

A FELICITY CONDITION ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *LITTLE WOMEN (2019)*

Theola Caesar Aisyah Sidik^{1,1}; Bramantya Pradipta^{1,2}

¹ Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

¹theolacaesar30@gmail.com; ²bramantyapradipta@untag-sby.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the types of speech acts and the realization of felicity conditions performed by the main characters in the *Little Women (2019)* movie, using Austin's (1962) speech act theory and Searle's (1969) felicity condition framework. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research identifies 97 utterances comprising assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts. It analyzes whether each fulfills or deviates from the propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions. The findings show that 81 utterances are felicitous and 16 are infelicitous, demonstrating that successful communication occurs when intention, context, and authority support the speech act, while infelicity arises from insincerity, lack of ability, or mismatched context, thereby deviating from the felicity conditions. These pragmatic outcomes play a significant role in understanding how felicitous and infelicitous utterances shape the movie's emotional dynamics, character, and plot tension. The study also concludes that felicity conditions are essential for understanding how speech acts function effectively or deviate in the movie utterances, offering deeper insight into how communication constructs relationships and meaning in a movie.

Keywords: *Austin; felicity conditions; illocutionary; Little Women; Searle; speech act*

INTRODUCTION

Among the many branches of linguistics, pragmatics plays a crucial role in explaining how language functions in real communicative situations by examining how meaning is shaped through speaker intention, social roles, and situational context (Levinson, 1985; Siregar et al., 2024). Pragmatics emphasizes that meaning does not reside solely in linguistic forms but emerges through language use in context to achieve specific communicative purposes (Thomas, 1995). From this perspective, language is understood not merely as a static system of symbols, but as a form of social action performed through interaction. This view is most clearly articulated in Speech Act Theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), which proposes that speaking is itself a form of acting. Through utterances, speakers perform actions such as asserting, requesting, promising, apologizing, or commanding. However, not all speech acts successfully achieve their intended functions. The effectiveness of an utterance depends on pragmatic requirements known as felicity conditions, which determine whether a speech act is appropriate, valid, and effective within a particular context (Austin, 1962). When these conditions are not met, utterances may become infelicitous, leading to pragmatic failure or miscommunication (Cutting, 2005).

Speech Act Theory and felicity conditions remain foundational frameworks in pragmatic research and are widely applied across diverse communicative contexts, including everyday conversation, social media interaction, legal discourse, and literary texts (Apriyanto, 2020; Rabiah, 2018; Babazade, 2025). Recent studies have demonstrated that language functions not only to convey information but also to perform actions that shape social relationships, express emotions, and influence interlocutors' responses. Several previous studies have examined the application of felicity conditions across diverse communicative contexts, demonstrating the breadth and relevance of speech act theory. Research has explored felicity conditions in social media discourse (Yunita & Simatupang, 2022), legal and courtroom settings (Zakiah, 2024), political and diplomatic speeches (Setiawan, 2024; Toisuta & Aritonang, 2024), pandemic-related

news involving public figures (Hadiati et al., 2023), and interactive game narratives (Setyawan & Cahyaningrum, 2023). Other studies have focused on fictional and cinematic discourse, including animated movies such as *Raya and the Last Dragon* (Muhamad & Simatupang, 2020) and *Onward* (Rianurhasanah, 2023), as well as mystery and drama movies like *Knives Out* (Dianita & Sofyan, 2023) and *Enola Holmes* (Azzahra & Dianita, 2025). Collectively, these studies predominantly employ descriptive qualitative methods and draw on the frameworks of Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Yule (1996), revealing varying dominance of sincerity, preparatory, general, or essential conditions depending on context and genre. While these findings confirm that the fulfillment of felicity conditions determines the success or failure of speech acts in both real and fictional discourse, most studies tend to focus on specific contexts, dominant conditions, or particular speech act types. Consequently, comprehensive analyses that simultaneously examine both felicitous and infelicitous conditions across multiple speech acts in historical drama movies remain limited, leaving a gap that the present study seeks to address. Despite their contributions, many of these studies rely primarily on general speech act classifications or focus predominantly on felicitous utterances, resulting in partial analyses that overlook pragmatic failure and the underlying causes of infelicity.

