

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature and media have long led children's narrative around themes of innocence, mischief, and moral insight. These portrayals are often designed to educate and guide the children, shaping them into morally upright individuals for the future. They are often pictured in narratives of mystical hero and villain, or going through a dangerous journey where they will learn the good and bad along the way. On the contrary to the themes mentioned previously, The movie *Matilda the Musical* (2022) embodies the theme of rebellion or revolution. Through this movie, rebellion isn't merely an act of mischief but a meaningful response to those that failed to protect and respect the children. The young protagonist, alongside her peers, utilises speech to confront both familial neglect and institutional tyranny caused by authoritative adults. This study explored how linguistic devices are used to perform speech actions of child rebellion.

Linguistics, as the study of language, encompasses both internal and external elements (Hastuti, et al., 2022). One of the external elements of linguistics is pragmatics, which concerns the study of meaning along with semantics. In the lens of pragmatics, the theory of speech acts offers a framework for understanding the function of language beyond conveying mere information or expression. It is the study of the relation between semiotic systems and the use of it within context along with semantics. On the other hand, according to Leech (1983), pragmatics refers to the study of meaning in relation to speech situations. He also mentioned in his book titled, "*Principles of Pragmatics*" (1983), that Searle (1969) argues that

pragmatics is an approach that views the theory of meaning as a sub-part of the theory of action (speech act). According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of meaning that is delivered by the speaker and received by the listener. It involves people's interpretation of meaning related to context, which includes how the meaning is interpreted in a particular context or how the context influences the interpretation of meaning. This framework can also be utilised to explore the ways listeners understand the speaker's intended meaning.

Speech acts are one of the theories within Pragmatics. It focuses on the action of an individual (speaker in this case), which is performed intentionally through language or utterances (Srinoparut et al., 2022). Austin (1962) (as cited in Yule, 1996), classified the action performed by producing an utterance into three acts. These include the locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act refers to the basic act of utterance, the production. It is the act of forming sounds and words in producing meaningful utterances. On the other hand, the illocutionary act refers to the purpose of the produced utterance. Within our utterances, there must be a purpose that we intend for the listener to hear, such as a statement, explanation, offer, and so on. Lastly, Yule refers to the perlocutionary act as the effect of the speaker's utterance. Simply put, it refers to the response of the listener after understanding the speaker's intended meaning.

From all of these classifications of speech acts, the illocutionary act is the most discussed within the speech acts. This is because the speaker's intended meaning varies; it may be implied from the utterances themselves. It may even create a misunderstanding by how diverse the interpretation of the hidden meaning within utterances is. Speech acts contain complex meanings, often with complex

contexts (Ratri and Bram, 2022). This classification is not only used in everyday conversations, but it can also be used to analyse utterances or languages within the media like live speeches, conferences, movies, books, and the like. Searle (1964) then classified the types of illocutionary acts into five categories including representative, declarative, directive, expressive, and commissive.

There have been several studies conducted by various writers regarding the theory of Speech Acts. In completing this study, the writer has taken some articles relevant to it as the secondary data source. For example, Thiab and Bairmani (2023) conducted a study examining the speech acts used to communicate each type and cause of aggression in the data under examination, this study seeks to identify the types and causes of aggression committed by aggressors. The study examines the behaviour of aggression in American animated films using a qualitative method along with utilising an internet-based data collection method. They have chosen five animated films from Walt Disney Animation Studios and Disney Toon Studios as the focus as well as the data source of the study, including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Dumbo*, *Cinderella*, *The Sword in the Stone*, and *The Rescuers*, as they employed online data collection techniques. They used Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts (Thiab & Bairmani, 2023).

Other than the studies that have been found above, the writer also found studies that focus on the classification of speech acts. For example, Tran and Tran (2022) attempts to analyse the classifications of speech acts performed by the characters of the movie. The movie that the author analyses in this article is a Disney movie, *Cinderella 3: A Twist in Time*, through its dialogue transcript as the primary data source. The writers used a descriptive qualitative study to conduct this

study. This article adopted Searle's theory of speech acts classification, namely, representative, commissive, expressive, declarative and directive (Tran, Tran, 2022).

Srinoparut and his colleagues (2024) also conducted a study on speech acts by attempting to explore the illocutionary acts produced by the main villains in the animated movies of Walt Disney Animation Studios. The focus of the research consists of all utterances produced by nine villains from nine well-known Disney animations. The selected villains included the Evil Queen from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Captain Hook from *Peter Pan* (1953), Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Cruella de Vil from *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961), Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Jafar from *Aladdin* (1992); Scar from *The Lion King* (1994), Hades from *Hercules* (1997), and Doctor Facilier from *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). The method used in this article is descriptive qualitative research. This study applied Searle's theory of illocutionary acts, comprising of representatives, directives, declaratives, expressives, and commissives (Srinoparut et al., 2024).

From the previous studies mentioned above, it is clear to see their common characteristics with each other in terms of objectives and findings. They tend to have the same objective, which is to explore and understand the speech acts as well as their types in the utterances collected from the data source. The source of utterances is in-common, yet they also vary. The corpus of the studies are all animated movies that can be considered children's movies, yet the utterances may be taken from the protagonist, the villains, or simply all the characters from the source.

