

Analysis of Locutionary Speech Acts of the Main Character in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's Novel *Bumi Cinta*: a Pragmatic Study on Character Development

Choeirul Azhar¹, Muhammad Ridho², Dewi Rani Gustiasari³

Study Program of Indonesian Literature, Universitas Pamulang. Jl. Raya Puspitek, Buaran, Kec. Pamulang, Kota
Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15310

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Locutionary Act, Pragmatics, Character Development, Indonesian Novel, Literary Analysis</p>	<p>This study aims to analyze the forms and functions of locutionary speech acts produced by the main character, Muhammad Ayyas, in the novel <i>Bumi Cinta</i> by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, using a pragmatic theoretical framework. Locutionary speech acts (literal meaning) are regarded as the primary foundation for understanding a character's utterances and the author's strategic approach to characterization. This descriptive-analytical qualitative study employs listening and note-taking techniques to collect data in the form of Muhammad Ayyas's utterances. The analysis reveals that locutionary speech acts are realized through three dominant sentence forms: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Declarative locutions function to affirm the character's principles and his intellectual-religious identity, as illustrated in utterances such as "If God wills it, anything can happen!" and "That is adultery! It is forbidden!" Interrogative locutions are strategically employed for persuasive and rhetorical purposes, as exemplified by the question, "Answer honestly, Yelena, when you were in a critical condition... whose name did you call to ask for help?" Meanwhile, imperative locutions display a spectrum of assertiveness, ranging from humanistic encouragement, such as "Come on, Dev, hurry up, stop joking around. Oh God, it is so cold, Dev," to direct moral resistance, as seen in the utterance, "Hey devil, take your companion and leave this place." Overall, the analysis of literal meaning through locutionary speech acts proves to be an effective key for revealing the richness and firmness of a complex and multifaceted character. This finding underscores the importance of locutionary analysis in pragmatic studies of literary texts, particularly in uncovering character construction and ideological positioning through language use.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license</p>	<p>Corresponding Author: Choeirul Azhar Study Program of Indonesian Literature, Universitas Pamulang. Jl. Raya Puspitek, Buaran, Kec. Pamulang, Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15310 c,hoeirul2000@gmail.com</p>



INTRODUCTION

The novel, as a literary genre, is a complex medium that represents life through narrative and dialogue. Language within dialogue serves as an essential instrument for authors not only to advance the plot but also to construct characters in depth. To understand how language

operates in literary works, a pragmatic approach offers a relevant analytical framework. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines the meanings of utterances in relation to context, emphasizing how speakers use language and how listeners interpret it in real-world settings (Huang, 2022; Schiffrin, 2022).

A central theory in pragmatics is Speech Act Theory, pioneered by J. L. Austin (2021) and further developed by John R. Searle (2021). This concept remains a foundational framework for understanding language as action, enriched by contemporary perspectives integrating social and cognitive dimensions (Haugh, 2021; Cutting, 2024). The theory asserts that every utterance is not merely a sequence of words but an act. Austin classifies speech acts into three levels: locution (the act of saying something), illocution (the act performed in saying something), and perlocution (the effect produced on the listener).

This study specifically focuses on locutionary acts, the act of producing an utterance with literal meaning according to lexical and grammatical conventions. Although often regarded as the most basic layer, locutional analysis holds a crucial role in literary studies (Lee, 2025). The author's lexical choices and literal sentence constructions for a character constitute the primary foundation shaping the reader's perception of that character's self-image, socio-intellectual background, and underlying principles (Archer, 2023).

Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Bumi Cinta* is an ideal object of study because it is rich with intense dialogues that reflect the thoughts and principles of its protagonist, Muhammad Ayyas. As an Indonesian Muslim student pursuing his studies in Moscow, Russia, Ayyas is constantly confronted with situations that challenge his convictions, compelling him to articulate his worldview explicitly. His literal utterances serve as direct reflections of his personality, knowledge, and moral steadfastness (Pili, 2025). For instance, his firmness appears when he rejects Devid's temptation: "Gila kau Dev! Itu zina! Haram!"

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to analyze the locutionary speech acts of the main character in *Bumi Cinta*. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to interpret meaning embedded in literary dialogue, which requires close reading, contextual sensitivity, and interpretive depth. Rather than quantifying linguistic forms, the study prioritizes understanding how literal utterances shape character construction within the narrative. This orientation aligns with the view that literary pragmatics must attend to both textual features and the broader social worlds that the text evokes.

The primary data of this study consisted of the protagonist's utterances found in the novel. These utterances were selected because they serve as direct linguistic representations of the character's thoughts, moral stance, and interpersonal orientation. The researcher carefully examined the novel in its entirety to identify segments of dialogue that contain clear locutionary meaning. This process ensured that the data truly reflected the protagonist's linguistic behavior rather than isolated or context-free expressions.

Data collection was conducted through the reading and note-taking technique commonly used in literary linguistics. The researcher repeatedly read the novel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline and conversational dynamics. Every relevant

utterance was documented manually, along with its narrative context, surrounding characters, and situational background. Recording contextual information was crucial, as locutionary meaning depends on literal form while also interacting with the circumstances in which it is spoken.

