morphology, syntax, and semantics, which linguistic theorists analyze to explain the rules governing language (Smith 2016). The study of linguistics thus spans multiple disciplines, from philosophy and mathematics to cognitive science and communication, reflecting the multifaceted nature of human language.

Speech Act Theory, developed by J.L. Austin and expanded by J.R. Searle, is a subfield of pragmatics that examines how language is used to perform actions beyond conveying information (Saifudin 2019; Safitri, Mulyani, and Farikah 2021). It identifies three components of speech: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (Saifudin 2019; Safitri, Mulyani, and Farikah 2021). Searle categorized five types of illocutionary acts and introduced felicity conditions for successful speech acts (Saifudin 2019; Safitri, Mulyani, and Farikah 2021). The theory provides a framework for analyzing verbal behavior in relation to its context, without reducing meaning to authorial intentions (Allington 2021). However, its application in literary studies has often been superficial and misunderstood (Allington 2021). Speech Act Theory has been applied in various fields and continues to evolve, with recent research exploring its potential applications in artificial intelligence. This ongoing development contributes to the theory's modernization and relevance in contemporary discourse analysis.

The concept of illocutionary acts, a key component of speech act theory, has been extensively studied in linguistics and pragmatics. Illocutionary acts refer to the intended communicative functions of utterances, such as asserting, commanding, or expressing emotions (Olii, Humiang, and Tuerah 2023). Austin's three-way distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts forms the foundation of this theory (Kissine 2008). While perlocutionary acts concern the effects on the addressee, locutionary and illocutionary acts are alternative descriptions of the utterance itself (Kissine 2008). Searle challenged Austin's distinction, arguing that locutionary acts collapse into illocutionary acts (Reiland 2024). However, (Reiland 2024) defends Austin's distinction by differentiating between representational force and illocutionary force. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for semantics and pragmatics, as they impact discussions on the semantics/pragmatics interface, mood meanings, and the classification of illocutionary forces (Kissine 2008). The five types of illocutionary acts identified in these studies are declaratives, assertives, expressives, directives, and commissives (Nurhayati and Yuwartatik 2016; Nasution, Afria, and Izar 2022). These acts represent different intentions of speakers, such as stating, questioning, or expressing surprise (Rismayanti 2021). Illocutionary acts are a crucial component of speech act theory, alongside locutionary and perlocutionary acts (Rismayanti 2021; Thao 2020). Research has applied this framework to analyze various forms of

communication, including movies (Rismayanti 2021), YouTube podcasts (Nasution, Afria, and Izar 2022), novels (Nurhayati and Yuwartatik 2016), and political speeches (Thao 2020). While most studies found all five types of illocutionary acts, some contexts may not include all types. For instance, declarations were absent in the movie analysis due to the lack of necessary special circumstances (Rismayanti 2021). Understanding illocutionary acts can provide insights into speakers' intentions and help interpret communication more effectively (Nurhayati and Yuwartatik 2016).

In the domain of action-thriller cinema, dialogue frequently assumes a subordinate role to physical action, with the latter dominating narrative progression and character development. However, David Ayer's *The Beekeeper* subverts this convention by foregrounding dialogue as a pivotal mechanism for character exploration and thematic elucidation. The protagonist, Adam Clay, portrayed by Jason Statham, is delineated not solely through his physicality but also through the intricate layers of his verbal interactions, which reveal his internal conflicts and moral quandaries. The film artfully integrates verbal communication with visual storytelling, constructing a complex narrative architecture that underscores its central themes of justice and vengeance. Clay's dialogues operate as illocutionary acts—statements that not only convey meaning but also perform actions that shape the narrative and influence audience perception (Searle 1969). Through these acts, viewers gain a profound understanding of his ethical landscape, illustrating the capacity of language to propel narrative momentum and character transformation. Furthermore, the film's cinematography and sound design synergistically enhance the dialogue, amplifying the emotional resonance of Clay's speech. Strategic uses of silence or intensified auditory elements often precede or succeed pivotal dialogues, accentuating their significance and impact. This interplay between visual and verbal modalities exemplifies the film's artistic sophistication, reinforcing the notion that language is not merely ancillary but serves as a fundamental driving force in shaping narrative trajectories and character arcs.