Based on the review of previous studies, research examining felicity conditions in drama movies—particularly historical drama movies—remains limited. Existing studies tend to emphasize dominant or successful speech acts without systematically addressing infelicitous utterances and the specific felicity conditions that fail to obtain. Moreover, few studies comprehensively apply Searle's framework by analyzing all four types of felicity conditions—propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions—across different categories of speech acts. The influence of cultural, historical, and emotional contexts on the fulfillment or deviation of felicity conditions in cinematic discourse also remains underexplored. These limitations indicate a clear need for a more comprehensive pragmatic analysis that captures both pragmatic success and failure within movie utterances.

To address these gaps, the present study investigates the fulfillment and violation of felicity conditions in the speech acts of the main characters in *Little Women* (2019), directed by Greta Gerwig. This study is guided by the research question: How are felicity conditions felicitous or infelicitous in these speech acts? The objective of this study is to examine how felicity conditions operate in both successful and unsuccessful speech acts by applying Searle's framework of propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions. The novelty of this research lies in its systematic and comprehensive analysis of both felicitous and infelicitous speech acts in a historical drama movie, offering empirical insights into how contextual, interpersonal, and emotional factors shape pragmatic success and failure in cinematic discourse. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to pragmatic studies and practically to the analysis of language use in movies, particularly in understanding how communication breakdowns and pragmatic effectiveness influence character development and narrative progression.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze how felicity conditions are felicitous or infelicitous in the speech acts of the main characters in *Little Women* (2019). This design is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meaning, intention, and contextual appropriateness in language use rather than on numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). The research subjects consist of selected utterances produced by the main characters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March. The data were purposively selected for their clear illocutionary acts and indications of either felicitous or infelicitous felicity conditions, making the sampling relevant to the research objective.

Data were collected through systematic observation and documentation. The movie and its official script were downloaded on 04 November 2025. The movie was watched repeatedly to understand the communicative contexts, and relevant utterances were identified and matched with the script to ensure accuracy. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using Speech Act Theory and Searle's framework of felicity conditions. Utterances were classified into illocutionary act types and analyzed with respect to propositional content, preparatory conditions, sincerity, and essential conditions. The utterances were then categorized as felicitous or infelicitous to explain pragmatic success or failure in the movie.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on Austin's (1962) speech act theory and Searle's (1969) felicity conditions, Selected utterances from the main characters Jo, Amy, Meg, and Beth were analyzed qualitatively to identify speech act types and determine whether they were felicitous or infelicitous. To support the qualitative analysis, a frequency table is also provided as a descriptive overview. The findings focus on the classification of speech acts and the analysis of felicity conditions, which are then discussed in relation to the movie's context and the characters' communication styles.

Table 1. Frequency of Speech Act

No.	Types of Speech Act	Frequency
1.	Assertive speech act	41
2.	Commissive speech act	8
3.	Declarative speech act	-
4.	Directive speech act	15
5.	Expressive speech act	33
Total		97

Table 2. Frequency of Felicity Conditions

No.	Felicity Conditions	Frequency
1.	Felicitous conditions	81
2.	Infelicitous conditions	16
Total		97

Discussion

Felicitous Condition

Data C2

Beth: "I do not want to go, but I wish I could hear all the music."