After data collection, the utterances were grouped according to their linguistic forms: declarative, interrogative, and imperative expressions. This categorization followed the pragmatic framework that defines locutionary acts as literal expressions produced by a speaker. Each group was analyzed to determine how its literal meaning contributes to the overall portrayal of Muhammad Ayyas. Such categorization allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns and stylistic tendencies that reveal consistency in the character's speech style.

The analysis utilized a content analysis technique that emphasizes meaning interpretation through systematic examination of text. Each utterance was interpreted in relation to its lexical structure, grammatical form, and narrative placement. The researcher then evaluated how these literal elements signal aspects of the protagonist's personality, such as intellectual clarity, moral firmness, or emotional restraint. By focusing on the text as both linguistic and literary material, the analysis bridged linguistic theory with narrative interpretation.

To maintain analytical rigor, the study incorporated triangulation through theoretical comparison. The findings were continuously aligned with the principles of Speech Act Theory, particularly Austin and Searle's classification of locution. This theoretical grounding helped prevent subjective over-interpretation and ensured that the discussion stayed within the appropriate pragmatic framework. Triangulation also strengthened the reliability of the interpretation by linking textual patterns with established linguistic concepts.

Researcher reflexivity was an important component of the method. As literary interpretation involves subjective engagement, the researcher maintained reflective notes to monitor personal biases, expectations, and emotional responses toward the protagonist. These reflections were used to prevent unintentional distortion of meaning. A self-critical stance ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the data rather than in the researcher's personal judgments.

The final stage involved synthesizing the results into thematic findings that explain how locutionary speech acts contribute to character development. Themes were derived inductively from repeated patterns in the data while also informed by pragmatic theory. The synthesis process allowed the researcher to articulate a coherent narrative about how literal language shapes the representation of Muhammad Ayyas. The methodological steps taken in this study ensured that the analysis was systematic, transparent, and firmly rooted in qualitative literary research principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Declarative Locutionary Speech Acts

Declarative locution is an utterance expressed in the form of a statement and serves to convey information, beliefs, or principles in a literal manner.

Table 1. Declarative Locutionary Speech Acts

No.	Utterance	Context	Analysis of Locutionary Meaning
1	“The Ka’bah is merely a qibla, the direction toward which Muslims turn their faces when performing prayer.”	Explaining the concept of qibla to Doctor Anastasia Palazzo.	Literally defines the “Ka’bah” not as an object of worship but as a “qibla” or directional focus in prayer. The words “merely” and “indeed” function to correct a misconception clearly and directly.
2	“If God wills, anything can happen!”	Responding to Yelena’s amazement over a natural phenomenon she considered extraordinary.	Conveys a fundamental theological principle: belief in God’s absolute power over all events.
3	“You’re crazy, Dev! That is adultery! Forbidden!”	Rejecting Devid’s suggestion to hire an escort in Moscow.	A direct moral judgment. The words “adultery” and “forbidden” are used in their literal Islamic legal sense to denote strictly prohibited actions.
4	“I am here not for pleasure, let alone to look for women, Dev.”	Affirming his purpose in Moscow to Devid.	A straightforward declaration of intention, emphasizing academic and spiritual goals rather than worldly pleasures.
5	“I do not want to receive a kiss from a woman who is not lawful for me.”	Reprimanding Doctor Anastasia Palazzo after she kissed him.	A clear statement of principle, establishing relational boundaries based on religious teachings regarding what is lawful and unlawful.

Ayyas’s declarative locutions function primarily as tools for asserting his identity and principles. In the first instance, he positions himself as an educator, while the third and fourth examples highlight his moral firmness and clarity of purpose. Overall, the declarative form becomes the author’s key device for portraying Ayyas as knowledgeable, principled, and resolute.

Forms of Interrogative Locutionary Speech Acts

Interrogative locution refers to utterances expressed in the form of questions that literally seek information or confirmation.

Table 2. Interrogative Locutionary Speech Acts

No.	Utterance	Context	Analysis of Locutionary Meaning
1	“Which floor are we going to, Dev?”	Asking Devid upon arriving for the first time at the apartment building in Moscow.	A pure interrogative locution. Literally, Ayyas seeks specific information (the floor number) to remove his uncertainty.

No.	Utterance	Context	Analysis of Locutionary Meaning
2	“Answer honestly, Yelena. When you were in a critical state... whose name did you call for help?”	Challenging Yelena’s atheism after she survived a life-threatening incident.	A rhetorical question. Literally requesting an honest admission, it functions to prompt Yelena’s introspection about her beliefs.
3	“Do I also need to take off everything I am wearing for you to understand?”	Responding to Linor who was teasing him in the room.	A sarcastic question. Literally asking about further action, yet actually expressing rejection through irony.
4	“Did I hear you correctly, Dev?”	Reacting to Devid’s request to be awakened for prayer.	Literally a request for confirmation expressing surprise. The utterance shows Ayyas’s astonishment at Devid’s change in attitude.
5	“How many days will you be there?”	Asking about Linor’s planned trip to Kiev.	A direct interrogative seeking factual information, showing reasonable concern for the interlocutor’s travel plans.