Relevant to the studies mentioned above, this study plans to analyse the related topics within movies. Speech acts are a theory that specialises in the meaning of context between speaker and hearer within conversations, thus, this theory is suitable to utilise in analysing conversation within movies. Movies are an excellent corpus to analyse as they often represent complicated cases of conversation within human lives. By using speech acts, both the explicit and implicit meanings of the utterances of the movie characters can be discovered. In doing this research, the writer used the movie's dialogue transcript in order to fully analyse the speech acts of the characters of the focus. This study used *Matilda the Musical* (2022) movie as the corpus, for the writer has taken interest in analysing children's utterances.

The drama musical movie *Matilda the Musical* was released on November 25th, 2022, inspired by Roald Dahl's novel titled *Matilda* published in 1988. It was then adapted twice into movies (*Matilda* in 1996, *Matilda the Musical* in 2022) and drama theatre. It is a comedy, fantasy, drama-musical movie directed by Mathew Warchus. According to Agustina and her colleague (2024), the movie tells a story about a five-year-old girl, namely Matilda Wormwood, who has extraordinary intelligence and superpowers. She grows up in a difficult and cruel environment since she is denied her rights in both home and school. Her school's cruel headmaster, Miss Trunchbull, has consistently treated her students inhumanely. Matilda cannot withstand the injustice both in her home and school. She stages the act of rebellion along with her friends and Miss Honey, the caring teacher, against the dictatorship of the headmaster (Agustina et al., 2024).

Child rebellion often happens within the family or educational settings, where children may retaliate against things that they perceive as unfair or when they are restricted from autonomy. However, while it is a common issue, the theme is rarely taken as a primary issue within movies. In the movie, *Matilda* takes a stance as an example of a child who defies figures with authority, which includes her neglectful parents and the cruel, oppressive headmaster, as a response to the injustice and denial of her rights. This rarity of an in-depth investigation concerning child rebellion in films has inspired the writer to choose *Matilda the Musical* as the primary focus for the analysis. This study attempted to uncover the underlying meanings and intentions that the children's characters express, by analysing their use of language through the framework of speech acts. According to the theory of speech act, illocutionary acts will allow the analysis of not only the children's speech but also her intentions, whether they are meant to convey her feelings of dissatisfaction, challenge authority, or establish her autonomy.

Studies that are conducted to examine the speech acts that focus on the theme of child rebellion are quite scarce. By recognizing this gap in the existing literature, this study aims to contribute a better understanding of the speech act theory by investigating how speech acts serve as a tool of rebellion. In order to demonstrate how language is used to perform speech of child rebellion in the movie, this study examined how the protagonist, Matilda Wormwood, along with her peers use language as an expression to rebel against her parents and headmaster. Furthermore, this study intended to interpret the sociocultural factors behind the usage of certain dominant types of illocutionary acts by the child characters which adds depth to the socio-pragmatic analysis.

1.2 Research Questions

There are several key issues that are analysed and discussed within the topic of analysis.

1. What are the dominant types of illocutionary acts used by the children in the movie *Matilda the Musical* in performing child rebellion?
2. How do the sociocultural factors contribute to the dominance of the particular illocutionary type used among the child characters?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study aimed to explore and investigate the speech acts performed by the child characters in conveying their retaliation as children who are treated unjustly by the adults in the movie adaptation of *Matilda the Musical* (2022). By focusing on the children's dialogue and interactions, this study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts that she employs in the theme of child rebellion, such as directive, expressive, commissive, representative, and declarative. In doing so, the writer also took an interest in determining the dominant type of illocutionary act that the child characters performed in conveying child rebellion. Furthermore, it also attempted to analyse and interpret the sociocultural factors behind the usage. In order to uncover the pragmatic aspects of child rebellion as depicted in the media, this study intended to reveal how a child character uses language as her tool of rebellion in a movie suited for both children and adults.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is conducted for students and other researchers, particularly in the study of speech acts, to be useful in understanding deeper knowledge concerning speech acts. By analysing the speech acts on the theme of child rebellion, this study

contributed to broadening the ways in which language is used by children in conveying their ideas and expressions, making it relevant to those who are interested in the field of pragmatics, children movie analysis, and sociocultural analysis. The findings of this study may help further research involving speech acts in children's movies. In addition, the writer expected this research to contribute meaningfully to the field of English Literature study, particularly in linguistics. By highlighting the role of speech acts in literature and films, this study enrich the academic study of the use of language as a tool of communication.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study investigated the use of rebellious speech by the child characters in the movie *Matilda the Musical* (2022), focusing on how language is used as tools of resistance for the unjust treatment by adult authority figures. The scope of this study is restricted to selected lines where children explicitly or implicitly challenge and/or oppose the adults over their authoritative control over their lives. These utterances (from the selected lines) are analysed through the lens of Speech Act Theory by Searle (1964) and George Yule (1996). Following on, the result of the dominant speech act classification are analysed thoroughly using the theory of Sociocultural Theory of Child Cognitive Development by Lev Vygotsky (1978).

1.6 Limitation of the Study

This study has its limitations as it does not attempt to generalize findings to all forms of children's discourse. It intentionally limited its focus to a specific case study. It aimed to provide a concentrated pragmatic analysis in the context of one movie and analyse the linguistic construction of rebellion. The analysis of this study is limited to the verbal elements (such as the utterances of the children), particularly

those that qualify as speech acts of child rebellion, such as verbal retaliation, refusal, etc, as well as the sociocultural factors that influences the use of the dominant type of utterance. As the official screenplay or movie script is not publicly available online, this study is limited into using the dialogue transcription of the movie and the related drama script which the movie is adapted from.