Jo: *"I will keep it all in my head and try to sing it for you when I get home."*

Jo's utterance is classified as a commissive speech act because it commits her to performing a future action. By saying, "I will keep it all in my head and try to sing it for you when I get home," Jo takes responsibility for remembering the music and singing it for Beth later. This commitment to a future course of action reflects the core characteristic of commissive, particularly promises, where the speaker voluntarily binds herself to do something for the hearer's benefit. In this scene, Jo and Meg are going to the theater to see a play. Beth, their younger sister who loves music, wants to hear the music being played there, but she doesn't want to go with them. Jo's utterance functions as a promise, and the conditions for a propositional content are fulfilled because it refers to a future action that she will do—remembering the music and singing it for Beth. The preparatory condition is fulfilled because Jo is in a position to attend the event, listen to music, and then try to reproduce it for Beth; nothing prevents her from carrying out this future action. The condition of sincerity is also fulfilled, because Jo genuinely intends to comfort Beth and sincerely intends to try to remember and sing the music for her. Finally, the essential condition is met because the statement constitutes a binding commitment to future action. Since all conditions are felicitous, Jo's promise is successful, functioning as a sincere promise to give Beth attention and affection.

Data Di6

Marmee: ".... Don't mind the clutter, Mr. Laurence, we don't."

Laurie: "Laurie, please."

Jo: *"Can I call you Teddy?"*

Laurie: "Yes!"

Jo's utterance is categorized as a directive speech act because it is intended to elicit a response or action from the hearer, namely, granting permission. By asking "Can I call you Teddy?", Jo is not merely expressing a thought but requesting Laurie's consent to perform a future action. This places the responsibility on Laurie to respond with approval or refusal, which is a key feature of directives. The utterance aims to influence the hearer's behavior—specifically, to authorize a particular form of address—therefore functioning as a polite request and fitting the category of a directive speech act. In this scene, Laurie visits Jo's house for the first time and meets the March family. Since Laurie is a neighbor who is still somewhat unfamiliar, Marmee tries to address her formally, but she refuses. Jo's utterance functions as a directive, and the propositional content condition is fulfilled because her question relates to a future action she wants to do—calling Laurie by the affectionate nickname "Teddy." The preparatory condition is fulfilled because Jo has reason to believe that Laurie has the authority to grant or deny permission regarding how she is addressed. Nothing is preventing her from responding (Traesar, Sujiwa, & Adhitya, 2025). The condition of sincerity is also fulfilled because Jo genuinely wants to use the nickname and sincerely seeks Laurie's consent rather than imposing it without permission. Finally, the essential condition was fulfilled because her question was intended as a request for Laurie's permission. Since all conditions were fulfilled and Laurie accepted the request, "Yes!", the directive was felicitous, successfully establishing a new, more intimate form of address between them.

Data E22

Marmee: "Jo will teach you."

Jo: *"ME?! I already teach Beth!"*

Meg: "You are a good teacher."

Jo's utterance is categorized as an expressive speech act because it primarily functions to express her psychological state and emotional reaction to Marmee's suggestion. By exclaiming "ME?! I already teach Beth!", Jo is not committing herself to an action, requesting someone else to do something, or stating an objective fact. Instead, she conveys surprise, frustration, and reluctance toward the new responsibility imposed on her. The utterance reflects Jo's feelings about the situation rather than aiming to change the external world, which is the defining characteristic of expressive speech acts. In this scene, because her teacher has just beaten Amy, Mr. Davis, Marmee suggests that Amy study at home and be taught by Jo. Jo's utterance serves as an emotional expression, conveying her surprise and protest at being assigned additional teaching responsibilities. The propositional content is fulfilled because her statement conveys her emotional reaction, surprise, and frustration by highlighting that she is already responsible for teaching Beth and does not want to teach Amy as well. The preparation condition is also fulfilled, because the situation reasonably justifies the emotional response that Marmee suddenly assigns an additional task without warning, so Jo has reason to react. The sincerity condition is fulfilled because Jo genuinely feels overwhelmed and honestly expresses her unwillingness and discomfort at that moment. Finally, the essential condition is fulfilled because the utterance expresses her emotional attitude toward the new obligation. With all the conditions of felicity fulfilled, Jo's expressive utterance is felicitous, functioning as a genuine emotional protest.

Data Di12

Amy: "You are going somewhere with Laurie, I know it!"

