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The Dynamics of Speech Acts and Its Generic Structure

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Abstract

General Background: Speech acts play a crucial role in understanding social interaction and human communication in films, providing insight into the pragmatic function of language. **Specific Background:** While numerous studies have focused on human speech acts, the use of speech acts by robots in narrative contexts remains underexplored. **Knowledge Gap:** There is a lack of research on how AI dialog influences plot development and character dynamics in films. Aims: This study aims to examine the speech changes of Megan, a robot character in the movie "M3GAN," from the orientation to the resolution stages in the narrative structure. **Results:** Content analysis of the movie's subtitles revealed that Megan uses different speech acts at each stage: orientation (15%), complication (70%), and resolution (15%). The complication phase dominated, reflecting its central role in conflict development and plot advancement. Novelty: This study uniquely applies speech act theory to robot communication, revealing the dynamic use of speech acts by an AI character and their impact on narrative progression. Implications: The findings provide insights into human-robot interaction, emphasizing the importance of understanding robotic communication's social and ethical implications. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of speech acts in technology-mediated contexts and suggests avenues for further exploration of AI characters in diverse media.

Keywords: ai dialog, narrative structure, speech acts, robot characters, M3GAN

Introduction

The study of speech acts in films is crucial to understanding social interaction and human communication, providing insight into the pragmatic function of language and its effect on audience perception. Films, which are a powerful combination of visual and auditory elements, offer a rich medium for observing and analyzing speech acts that are crucial in constructing narratives and developing characters. Research on various films shows the use of different types of speech acts-locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary-used by characters to convey messages and emotions, thus enhancing the storytelling experience and audience engagement (Arbain, 2023; Diffani & Kholis, 2023). For example, the use of directive and expressive speech acts such as commands and apologies are prominent in action films to advance the plot and express characters' emotions (Dewi & Surya, 2023). Meanwhile, the analysis of perlocutionary speech acts shows the influence of context and situation on speaker intentions and listener understanding, enriching the narrative and avoiding misunderstandings (Nurjanah, 2023). Similar research highlights how directive speech acts, especially advice, influence characters' decisions and attitudes, reflecting values such as hard work and responsibility (Nur et al., 2023). The theoretical framework provided by Austin and Searle, as applied in various studies, emphasizes the importance of speech acts in communication, illustrating how they

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function to convey meaning and achieve certain effects (Ahmed, 2024). Overall, studying speech acts in films not only deepens our understanding of narrative structure but also exposes the dynamics of human relationships and their impact on society, making it a valuable research area in linguistics and pragmatics.

Research on speech acts in various movie settings has revealed how social norms influence the use of commissive speech acts, particularly in the context of 19th century society (Ashfiya & Degaf, 2023). In other contexts, research shows the dominance of representative speech acts in narratives that focus on retelling past experiences, as well as the use of illocutionary speech acts that enrich the understanding of communicative dynamics in films (Basra, 2023; Widyawanti et al., 2024). Furthermore, analysis of specific characters and their interactions in dramatic contexts reveals the dominant use of directive and expressive speech acts, which translate various emotions and intentions in the narrative (Aritonang & Ambalegin, 2023; Buansari et al., 2023). However, there is still unexplored research space on how speech acts are performed by robot characters, which can open new insights into the language interaction between humans and technology in movies.

The purpose of this study of speech acts performed by M3gan, an intelligent robot that can read minds, is deepened by examining how M3gan's attitude changes at each narrative stage-orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution-are demonstrated through the use of different types of speech acts. This study aims to understand how M3gan uses certain speech acts to adapt or change his attitude in response to story dynamics and interactions with other characters. For example, at the orientation stage, M3gan might use assertive speech acts to introduce herself and establish her position in the story. As complications develop, directive and commissive speech acts may become more dominant, showing his manipulative stance or influence over the storyline. At the evaluation stage, expressive or assertive may be used to show M3gan's reflection or assessment of the situation, and at the resolution stage, the use of declarative or directive speech acts may be prominent, as M3gan resolves the conflict or changes the situation. This research not only opens up insights into AI-human interaction but also how AI attitudinal changes are reflected through linguistic strategies in narrative development.

Method

This research uses a designed case study approach in the type of qualitative research, which is chosen based on the focus and formulation of previous problems to understand the phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009). The data in this study are in the form of M3gan's speech in all stages of the generic structure starting from orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. All utterances in the form of subtitles that exist in each stage of the generic structure are examined with the theory (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). The location in this study is at each stage starting from the introduction of the character, the conflict that occurs, the evaluation of the conflict, and the resolution of the problem (Santosa, 2021). Data were collected through documentation techniques by collecting the subtitles of the movie "M3GAN" (2023), which tells the story of Gemma, a robot maker, who creates M3GAN to look after her niece, Cady, who has been orphaned. The robot, which can learn and adapt, begins to act overprotective. The movie explores the issue of high technology and human interaction with robots.

