

A Pragmatic Study on Commisive Acts: Related to Political Scene in The Trial of the Chicago 7

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan tindak komisif yang terbagi menjadi enam tipe dan diimplementasikan pada konteks politik di setiap ujaran pembicara sejak persidangan berlangsung dalam film *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Berdasarkan teori yang dianut oleh Searle (1979) diantaranya janji, ancaman, penolakan, peringatan, penawaran, dan jaminan. Berfokus pada investigasi klasifikasi setiap ujaran yang muncul dan mengandung tindak komisif dalam persidangan Chicago. Data diperoleh dari transkrip dan seleksi cuplikan percakapan setiap karakter pada film, sehingga dinalisis secara kualitatif dengan pendekatan pragmatic. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa masing masing tokoh menggunakan tindak komisif sesuai dengan keyakinan ideologis dan fungsi institusional mereka. Sementara pengacara lebih sering menggunakan janji, penawaran, dan jaminan sebagai strategi pembelaan terhadap kliennya dalam mencari keadilan, jaksa agung biasanya menggunakan ancaman dan penolakan untuk memperkuat posisi hukum negara yang berkedaulatan. Sebaliknya, peringatan dan penolakan digunakan oleh hakim untuk mengontrol proses peradilan dan menjaga wibawa pengadilan dan melindungi reputasi kedudukan tertinggi dalam persidangan yang memutuskan hasil akhir. Keenam jenis tindak komisif ini menunjukkan peran retorik yang beragam dalam membingkai konflik hukum dan politik, serta bagaimana bahasa berfungsi sebagai alat kekuasaan, perlawanan, dan negosiasi ideologi dalam ruang wacana pengadilan.

Kata Kunci: Tindak Komisif, Persidangan, Politik

ABSTRACT

*This study analyzes the use of commissive acts which are divided into six types and implemented in the political context in each speaker's utterance since the trial took place in the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Based on the theory adopted by Searle (1979) including promises, threats, refusals, warnings, offers, and guarantees. Focuses on investigating the classification of every utterance that appears and contains commissive acts in the Chicago trial. The data were obtained from transcripts and a selection of snippets of each character's conversations in the film, so they were analyzed qualitatively with a pragmatic approach. The results of the analysis show that each character uses commissive acts according to their ideological beliefs and institutional functions. While lawyers more often use promises, offers, and assurances as defense strategies for their clients in seeking justice, the attorney general usually uses threats and denials to strengthen the legal position of the sovereign state. In contrast, warnings and denials are used by judges to control the judicial process and maintain the prestige of the court and protect the reputation of the highest position in the trial that decides the final outcome. These six types of commissive acts demonstrate the diverse rhetorical roles in framing legal and political conflicts, as well as how language functions as a tool of power, resistance, and ideological negotiation in the court discourse space.*

Keywords: *Commissive acts, Courtroom, Political*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the main foundation of communication and has a very strategic role, especially in politics. The existence of language is not only to convey information, but politicians use language as a supporting tool to influence public opinion, form a self-image and most importantly show a commitment to future actions. This can be reflected in the political situation, where currently the

political context is always an anticipated discussion for social media. In this forum, politicians utilize the situation to attract public attention to shape opinions and perceptions.

The choice of appropriate language in this political situation is very important. The language used in the political context must be precise and clear in order to lead opinion and lead public perception in responding to an action. According to Searle (1979), commissive speech acts are one of the important categories in speech act theory because they show how utterances can bring consequences in real actions. Therefore, the language used by politicians in a trial must be persuasive in order to be convincing in attracting public opinion. In responding to a serious situation, especially creating tension between social and legal, the commissive act is the right choice in executing an opinion formulated in an utterance in the political realm.

Commissive acts that obligate the speaker to follow through on his statements are known to be willing the speech (Rustono 1999: 40). Commissive acts is commitment the speaker to doing something in the future action. Commissive acts classify into the six types such as promise, threat, refusal, warning, offer, and guarantee. This shows that a speaker's identity can be inferred through observing the use of commissive acts in the utterance.

The purpose of this study is to investigate more deeply how commissive actions are used in the political context of the Chicago trial, by combining the contributions of the main characters such as the judge, the prosecutor and the lawyer. The setting chosen is a Chicago courtroom, involving seven members of the accused who participated in the Vietnam War. This study applies Searle's (1979) theory in examining a conflict between politicians in categorizing an utterance into appropriate types. Transcribing and selecting each speaker's utterance containing a commissive act became the main data source for this study. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the use of linguistics, especially examining behind the speaker's utterances using commissive acts as a political communication strategy, as well as its consequences in gaining public sympathy and attention.