Jo: *"Yes, we are, now stop bothering."*

Jo's utterance is classified as a directive speech act because it is intended to make the hearer perform (or stop performing) an action. By saying "now stop bothering," Jo directly commands Amy to cease her behavior and leave them alone. The utterance places the responsibility for changing her actions on Amy, which is the defining feature of directives. Rather than expressing feelings alone or committing herself to a future action, Jo uses language to control the situation by instructing Amy what to do, making the utterance function clearly as a directive, specifically a command. In this scene, Jo and Laurie are about to go ice skating when Amy arrives and asks to join them, but Jo firmly tells her she has not been

invited. Jo's utterance "now stop bothering" functions as a command, and the propositional content condition is fulfilled because the utterance refers to a future action that Jo wants Amy to do—namely, to leave and not join them. The preparatory condition is fulfilled because Jo reasonably believes that Amy is capable of performing the behavior and that Amy's presence is disruptive, thus providing a valid reason for Jo to make the request. The condition of sincerity is also fulfilled because Jo is genuinely annoyed and sincerely wants Amy to stop bothering her at that moment. Finally, the essential condition is fulfilled because Jo intends her statement to be an attempt to persuade Amy to change her mind about coming along. With all the conditions of felicity fulfilled, Jo's command is felicitous, effectively realizing her desire not to invite Amy.

Data A34

Jo: (angry) "You will be bored with him in two years, and we will be interesting forever."

Meg: *"Just because my dreams are not the same as yours does not mean they are unimportant."*

Meg's utterance is categorized as an assertive speech act because it functions to state and affirm a belief that Meg holds to be true. By saying "Just because my dreams are not the same as yours does not mean they are unimportant," Meg is asserting her perspective about the value of her dreams and correcting Jo's assumption that they are inferior. The utterance presents a claim about reality—specifically, the legitimacy of her personal aspirations—rather than requesting action, expressing emotion alone, or committing to future behavior. Therefore, it functions as an assertion that conveys Meg's conviction and defends the truth of her viewpoint. In this scene, it is Meg's wedding day. Jo, who believes it is better to work and support herself than to marry and live with someone else, tries to convince Meg to stay with her and pursue their dreams. Meg's utterance serves as an assertive statement, and the propositional content condition is fulfilled because she makes a statement that evaluates the truth about her real dream. The preparation condition is fulfilled because Meg has sufficient evidence to assert it: Jo explicitly belittles her dreams, giving Meg a reason to correct that implication. The sincerity condition is also fulfilled because Meg genuinely believes that her desires—marriage and household happiness—are meaningful even though Jo rejects them, and she expresses this belief sincerely. Finally, the essential condition is fulfilled because her statement is intended as a corrective claim, defending her argument about her own dreams. With all the felicity conditions met, Meg's statement is felicitous and serves as a firm yet honest rebuttal to Jo's accusation.

Data A40

Jo: "When did you become so wise?"

Amy: *"I always have been; you were just too busy noticing my faults."*

Amy's utterance is classified as an assertive speech act because it functions to state what she believes to be true about herself and Jo's behavior. By saying "I always have been, you were just too busy noticing my faults," Amy presents a claim about reality—her consistent wisdom and Jo's past failure to recognize it—rather than asking for action, expressing emotion alone, or committing to future behavior. The utterance is intended to inform and correct Jo's assumption, which is the defining function of assertive speech acts. In this scene, Amy previously expresses her opinion about the importance of writing, which amazes and surprises Jo. Amy's utterance serves as an assertive statement, and the propositional content is fulfilled because she claims herself (that she is always wise) and about Jo's past behavior (that Jo is too focused on her flaws). The preparatory condition is fulfilled because Amy has a reasonable reason for making this statement, and Jo's past tendency to criticize or ignore Amy's strengths provides contextual justification for her claim. The condition of sincerity is fulfilled, because Amy genuinely believes both parts of her statement, her own worth and Jo's past indifference. Finally, the essential condition is fulfilled because Amy clearly intends for her statement to be taken as an act of stating or correcting Jo's assumptions about her. With all felicity conditions fulfilled, Amy's assertive statement is felicitous, functioning as a confident and honest self-statement.