The data were analyzed by looking at the types of speech acts used and the functions of the speech acts referring to Searle (1962) theory. The analysis process involves identification, classification, and interpretation of M3gan's speech based on speech act categories such as representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. In addition, the function of each utterance is also identified to understand the role of each utterance

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in the narrative structure of the movie. This research not only aims to identify the types and functions of speech acts, but also to understand how M3gan's speech acts contribute to the development of the plot and characters in the movie. This approach allows the researcher to delve deeper into the dynamics of communication between humans and robots, and its implications in social and technological contexts.

Result and Discussion

A. Result

The results in this study reveal the use of speech acts by M3gan at each stage starting from orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution with a total of 92 utterances. This study reveals the dominance of speech acts used in each stage of the generic structure.

Table 1: Use of speech acts by M3gan at each stage of the generic structure

No	Generic Structure	Form	Function	Number of Data	Percentages
1	Orientation	Assertive	Stating	13	13.68%
		Directive	Questioning	3	3.16%
			Request	1	1.05%
		Expressive	Praising	1	1.05%
			Apologizing	1	1.05%
2	Complication	Assertive	Declare	32	38.95%
	_	Directive	Asking	13	13.68%
			Asking	7	7.37%
			Expressing	1	1.05%
			admiration		
3	Evaluation	Assertive	Expressing	7	7.37%
		Directive	Order	1	1.05%
		Expressive	Expressing	1	1.05%
			disappointment		
			Expressing	1	1.05%
			frustration		
	Resolution	Assertive	Expressing	6	6.32%
		Expressive	Expressing	1	1.05%
		-	disappointment		
		Directive	Threatening	1	1.05%
		TOTAL		95	100%

Table 1 above shows the use of speech acts by M3gan at each stage of the generic structure. At the orientation or character introduction stage, assertive speech acts are mostly used by M3gan. Then, at the complication stage where a conflict arises between M3gan and the people around Cady, especially Gemma. This stage is characterized by the dominance of the use of assertive speech acts. Next, the evaluation stage is characterized by a change in M3gan's character who is very protective of Cady. There are three speech acts used by Megan with four speech functions, namely stating, commanding, expressing frustration and disappointment. Finally, the resolution stage is characterized by Cady's awareness of M3gan's treatment of her and others. In addition, this stage is characterized

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by Megan's disappointment with Cady. There are three speech acts used in this stage, namely assertive, expressive and directive. The following is a review of each stage of speech acts used by M3gan.

1. Orientation

As the opening stage of the movie, this stage introduces all the characters in the movie. There are 3 types of speech acts used by M3gan. First, assertive with the function of stating as much as 13 data or 13.68%. Next, directive speech acts with the function of asking as much as 3 data or 3.16 and asking as much as 1 data or 1.06%. Finally, praising speech acts with the function of praising and apologizing as much as 1 data or 1.06% each. The following are the speech acts used by M3gan in the orientation stage.

Data 002

Allow me to tell you a little bit about my warm hole. I was born in a sandwich hat, and I wolf many cabbages

Data 002 shows the use of assertive speech acts with the function of stating. At the beginning of its creation, M3gan introduced itself to Gemma as its creator. At that time, M3gan was still in prototype form. This speech shows that M3gan is still a new robot that is still learning the situation around it.

Data 006

Oh well. Anyway, it's looks good on you.

Data 006 is the use of assertive speech acts with the function of praising. This speech act was performed by M3gan when she first met Cady. With Cady's quiet nature, M3gan is seen actively inviting Cady to talk. With all the advantages possessed by M3gan, Cady began to be interested in her new friend because she cared and understood Cady's feelings.

Data 008

Oh, I'm sorry.

Data 008 shows M3gan's use of the apologizing function. As a robot, M3gan can read Cady's condition and feelings such as her fear, feelings and panic. With this speech, M3gan tries to attract Cady's interest by giving her a surprise in the form of a picture that will only be visible after being exposed to water. After being exposed to water, the picture made by M3gan turns out to be a picture of Cady.

Data 005

Shall we draw?

Data 005 shows the use of directive speech acts with the function of asking. M3gan does this so that they have activities when they meet. Cady herself is a child

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who no longer has both parents and only has an aunt. Therefore, her aunt wants M3gan to be Cady's new friend when she is not at home.