METHOD

This study employs a case research type of qualitative research design to investigate the type commissive acts of political framework in *The Trial of the Chicago 7* movie. The object of this research was the transcript of each utterance the speakers itself. The transcript was obtained from the Deadline Hollywood (<https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Trial-of-the-Chicago-7-Script.pdf>). The data consist of promise, threat, refusal, warning, offer and warning classify as case of commissive acts in the speaker's utterances. Using the documentation technique, the primary source of the data for this study use movie entitled "*The Trial of the Chicago 7*" (2020) directed by Aaron Sorkin for data collection. The data consist of the utterances, specifically commissive acts that particularly those made by courtroom of the central characters such as judges, prosecutors and lawyer.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Promises

Judge Hoffman: *“Let the record show that I tried, fairly and impartially, I tried to get the defendant to sit on his own. I ask you again, and you may indicate by raising your head up and down or moving it from side to side, if I have your assurance that you will not do anything to disrupt this trial if I allow you to resume proper order”*

The conversation took place when in the previous situation in Bobby Seale, who was one of the black defendants was not given a platform to speak out in expressing his aspirations to defend himself from all charges given by the judge in court, not only that Bobby Seale was also not accompanied by a lawyer during the trial so long that he tried to rebel in front of the judge and jury and government defense lawyers. From the conversation above, a judge was forced to silence his mouth of justice with a cloth and instruct Bobby Seale that he was only given the right to answer questions that were asked only by nodding his head. The utterances above refer to a commissive acts, namely Promise. Promise is utterances by Judge Hoffman. The promise form is that **“Let the record show that I tried, fairly and impartially, I tried to get the defendant to sit on his own.”** It means that the Judge Hoffman promising to be fair in not taking sides with anyone, on the contrary it has a hidden meaning if it is associated with Bobby Seale, a defendant who is black and is not given the freedom to speak out or be given a companion.

b. Threat

1) Sondra: *You can't give this speech in Chicago.*

Bobby: *Yes while I'm in trouble in--I'm the head of the Black Panthers, Sondra, when the hell am I not gonna be in trouble?!*

Sondra: *If you stand up and say “Fry the pigs”! ... So will every white person in America, cops won't give a shit about context and you don't have enough protection in Chicago!*

The conversation above tells about the member of black panthers. In this situation Sondra tried to prohibit Bobby visit and crossing the Chicago area just to deliver a speech. Sondra criticized Bobby to obey what he said. Given that the Chicago area is strict about the rules that are enforced and indiscriminate. Sondra's words containing commissive acts are **“don't have enough protection in**

Chicago!” expressing a form of threat so that her friend Bobby Seale's mind is opened by something that should not violate patented laws, considering they are from a black community. Sondra is very aware of what will happen if the Chicago government is against the black community. Thus utterances are indicated contain a commissive acts, namely **threats**. In this conversation above, threats as function spontaneous reaction to prevent Bobby Seale of conflict political in the middle of Chicago.

2) Mitchell: *And we've watched for a decade while these*

rebels without a job who've never

bothered to get their hands dirty fighting

the enemy tell us how to prosecute a war.

The decade's over, the grown-ups are back

and I deem these shitty little fairies to be

a threat to national security so they're

gonna spend their 30's in a federal

facility. Real time

The utterances are including to commissive acts, namely threats. Refers to the statement of John Mitchell **“I deem these shitty little fairies to be a threat to national security so they’re gonna spend their 30’s in a federal facility”**. The threatening form of the utterance displays a negative intention that has the potential to realize the utterance in a future action.

c. Refusal

1) Bobby: *I object to this man's testimony against me*

because I've been denied counsel.

This utterance shows how the role of language can be used to reduce the urgency of a legal objection. Bobby's statement contained serious content related to the violation of constitutional rights, namely the denial of testimony that could potentially prejudice him because he did not have legal counsel. However, by replying to the objection only with “We understand”, the judge created the impression that the issue did not require a substantive response. This leads to a disregard for the potential for legal discussion that should be part of the deliberative process of the trial.