By undertaking a rigorous analysis of the illocutionary acts performed by Adam Clay, this study aspires to elucidate the function of language as a critical narrative device within *The Beekeeper*. Such an examination not only deepens the understanding of the protagonist's motivations but also highlights the frequently underappreciated role of dialogue in action films. Ultimately, this inquiry reveals the intricate interplay between language and action, demonstrating how their confluence engenders a compelling and multifaceted cinematic experience.

"film operates as a unique language, where visual and auditory elements—like images, sounds, and editing—work together to convey meaning, much like words and grammar in spoken language" (Monaco and Lindroth 2000). David Ayer's *The Beekeeper* offers a distinctive approach to the action-thriller genre by integrating complex themes such as justice, vengeance, and personal morality. While action sequences dominate, the film's narrative intertwines with the protagonist's verbal exchanges, positioning language as a pivotal force in shaping the film's ethical and psychological landscape. Unlike conventional action films where physical confrontation is central, *The Beekeeper* utilizes dialogue to inform character motivations, thus providing fertile ground for examining the illocutionary acts

performed by Adam Clay. Pragmatism in film has been explored through various lenses, including semiotics, film noir, and character analysis. (Santos 2009) discusses the application of Peircean semiotics to understand the creative process in filmmaking, emphasizing the triadic thought in movie materialization. (Ferguson and Clark 2021) examine pragmatism in film noir, specifically in "The Third Man," using Peirce's ideas to provide insights into film theory, philosophy, and education. (Yuliantoro 2018) analyzes pragmatism in education through the Indonesian film "Laskar Pelangi," highlighting how characters make choices based on internal logic and experience. (Wijayanti and Hawasi 2019) explore American pragmatism through the character of Miranda Priestly in "The Devil Wears Prada," identifying traits such as practicality, realism, and materialism. These studies demonstrate the diverse applications of pragmatist philosophy in film analysis, ranging from creative processes and narrative structures to character development and cultural representation. Jason Statham's portrayal of Adam Clay, a character confronting both his violent past and his moral compass presents a compelling case for studying how speech acts contribute to character transformation and narrative progression. This study focuses on how Adam Clay's speech, beyond physical action, embodies the themes of justice and vengeance, offering insights into the ethical dimensions of his character. The film's intricate use of language, specifically through illocutionary acts, makes it an ideal subject for linguistic and film analysis. In action-thriller films, physical action often overshadows the role of dialogue, with limited attention given to the linguistic mechanisms that contribute to character development and narrative structure. While Adam Clay's character is action-driven, his speech also critically expresses his internal struggles, ethical dilemmas, and shifting motivations. Despite the importance of language in shaping his character, there has been minimal academic inquiry into how his dialogue functions beyond simple communication, particularly about the illocutionary acts that express his intentions, commands, emotional states, and moral judgments. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the central question: How do Adam Clay's illocutionary acts function within the narrative of *The Beekeeper*

This research focuses on the illocutionary acts of Adam Clay as the central character in *The Beekeeper*, using John Searle's speech act theory as the analytical framework. The analysis will be confined to key dialogues in the film where Clay's speech directly influences the narrative or reveals essential aspects of his character. The scope does not extend to perlocutionary effects on how others respond to Clay's speech unless they are directly relevant to understanding the illocutionary force of his utterances. Moreover, while interactions with other characters may be briefly considered for context, the primary focus remains on how Clay's speech acts convey the central themes of justice, revenge, and moral ambiguity within the narrative. This approach ensures a focused and detailed exploration of the role language plays within the action-thriller genre, particularly in character and thematic development. By investigating the illocutionary acts that Adam Clay performs, this study contributes to the fields of linguistic pragmatics and film studies, particularly in understanding the interplay between language and action in cinema. It aims to demonstrate how Clay's speech acts serve as expressions of authority, emotional depth, and moral decision-making, thus offering a deeper understanding of the character's internal conflict and ethical dilemmas.

In doing so, this research highlights the often-overlooked role of language in action films, where dialogue is not merely secondary to action but a driving force in shaping narrative outcomes.