Infelicitous Condition

Data C1

Jo: "A friend of mine desired me to offer a story, by her, she wrote it - *she would be glad to write more if this suits.*"

Mr. Dashwood: "Not a first attempt, I take it?"

Jo's utterance "she would be glad to write more if this suit" is classified as a commissive speech act because it commits the speaker (indirectly) to a future course of action, namely the production of more stories if the current one is accepted. Even though Jo attributes the commitment to a "friend," the illocutionary force of the utterance is an offer of future work, which is a subtype of commissive. The statement projects a future action contingent on the publisher's approval and functions to assure Mr. Dashwood of continued cooperation. Therefore, despite the later-revealed insincerity and misrepresentation of the author, the utterance pragmatically functions as a commissive because it attempts to bind the (supposed) writer to writing more in the future. In this scene, Jo submits her friend's novel to the publisher, Mr. Dashwood, and makes a further offer regarding her next work. However, what she submitted was actually her own work. Jo's utterance functions as a commissive because it offers a future action (providing more stories) on behalf of the person she claims to represent. The propositional content condition is fulfilled, because the utterance expresses a future action that "she" will take if the editor approves the manuscript. However, the preparatory condition is violated, because a promise requires the speaker (or the person they commit) actually to be able to perform the promised action. However, Jo's "friend" is fictional or imaginary, making it impossible for that person to write more stories. The sincerity condition also deviates, because Jo does not truly intend for a "friend" to fulfill the offer; she is the author herself, yet she hides this fact and pretends to commit someone else. Finally, although the essential condition is structurally fulfilled (the utterance is still considered as an attempt to commit someone to a future action), the commissive becomes infelicitous because the key background facts and genuine intention required for a valid promise are deviated.

Data E1

Friedrich: "You are on fire."

Jo: "*Thank you.*"

Friedrich: "You are on fire!"

Jo's utterance is considered an expressive speech act because its primary function is to express her emotional state, rather than to state a fact, give a command, or commit to a future action. Through her tone and wording, Jo conveys feelings such as surprise, frustration, or anger in response to the situation she is facing. The utterance reflects her psychological attitude toward the circumstances, allowing the hearer to understand how she feels at that moment. Since expressing emotions and personal reactions is the defining feature of expressive speech acts, Jo's utterance fits this category. In this scene, Friedrich is actually warning Jo that her skirt is on fire because she is standing in front of the fireplace. However, she thinks he is complimenting her because she is excited about her novel being accepted by Mr. Dashwood. Jo's response, "Thank you," to Friedrich's warning, "You are on fire," is infelicitous because the felicity conditions do not align with the intended speech act. The propositional content condition is violated because Jo interprets Friedrich's utterance as praise rather than a literal statement of danger, leading her response to mismatch the actual situation. The preparatory condition also deviates, as Jo mistakenly believes Friedrich is expressing admiration, which fails to alert her to a factual problem, so she lacks the appropriate contextual understanding needed to thank him. The sincerity condition is fulfilled because Jo genuinely expresses gratitude based on her misunderstanding of the utterance. The essential condition is also met, as her reply still counts as an expressive act of thanking. However, because the propositional content and preparatory conditions are deviated, Jo's expressive utterance becomes infelicitous, creating a pragmatic mismatch between Friedrich's assertive warning and Jo's expressive gratitude.

Data A24

Jo: "What did you do?"