The variation in Ayyas’s interrogative locutions demonstrates the flexibility of his character. Data (1) and (5) reveal his practical and inquisitive nature. However, in data (2) and (4), the interrogative form becomes a tool for wise and persuasive moral guidance. Data (3) shows his ability to use irony as a form of self-defense.

Forms of Imperative Locutionary Speech Acts

Imperative locution refers to utterances expressed in the form of commands or requests.

Table 3. Imperative Locutionary Speech Acts

No.	Utterance	Context	Analysis of Locutionary Meaning
1	“Enough, Dev, hurry up, stop joking around. Masya Allah, it’s so cold, Dev.”	Urging Devid to quickly find a taxi because he cannot bear the cold in Moscow.	Literally, this is a command to “hurry” and “stop joking.” The word “yuk” (let’s) softens the command, making it a natural and friendly urging between companions.
2	“Fine, we will get out. But we will not pay you!”	Responding to a taxi driver who threatened to drop them off before reaching their destination.	A literal directive to stop and let them “get out,” coupled with a refusal to pay. This command reflects Ayyas’s firmness in confronting unfair treatment.
3	“Hey, you devil, take your friend out of	Expelling Linor and Sergei when they	This is the strongest imperative locution. The literal meaning is an order of expulsion accompanied by a physical

No.	Utterance	Context	Analysis of Locutionary Meaning
	here. If not, I will finish both of you right here. Now!"	behave indecently in the living room.	threat. The terms "devil" and "finish" signal heightened anger and a forceful act of moral reprimand.
4	"With respect, I ask you to leave now!"	Ordering Linor to leave his locked room after she attempted to seduce him.	A direct command softened by a respectful phrase to maintain ethical conduct despite the morally urgent situation. It demonstrates strong self-control.
5	"Tell him your problem exactly as it is."	Advising Devid to consult Imam Hasan Sadulayev about his personal issues.	A directive functioning as guidance and constructive counsel. The command directs Devid toward a spiritual and responsible solution.

The forms of imperative locution effectively reveal the emotional range and firmness of Ayyas. Data (1) reflects a humane sense of urgency, while Data (3) and (4) represent the peak of his moral assertion and decisiveness. The harsh command in Data (3) demonstrates physical courage, whereas the structured command in Data (4) illustrates strong self-control. Overall, the imperative forms portray Ayyas as a principled figure.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that locutionary speech acts play a significant role in shaping the characterization of Muhammad Ayyas in the novel *Bumi Cinta*. Through a pragmatic lens, the analysis reveals that the literal forms of his utterances consistently reflect his moral integrity, intellectual depth, and emotional restraint. Declarative expressions function as tools for asserting identity, allowing Ayyas to articulate religious principles, personal intentions, and ethical boundaries in a clear and composed manner. Interrogative forms display his flexibility, showing both practical curiosity and a capacity to guide others toward introspection through persuasive questioning. Meanwhile, imperative expressions uncover the breadth of his emotional responses, ranging from gentle encouragement to assertive moral intervention, indicating a character who balances empathy with firmness. The combined presence of these locutionary types highlights the author's intentional use of language to construct a multidimensional protagonist whose worldview is expressed directly through his literal speech. Rather than relying on narration alone, the novel foregrounds dialogue as the primary medium through which character and conviction are revealed. This confirms the value of pragmatic analysis in literary studies, demonstrating that the examination of locutionary acts provides meaningful insight into how linguistic choices contribute to narrative depth and character formation.

REFERENCE

- Archer, D. (2023). *The pragmatics of literary dialogue: Character, conflict, and context*. *Language and Literature*, 32(1), 5–25.

- Austin, J. L. (2021). *How to do things with words: The William James lectures* (2nd ed., Reissue). Harvard University Press.
- Birner, B. J. (2024). *Introduction to pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cutting, J. (2024). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- El Shirazy, H. (n.d.). *Bumi cinta*.
- Haugh, M. (2021). *Rethinking context in pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Huang, Y. (2022). *The Oxford dictionary of pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, T. B. (2025). Locutionary acts in narrative: The literal basis of implied meaning. *Journal of Narrative Analysis*, 15(2), 112–130.
- Levinson, S. C. (2024). *Pragmatics* (Reprint with new introduction). Cambridge University Press.
- Pili, D. (2025). Characterization through reported speech in modern Indonesian novels. *Asian Journal of Literary Studies*, 10(1), 45–62.
- Schiffrin, D. (2022). *Inquiries in pragmatics: The role of context, intent, and interaction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Searle, J. R. (2021). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language* (Reissue). Cambridge University Press.
- Taleb, K. B. (2022). Speech act theory and ethical discourse: Analyzing moral imperatives in dialogue. *International Journal of Ethics and Language*, 6(3), 180–201.
- Yule, G. (2023). *Pragmatics* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.