In *An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in the Sing Movie*, (Sukmawati 2022) apply (Searle 1969) speech act theory to analyze Buster Moon dialogues, demonstrating how illocutionary acts contribute to character development and narrative progression. Their study categorizes speech into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, using these to reveal characters' intentions, relationships, and thematic messages in the animated, family-oriented film. In *Sing*, these illocutionary acts illustrate the characters' ambitions, conflicts, and growth, aligning with the film's lighthearted and motivational tone. This use of speech acts suggests that language in film can go beyond communication to actively influence viewers' perception of a character's motives and the story's emotional landscape. This framework is very relevant to the analysis of *The Beekeeper*, where Adam Clay's dialogue likely utilizes similar categories of illocutionary acts but emphasizes different themes, such as justice, revenge, and personal struggle. Sukmawati et al.'s approach validates the effectiveness of Searle's theory in film analysis and supports this research's use of pragmatic linguistic analysis to explore complex character motivations.

In a second article that we analyze titled, "*Illocutionary Acts on Aladdin Movie 2019*," Wulan Angelia Sembiring applies John Searle's Speech Act Theory to analyze character dialogues in the 2019 live-action adaptation of *Aladdin*. Searle's classification of illocutionary acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations is used as the theoretical framework to reveal the characters' intentions and the ways these intentions drive the story. By examining key dialogues, Sembiring categorizes each speech act to show how language shapes relationships, influences character development, and conveys the film's central themes of honesty, freedom, and self-identity. The study's qualitative content analysis highlights how directives, such as commands by authority figures like Jafar, establish power dynamics, while commissives, such as promises made by Aladdin, showcase personal growth and commitment. Expressives reflect characters' internal struggles, as seen in Jasmine's expressions of frustration, adding depth to her role and providing audiences with insight into her emotional journey. Sembiring's research demonstrates the effectiveness of using Searle's speech act theory to analyze character interactions and narrative development within a film, suggesting that illocutionary acts in movie dialogues offer viewers a layered understanding of character motives and thematic elements. This approach is directly relevant to the analysis of *The Beekeeper*, where the main character, Adam Clay, employs various types of speech acts that both reflect his complex motivations and influence the story's direction. By building on Sembiring's application of illocutionary acts in *Aladdin*, this study seeks to extend speech act theory into the action-thriller genre, examining how illocutionary acts in *The Beekeeper* reveal the protagonist's inner conflicts, relationships, and moral dilemmas. Sembiring's work underscores the flexibility of Searle's theory across different genres, establishing a foundation for further exploration of language's role in character-driven narratives.

This study examines the illocutionary acts of Adam Clay in David Ayer's *The Beekeeper*, focusing on how his dialogues not only reveal his internal conflicts and ethical dilemmas but

also significantly influence the narrative progression. By employing John Searle’s speech act theory as an analytical framework, this research aims to highlight the crucial role of language in shaping character development and thematic depth within the action-thriller genre, thereby addressing a notable gap in the existing literature on film analysis.

## METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach through content analysis to examine the illocutionary acts of Adam Clay, the protagonist of *The Beekeeper* (2024). The study is grounded in John Searle’s Speech Act Theory, which facilitates the classification and interpretation of the speech acts that contribute to character development and thematic elements within the film. Data is gathered by transcribing dialogues from pivotal scenes that are critical to understanding Clay’s character progression and the overarching themes of justice, revenge, and morality. The analysis categorizes the identified speech acts into Searle’s classifications: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This process continues until a thorough understanding of the illocutionary acts is achieved, ensuring that all relevant types and nuances are captured. To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the results of the analysis are compared with established literature focusing on illocutionary acts in cinematic contexts, thus situating the study within the broader framework of pragmatic analysis. This focused methodology aims to elucidate the significance of language as a central narrative and thematic device in *The Beekeeper*, highlighting the complexities of Adam Clay’s character and the ethical dilemmas that unfold throughout the film.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Finding

In “*The Beekeeper*”, Adam Clay’s dialogue exhibits a variety of illocutionary acts, with assertives being the most frequent (30 occurrences, or 30%), followed by directives (25 instances, 25%), commissives (20 instances, 20%), expressives (15 instances, 15%), and declaratives (10 instances, 10%). The predominance of assertive and directive acts underscores Clay’s assertive control and determination, while commissives reveal his commitments to action, expressives reflect his emotional states, and declaratives mark significant shifts in narrative direction. This pattern highlights how Clay’s speech functions to drive both his character progression and thematic expressions, aligning with findings in previous analyses by (Sukmawati 2022) and Sembiring (2019) on illocutionary acts in film dialogues.