Amy: *"Just a drawing and then... Mr. Davis hit me."*

Amy's utterance is categorized as an assertive speech act because it functions to report and describe a past event that she believes (or presents as) true. By saying "Just a drawing and then... Mr. Davis hit me," Amy is giving Jo information about what happened at school, thereby presenting a claim about a state of affairs in the world. The utterance is not intended to request an action, express emotion alone, or commit to future behavior, but to state and explain events, which is the defining function of assertive speech acts, even though the report is incomplete and thus pragmatically infelicitous. In this scene, Amy comes home from school with an injured hand because her teacher, Mr. Davis, hit her. She was hit because she talked about Mr. Davis with her friends, and her friends asked her to draw Mr. Davis on her small blackboard because she was good at drawing, which was meant to mock Mr. Davis. Amy's utterance is an assertion in which she reports past events, but it becomes partially infelicitous because she conceals her true intention. The propositional content condition is fulfilled because she presents a description of what happened; however, she selectively frames the act as "just a drawing," omitting the fact that it was a mocking caricature, creating an incomplete representation. The preparatory condition is violated because an assertive act requires the speaker to have adequate evidence and present it truthfully. However, Amy deliberately withheld information by not explaining in detail why she was hit. The sincerity condition is violated because Amy does not fully believe her own argument; she presents herself as knowing she drew something provocative, but chooses to minimize her responsibility to elicit sympathy. The essential condition is still fulfilled, because her utterance functions as an attempt to report a state of affairs. Overall, the assertive becomes infelicitous because Amy's utterance deviates from the sincerity and preparatory conditions, resulting in a report that misleads the listener despite maintaining the structural form of an assertion.

Data E25

Marmee: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Forgive her. Help each other, and you begin again tomorrow."

Jo: *"She does not deserve my forgiveness. I will hate her! I will hate her forever!"*

Jo's utterance is categorized as an expressive speech act because its primary function is to express her emotional state, not to describe facts, request action, or commit to future behavior. By saying it, Jo expresses intense feelings of anger, hurt, and resentment toward Amy after discovering that Amy's manuscript had been burned. The utterance conveys Jo's psychological attitude toward the situation rather than aiming to change the external world. This focus on expressing emotion—especially through exaggerated and emotionally charged language—is the defining characteristic of expressive speech acts, which is why Jo's utterance is classified as expressive, even though it later proves to be insincere or temporary. In this scene, Jo is very angry after learning that Amy deliberately burned her novel. Jo's utterance is an expressive one because it conveys intense anger and emotional rejection towards Amy. The propositional content condition is fulfilled because the utterance describes Jo's emotional attitude, her stated hatred and refusal to forgive, which is appropriate content for an expressive utterance. The preparatory condition is also fulfilled, because the context (Amy burning her manuscript) reasonably justifies Jo's strong emotional response, providing a situational basis for expressing anger. However, the condition of sincerity is compromised, because Jo does not truly intend to hate Amy "forever"; her utterances are driven by anger rather than a stable, honest emotional state, and subsequent events show that she does not maintain this hatred. Nevertheless, the essential condition is met because the utterance remains an attempt to express an emotional reaction. Because the condition of sincerity is deviated, Jo's expressive utterance becomes infelicitous, representing an emotionally charged statement rather than a sincere expression of lasting feelings.

Data E29

Beth: "Now your hair is off."

Hannah: "You look like a boy."

Jo: *"It does not affect the fate of the nation, so do not wail."*

Jo's utterance is classified as an expressive speech act because it is used to display her emotional attitude toward the situation, rather than to state a fact, give an order, or commit to future action. By saying, "It does not affect the fate of

the nation, so do not wail," Jo attempts to convey indifference and emotional control about cutting her hair, framing it as something trivial. The utterance reflects how she wants her feelings to be perceived and functions to express (or perform) an emotional stance. Since expressing a psychological attitude—whether sincere or not—is the defining function of expressive speech acts, Jo's utterance fits this category, even though her true feelings later contradict it. In this scene, Marmee wants to visit her sick father at the army headquarters, but she doesn't have enough money. They are all surprised when they see Jo handing Marmee a large sum of money, which turns out to be the result of her cutting her hair. Jo's utterance functions as an expressive act because she is presenting an emotional stance, trying to appear unaffected by cutting her hair, even though the emotion she expresses is not genuine. The propositional content condition is fulfilled because the utterance conveys her supposed attitude that the haircut is trivial and not worth crying over. However, the preparatory condition is deviant, because an expression requires that the situation appropriately warrants the emotion being displayed. However, Jo is actually distressed, making her calm, joking stance contextually inappropriate. The sincerity condition is also deviant, because Jo does not truly feel the nonchalance she expresses; the following scene reveals she cried over the loss of her hair, proving that her expressed emotion does not match her real psychological state. The essential condition is still fulfilled because the utterance counts as an attempt to express an emotional stance, even if that stance is false. Therefore, the expressive act becomes infelicitous, primarily due to Jo's deviated sincerity condition and preparatory condition, which the situation mismatched between expressed and actual feelings.