2) Bobby: *I have a motion pro se to defend myself. I'd*

like to invoke the precedent of Adams vs. U.S.

ex rel. McCann, where the Supreme Court

In the context of the trial, the impact of the above conversation is quite significant. The judge spontaneously blocked access and framed the narrative by stating that the defendant's capacity to speak was irrelevant and invalid. The legal apparatus directly demonstrated that it was shutting down the

defendant's right to speak. In addition, this action made the trial not fully open to the arguments of less institutionally powerful parties.

d. Offer

Schultz : *You pay me for my opinion*

Schultz responds confidently say **"You pay me for my opinion."** This is a subtle way of asserting his professionalism and suggesting that he will carry out the case with his own judgment. However, Mitchell, who is more authoritarian and result driven seems irritated by the response and sarcastically asks, "Where did you learn that, in class?" He dismisses Schultz's professional stance and makes his priorities clear by saying, "I pay you to win."

e. Warning

1) Tom : *No, we were arrested for--the law doesn't
recognize political-*

Abbie : *We weren't arrested, we were chosen. Lee,
John, have you guys asked yourselves what
you're doing here?*

Weiner: *Everyday*

Abbie: *You're a give-back. They give the jury a couple
of guys they can acquit and feel better about
finding the rest, us guilty.*

In this scene from The Trial of the Chicago 7, a moment of tension arises among the defendants as they reflect on why they were chosen to stand trial. Tom Hayden begins by stating that they were arrested under the law, but Abbie Hoffman interrupts and insists that their arrest was not a legal matter, it was political. He argues that they weren't simply arrested for breaking the law, but were chosen by the government as symbolic targets to make an example out of. This scene reveals internal conflict among the defendants and exposes how some of them see the trial not just as a legal process, but as a form of political theatre designed to divide and manipulate public perception.

2) Abbie: *I don't know what tactical genius came up
with that, but you know when shit happens?
When you don't give protestors a place to go*

Abbie Hoffman is speaking during a tense moment of the protest planning. He mentions indications that the marshals, who organized the protest, were telling the demonstrators that they would be told to turn left on Roosevelt Road and then return to the park. Abbie mockingly remarks on

the choice, suggesting that whoever designed the route didn't give it enough care. Abbie's understanding of the predicament protest management may turn into conflict is evident in this instance. It also illustrates a major subject of the movie, which is that the demonstrators were frequently caught between using their right to assemble and the inability of the government to responsibly permit or oversee nonviolent protests.

f. Guarantee

Mitchell : *It's a law and they broke it*

Mitchell as Attorney General in United States. Mitchell ends the discussion firmly by stating, **"It's a law and they broke it"** showing that he is focused purely on punishment, not justice. This scene highlights how the trial is driven more by political strategy than legal fairness, showing the government's eagerness to use vague laws as weapons to silence dissent.

CONCLUSION

The kinds of commissive acts that occur in a political setting are examined in this study. Using Searle's theory (1979) and six specific categories of commissive acts, this study discovered that the speakers in the movie used these types of commissive acts in a number of their utterances. Promises, threats, rejections, cautions, offers, and guarantees are the six categories. Through data gathering through selection during the dialogue talks with documentation, the effects of the six types of commissive acts were also examined. Every kind of commissive act was utilized to categorize and highlight an ideology in a statement that elicits an emotional response and has the power to alter public opinion through spoken words alone.

In order to defend the authority of the state and maintain the legitimacy of the law against the defendants, the attorney general usually uses forms of threats and denials. However, lawyers more often use promises, offers, and assurances as rhetorical strategies to defend their clients and challenge a legal system perceived as unfair. On the other hand, judges take a different position, they use warnings and denials as an attempt to maintain control of the courtroom but they also sometimes show favoritism that implicitly supports the power story.

This research shows that commissive speech acts not only function as linguistic commitments but also as tools to reflect political ideologies, power relations, and institutional interests. This is demonstrated through the classification and analysis of utterance contexts. Therefore, understanding how commissions speak in political discourse helps pragmatics research. It also allows us to critically consider how language is used as a tool for power and resistance in a broader socio-political context.

SUGGESTION

The author suggests that further research in this field explore commissive speech acts in a political context by comparing two or more types of discourse, both fictional and non-fictional, such as political films, state speeches, or other court transcripts. This method will make it possible to observe differences in the categories of commissive speech acts that Searle (1979) classified in a more thorough and expansive way. In order to present more diverse information about the context, intent, and communicative impacts of commissive speech acts in political discourse, future research is also advised to employ lengthier or more intricate data sources. The analysis of the rhetorical and ideological effects of commissive utterances in influencing public perception may also be enhanced by future research employing theoretical frameworks other than those proposed by Searle and Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, such as critical pragmatics theory (van Dijk, 2006) or new argumentative theory in political discourse.

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