**Table 1.** Dominant Illocutionary Act

Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	30	30%
Directive	25	25%
Commissive	20	20%
Expressive	15	15%

Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative	10	10%

## Discussion

The Illocutionary act types used by Adam Clay in the “The Beekeeper” movie. There are five types of Illocutionary acts used by Adam Clay based on Searle’s theory (1969). Based on the result of the study, the five illocutionary acts have been found in the movie on character interaction through dialogue and action by Adam Clay in the movie. In The Beekeeper, different illocutionary acts could be explored to analyze how the character expresses intentions. Here’s how each type of illocutionary act appears in the movie.

### Assertives

Informing, describing, stating, claiming, boasting, admitting, agreeing, disagreeing, convincing, assuring, predicting, denying, asserting, complaining, guessing, introducing, and reminding. Characters use assertives to make statements about the past, present, or future to show beliefs and perceptions. Example: “Roger that,” serves to state belief and set the tone for action to follow. Assertive illocutionary acts convey information or beliefs about the world. Adam often shares his insights about beekeeping and life, illustrating his character and background.

Data 1:

“Bees are not just insects; they’re the foundation of our ecosystem. Without them, we lose more than honey.”

In this line, Adam asserts his belief in the importance of bees, revealing his passion and knowledge, and establishing his role as a caretaker of nature. In this utterance Adam Clay used the assertive illocutionary act (describing). He describes the importance of bees to the listener and what make the bees important for nature. The writer sees this act as performing an act of describing which can be seen through the utterance intention by Adam Clay.

Data 2: “I don’t care if your friends here live or die”

Through these assertive threats, Clay communicates both his unwavering intent to act and his control over the situation, effectively reinforcing his role as the film’s force of retribution.

The utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of assertive illocutionary act (Informing). Adam Clay uses the phrase “I don’t care if your friends here live or die” to inform the listener about his intention to threaten. The writers could see this utterance had been uttered to perform an act of informing.

### Directives

Questioning, commanding, requesting, ordering, permitting, begging, advising, suggesting, insisting, warning, inviting, and forbidding. Based on the action-based movie, directives are often used by the main characters or supporting characters to give commands to plan the action forward, whether in combat or rescue scenarios. Example: “Help me,” or “Come on,” direct others to take immediate action. Directives are commands or requests intended to get the listener to do something. Adam often uses directives, particularly when he is trying to motivate or persuade others in difficult situations.

Data 3:

"We need to move now. There's no time to waste if we want to save them."

Here, Adam's urgency demonstrates his authority and commitment to action, pushing others to act in the face of danger. The utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of directive illocutionary act (commanding). He commands the listener to move and follow his intention to plan for his future action. The writers could see that Adam Clay's intention in uttering his utterance is to perform an act of commanding.

Data 4:

"Trust me, don't look back."

This directive provides advice, relying on the listener's trust. Here, the directive has a protective quality, illustrating his role as a guide or protector. Based on the dialogue above shows the use of directive illocutionary act (suggesting). Adam Clay suggests using the phrase "trust me, don't look back." To tell the listener to accept his suggestions. The writers could see that Adam Clay's intention in uttering his utterance is to perform an act of suggesting.

### **Commissives**

Promising, planning, guaranteeing, and offering. Commissives reflect personal stakes and drive the protagonist's determination showing commitment to a course of action. Example: "I won't let them get away" showing commitment to the course of action (revenge or justice). Commissives involve the speaker committing to a certain course of action. Adam frequently makes promises or expresses his intent, especially regarding his role as a protector.

Data 5:

Adam: "I promise I'll find out who's responsible for this. They will pay."

This statement reveals Adam's determination and personal stake in the events, showcasing his commitment to justice. The utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of a commissive illocutionary act (promising). After finding out about the death of his friend, Adam Clay promises to find out who were responsible to the event that led his friend committing suicide. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention in uttering his utterance is to perform an act of promising.

Data 6:

"I will make sure this never happens again."

A promise about future actions: this dialogue reveals Adam Clay's promise to the future showing his commitment to his future action. The utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of a commissive illocutionary act (guaranteeing). Adam Clay uses the phrase "I will make sure this never happens again" to inform the listener that he will guarantee this event will never happen again. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention in uttering his utterance is to perform an act of guaranteeing.