Data A37

Amy: "Marmee! Marmee! Aunt March is going to Europe and..."

Jo: *"...wants me to go with her! How wonderful! Now I know why I spent all those boring hours reading to her!"*

Amy: "No, she... she wanted me to come. As her companion."

Jo's utterance is categorized as an assertive speech act because it functions to state what she believes to be a fact about the world. By saying it, Jo is presenting her assumption as a truth, namely that Aunt March intends to take her to Europe. She is not asking for confirmation, expressing emotion alone, or committing to a future action; instead, she is asserting a belief and concluding Aunt March's decision. Even though the belief turns out to be false and lacks sufficient evidence, the illocutionary force of the utterance remains assertive because its primary purpose is to claim and state a presumed reality. In the previous scene, Aunt March had said that Jo might be taken to Europe if she behaved well and was faithful. Jo interpreted this promise as a certainty. However, in this scene, Aunt March chose Amy. Jo's utterance functions as an assertive speech act, but it becomes partially infelicitous because one of Searle's felicity conditions fails. The propositional content condition is fulfilled because Jo produces a statement that she believes to be true about Aunt March's supposed intention to take her to Europe, even though it is ultimately false. The preparatory condition is not met because Jo lacked evidence to justify her decision to go to Europe. Her assumption was based solely on Aunt March's previous ambiguous statement, which could not reasonably serve as a strong basis for asserting that Aunt March truly intended to take her. The sincerity condition is fulfilled because she genuinely believes her claim at the moment she says it. Likewise, the essential condition is fulfilled because Jo is clearly attempting to assert a fact about the world. Because the preparatory condition is deviated, the assertive becomes infelicitous, revealing a mismatch between Jo's assumption and the actual situation.

Discussion of Felicitous and Infelicitous Findings in The Movie

Most utterances in *Little Women (2019)* are categorized as felicitous because the characters perform speech acts in appropriate contexts, with clear intentions, sufficient authority, and mutual understanding between speakers and hearers. These utterances generally fulfill Searle's (1969) felicity conditions—propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions—resulting in effective communication. Interactions among Jo, Amy, Meg, and Beth are largely sincere and contextually appropriate, allowing the characters to express emotions such as affection, concern, and encouragement directly, which supports the portrayal of close interpersonal relationships and emotional depth in the movie.

However, several utterances are infelicitous due to the deviation of one or more felicity conditions, often arising from emotional tension, suppressed feelings, or conflicting intentions. In particular, Jo's infelicitous utterances frequently result from unmet sincerity or essential conditions when she hides her true emotions, reflecting inner conflict rather than simple pragmatic failure. These infelicitous moments function as narrative devices that reveal character traits, emotional struggles, and interpersonal conflict, enriching the story's complexity.

While previous studies on felicity conditions generally focus on classifying and counting felicitous and infelicitous speech acts separately—often treating infelicity as a communicative failure—this study examines them simultaneously. By analyzing how and why felicity conditions are fulfilled or deviated within the same communicative context, this research demonstrates that infelicitous utterances can serve meaningful pragmatic and narrative functions. Applying Searle's complete framework to emotionally and historically situated discourse, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of felicity conditions as indicators of character development and relational dynamics rather than mere markers of communicative breakdown.