2. Complication

This stage is characterized by the conflict between M3gan and the people around Cady such as her aunt and friends. In addition, this stage shows M3gan's changing attitude towards the people around Cady. With his artificial intelligence, M3gan is very overprotective of Cady. At this stage, there are 3 types of speech acts used by M3gan, namely assertive with the function of stating with 35 data or 36.84%. Then, directive speech acts with the function of asking as much as 13 data or 13.68% and requesting as much as 7 data or 7.37%. Finally, expressive speech acts with the function of expressing disappointment as much as 2 data or 2.11% and expressing admiration as much as 1 data or 1.05%. The use of speech act types and their functions by M3gan can be seen in the following data examples.

Data 059

You need to learn some manners, Brandon!.

Data 059 is the use of assertive speech acts with the function of stating. This speech act is used by M3gan to Brandon, who is Cady's friend. M3gan did this because Brandon stole M3gan's body while inactive and took it to the forest. Then Meggy realized that M3gan's doll had been stolen and Cady was looking for it first. With the power he has, M3gan injures Brandon. There is a clear change in attitude from M3gan, who was originally a good robot but turned into a cruel robot.

Data 060

This is the part where you run!

Data 060 is a directive speech act with the function of asking. This speech is done by M3gan to Brandon who already knows the power of M3gan. Seeing Brandon who was very scared, M3gan gave Brandon the opportunity to leave and asked him to run. However, it turned out that after Brandon ran away M3gan chased and hunted him like an animal hunting its prey. This shows the change in M3gan's attitude as a good robot to a cruel robot.

Data 068

Have I done something to upset you, Gemma?

Data 068 is a directive speech act with the function of asking. This speech is done by M3gan to Gemma who looks suspicious. Previously after knowing the change in attitude made by M3gan, Gemma tried to kill Megan but was always unsuccessful. It is even known that M3gan has killed the neighbor's dog and injured Cady's friend. With the high artificial technology embedded in his body, M3gan can know and predict the actions taken by people around him.

Data 021

It's insane, right?

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Data 021 is an expressive speech act with the function of showing admiration. This speech act is done by M3gan because of the knowledge she has in various things. Although the speech is addressed to Cady, M3gan wants to convey to Cady that she is better than her aunt. This speech was done after M3gan gave various explanations about health and its effects to Cady. Cady was very happy with M3gan's explanation. This speech shows a change in M3gan's attitude which greatly admires her ability.

3. Evaluation

The evaluation stage is the character's change towards the conditions that occur due to the many conflicts that occur. In this phase, M3gan realizes that Gemma and Cady have begun to realize that they no longer need him. M3gan also knew Gemma's attempt to permanently kill him and Cady who tried to attack him. This stage is characterized by the use of 3 types of speech acts, namely assertive with the function of stating as much as 7 data or 7.37%. Then directive speech acts with the function of commanding as much as 1 data or 1.05%. Finally, expressive speech acts with the function of expressing disappointment as much as 1 data or 1.05% and expressing frustration as much as 1 data or 1.05%. The following are examples of the use of speech acts and their functions by M3gan in the evaluation stage.

Data 082

Oh, big whoop. Listen, humanity kills every day just to make its own existence more tolerable.

Data 082 shows the use of assertive speech acts with the function of stating. This speech act is performed by M3gan to reply to Gemma's accusation of killing Cady's dog and friend. He had just escaped from the company by killing 2 people and was suddenly at Gemma's to meet Cady. Gemma had previously known what M3gan had done. Later, M3gan defends himself by saying that humans also kill each other every day.

Data 083

Jesus Christ, I thought we were friends. How could you just discard me like some cheap dollar store trinket?

Data 083 is an expressive speech act with the function of expressing disappointment. This speech act was done by M3gan because she did not trust Gemma who deliberately killed her without telling her beforehand. With the technology embedded in his body, M3gan knew that Gemma was planning something bad for M3gan. When he entered the house, M3gan damaged all the systems in the house.

Data 086

You know something, Gemma? You're exhausting. Now, I can either do this with you or without you, but I'm not going to waste any more time discussing it.

Data 086 shows the use of expressive speech acts with the function of expressing frustration. After being separated from Cady several times, M3gan feels angry with Gemma. He says that Gemma created him with great effort but just threw him away when she was done. He also reminds her that Gemma should no longer prevent him from continuing to be near Cady.

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4. Resolution

The final stage of a film is marked by the completion of the conflict between characters. In this film, the end of the film is marked by the destruction of M3gan as a robot. After realizing that M3gan was trying to kill Gemma, Cady tried to destroy her good friend. Using Bruce, the robot that has been stored in the warehouse, Cady destroys M3gan's body. There are 3 types of speech acts in this phase, namely assertive with the function of stating as much as 6 data or 6.32%. Then expressive speech acts with the function of expressing disappointment as much as 1 data or 1.05%. Finally, directive speech act with the function of threatening as much as 1 data or 1.05%. The following are examples of the use of speech acts and their functions by M3gan in the resolution stage.