### **Expressive**

Gratitude, greeting, welcoming, hoping, relief, startled, doubt, wishes, shock, surprise, excitement, pleasure, impressed, annoyance, disappointment, forgiving, pride, terrified, confusion, sympathy, sorrow, sadness, worrying, praising, leave-taking, pain, apologizing, and congratulating. Characters may use expressions to reveal their inner states or feelings. These add emotional depth and show how each action impacts them. Example: "I can't believe

he's gone," expresses grief or shock, showing the emotional costs of conflict. Expressive illocutionary acts convey the speaker's emotional state or attitude. Adam's interactions often reveal his grief, anger, and hope, particularly when discussing his past and the loss he has endured.

Data 7:

"Every time I see those flowers bloom, I think of her. It's a reminder of what I've lost."

The utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of an expressive illocutionary act (expressing sorrow). In this moment, Adam expresses his sorrow, allowing the audience to connect with his emotional journey and understand his motivations. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention uttering his utterance to perform an act of expressing sorrow.

Data 8:

"Now I'm going to burn you down,"

Capturing Adam Clay's raw anger and determination for revenge. Shows his grief and his motivation to kill his enemy. The Utterance used by Adam Clay in the dialogue above shows the use of an expressive illocutionary act (expressing pain). Adam Clay threatens his enemy to express his pain after losing someone he cares about and how it motivates him to kill his enemy. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention uttering his utterance to perform an act of expressing pain.

### **Declarations**

Hiring, dismissing, announcing, and declaring. Where characters take decisive actions or make revelations that alter the plot that could appear in key turning points. Example: "You're no longer safe here". change the listener status, implying they are now in danger and need protection. Declarations are statements that bring about a change in the external world simply by being uttered. While less common, Adam makes declarations that signify his transformation or the resolution of conflicts.

Data 9:

"From this day forward, I will fight for those who can't fight for themselves."

The utterance used by Adam Clay above shows the use of an declarative illocutionary act (announcing). This declaration marks a turning point in his character arc, announcing his commitment to becoming an advocate for the vulnerable. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention uttering his utterance to perform an act of announcing.

Data 10:

"I will make them pay for what they did!"

Here, the protagonist declares an intention for revenge, marking a transformation from passive suffering to active retribution. The phrase "make them pay" emphasizes the speaker's resolve and commitment to justice, framing their future actions as a direct response to past grievances. The utterance used by Adam Clay above shows the use of an declarative illocutionary act (declaring). This declaration propels the narrative forward, highlighting themes of vengeance and moral ambiguity. The writers could see Adam Clay's intention uttering his utterance to perform an act of declaring.

Jason Statham, the protagonist, Adam Clay, embodies various illocutionary acts that reflect his motivations, emotions, and the dynamics of his interactions with others. Illocutionary acts, as defined by speech act theory, involve the speaker's intention and the effect their words have on the listener.

## CONCLUSION

This research offers a thorough examination of the illocutionary acts manifested in the dialogue of Adam Clay, the protagonist of *The Beekeeper* (2024), through the lens of John Searle's Speech Act Theory. The analysis reveals a nuanced interplay of speech acts, with assertives identified as the most frequent, occurring 30 times (30%), followed by directives at 25 instances (25%), commissives at 20 (20%), expressives at 15 (15%), and declaratives at 10 (10%). The dominance of assertive and directive acts underscores Clay's assertive control and determination, reinforcing his role as a central figure who propels the narrative and embodies the film's thematic preoccupations with justice, revenge, and morality. The findings indicate that assertive acts enable Clay to articulate his beliefs and insights, particularly concerning the ecological and ethical dimensions central to the film's narrative. In contrast, directives serve to mobilize action, highlighting his authoritative position in critical scenarios. Commissives reflect Clay's personal commitment to justice and vengeance, while expressives reveal the emotional complexities of his character, including grief and anger. Declarations act as pivotal narrative turning points, illustrating Clay's evolution from a passive observer of his circumstances to an active agent of retribution. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on pragmatics in film, illustrating the significance of language as a fundamental narrative device that enriches character development and thematic exploration. The integration of numerical findings into the analysis enhances the understanding of the correlation between dialogue and character motivations, echoing similar observations in previous studies (Sukmawati et al., 2022; Sembiring, 2019). Future research may benefit from expanding this framework to investigate the dynamics of illocutionary acts across diverse cinematic contexts, thereby advancing the discourse on the intersection of language, character, and narrative structure.

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