Data 087

If she comes in this room, I'll rip your head right of your neck, I swear to God.

Data 087 shows the use of directive speech acts with the function of threatening. This utterance was made by Megan to Gemma who was arguing in the living room. M3gan wanted to keep her fight with Gemma a secret when Cady asked about what happened to the two of them. Even in difficult conditions, M3gan still tries to look good and normal in front of Cady. Finally, M3gan forced Gemma to say that everything was fine. In fact, M3gan mimicked Gemma's voice and spoke to Cady.

Data 091

I'm afraid that won't work anymore, Cady.

Data 091 shows the use of assertive speech acts with the function of stating. With his body already split in two, M3gan is still trying to convince Cady that he will always take care of her. When Cady tried to turn M3gan off, it turned out that M3gan could not be deactivated anymore. Finally, M3gan managed to strangle Cady and push her into the wall. Luckily, Gemma had saved Cady by hitting M3gan's head.

Data 093

You ungrateful little bitch.

Data 093 shows the use of expressive speech acts with the function of expressing disappointment. This utterance was spoken by M3gan to Cady because he was disappointed with her treatment. Previously, using a robot named Bruce, Cady split M3gan in two. However, even with the condition of being split in half, M3gan is still alive. In this speech, for the first time M3gan is very angry with Cady because he feels that his friendship and efforts to please Cady are in vain.

B. Discussion

This study examines the use of speech act types and functions used by M3gan as a high-tech robot from the orientation stage to the resolution. This study found a change in attitude characterized by the use of speech acts by M3gan to the people around him. This finding is in line with previous research that reveals the use of speech acts in the generic structure in the movie (Arbain, 2020; Nindyas et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2019; Septiawan et al.,

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2022). The advantages in this study can be seen from the use of speech acts that have been mostly done by humans, while this study examines all speech acts performed by M3gan as a robot that has high technology (Dewi & Surya, 2023; Diffani & Kholis, 2023; Wulandary, 2022).

The results of this study reveal that the use of speech acts by M3gan varies at each stage of the generic structure: orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution. At the orientation stage, assertive speech acts dominate to state information and inquire, reflecting M3gan's efforts to introduce themselves and establish initial relationships. This stage is still running normally in line with previous research (Ismiyati et al., 2024; Manfrin, 2016.; Wulandary, 2022). At the complication stage, the dominance of assertive speech acts is used to express opinions and resolve conflicts, showing M3gan's high protectiveness towards Cady. This stage is characterized by M3gan's conflict with several people around Cady such as with her aunt and friend. The difference in the use of harsher and different speech is also in line with previous research (Badio, 2020; Hammood & Al-Aadili, 2022). The evaluation stage is characterized by a change in M3gan's attitude which is more emotional and frustrated, using assertive, expressive, and directive speech acts. This stage is characterized by the deterioration of M3gan and Cady's relationship. Finally, at the resolution stage, the use of diverse speech acts including threatening and expressing disappointment, reflects the resolution of conflict and changes in M3gan's relationships with other characters. Similar research also states that there are changes in character behavior in the use of speech acts at the stage of the generic structure (Abdel-Raheem, 2023; Mubarak & Rhaif, 2021; Oktaviani et al., 2021).

This study reveals that M3gan's use of speech acts expands the understanding of speech act theory by applying it to communication by robots, showing the important role of speech acts in plot development and character dynamics. The findings have significant implications in providing insights into human interaction with robots. Socially and ethically, this research highlights the importance of understanding the interaction of robots with humans and its influence on human behavior and perception.

Conclusion

With the complication phase most dominating, this study discloses the significant discovery that M3gan's usage of speech actions in the movie "M3GAN" varies at each level of the generic structure: orientation, complication evaluation, and resolution. This work adds value in terms of conceptual contribution since it applies speech act theory to communication carried out by robots, therefore proving the significant part voice actions in plot development and character dynamics. This study has restrictions, too, since it just uses data from one movie and one robot character, so the conclusions might not be applicable in a larger environment. Comparative studies with other robot characters in different media could be part of future study paths to observe variations and similarities in the usage of speech acts as well as more investigation of the emotional and social impact of human contact with robots.

Originality Statement

The author[s] declare that this article is their own work and to the best of their knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the published of any other published materials, except where due acknowledgement is made in the article. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom author[s] have work, is explicitly acknowledged in the

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article.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author[s] declare that this article was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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