CONCLUSION

Based on Tables 1 and 2, a total of 97 speech acts by the main characters in *Little Women* (2019) were identified: 41 assertive, 33 expressive, 15 directive, 8 commissive, and none declarative. The dominance of assertive speech acts indicates that the movie relies heavily on statements, explanations, and expressions of opinion. In contrast, the high frequency of expressive acts reflects the emotionally driven nature of the narrative. Directive acts occur mainly in moments of guidance or conflict, whereas commissive acts occur less frequently and are typically tied to promises or commitments in emotionally significant scenes. The absence of declarative acts aligns with the lack of institutional authority among the main characters.

The findings reveal the distribution of felicity conditions in the utterances of *Little Women* (2019), showing how successfully the characters' speech acts fulfill Searle's felicity conditions. Of the 97 analyzed utterances, 81 are categorized as felicitous, indicating that most speech acts effectively align speaker intention, contextual appropriateness, and conventional procedures. These felicitous utterances fulfill all four felicity conditions—propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions—allowing the illocutionary force to function successfully. As a result, they contribute to character development, emotional depth, and narrative progression, reflecting the movie's emphasis on effective illocutionary performance. In contrast, 16 utterances are identified as infelicitous, indicating instances where the intended illocutionary force fails due to unmet felicity conditions. According to Austin (1962), such deviations result in misfires or abuses, where the speaker's intended action is not properly recognized or accepted by the listener. These infelicitous utterances often lead to misunderstanding, emotional tension, or communicative failure, thereby enriching the portrayal of interpersonal conflict and emotional complexity among the characters.

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed for future research and educational practice. Future researchers are encouraged to examine a wider range of characters or compare multiple movie adaptations to explore how historical, social, and cultural contexts influence the fulfillment of felicity conditions, including comparisons between novel and movie adaptations. Researchers may also integrate other pragmatic frameworks, such as implicature, politeness strategies, or conversational maxims, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of communicative behavior. In addition, educators can use the *Little Women* (2019) movie as a teaching resource to demonstrate how speech acts operate within narrative contexts. Finally, students are encouraged to apply felicity condition analysis to various genres, including novels, television series, and digital discourse, to enhance their awareness of pragmatic success and failure in communication.

References

- ANIS, R. (2023). *FELICITY CONDITION OF REQUEST IN "ONWARD" MOVIE* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG).
- Apriyanto, A. (2020). LANGUAGE AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL IN HUMAN LIFE. *Fax Justu : Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 10(02), 45–54.

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Babazade, Y. (2025). Speech Acts and Hidden Meaning: A Journey into Pragmatics. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis Et Linguarum*, 2(1), 221-228.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cutting, J. (2005). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Dianita, D., & Sofyan, R. A. (2023). Felicity Conditions In Speech Act From The "Knives Out" Movie: A Pragmatic Study. *English Journal Literacy Utama*, 2(2), 775-785.
- Darajat, L. Z. (2024). *Felicity conditions in legal discourse: A case study of the reality show paternity court* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).
- Hadiati, C., Yulianita, N. G., & Muttaqin, U. (2023). Felicity condition of expressive speech act uttered by public figures in Covid-19 news. *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra*, 2(2), 349-361.
- Jafar, A. (2019). Illocutionary Speech Acts on Tweets Posted by Public Figures: Pragmatics Study. *English Journal Literacy Utama*, 2(2), 132-141.
- Levinson, S.C. (1985). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lubis, R. A., Siregar, D. Y. S., Husni, P. N., Rizky, F. M., & Thomaroh, H. (2025). Pragmatics in Everyday Life: Understanding Unspoken Rules of Interaction. *Sintaksis: Publikasi Para ahli Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, 2(1), 199-211.
- Muhamad, A., & Simatupang, E. C. (2022). Felicity Condition of the Speech Act in Raya and the Last Dragon Movie: Pragmatics. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 5(3), 18705-18711.
- Munir, E., & Yavuz, M. A. (2024). Study of pragmatic analysis of literature on the development of ELT students' receptive and productive skills: A case of North Cyprus. *Heliyon*, 10(21).
- Rabiah, S. (2018, November). *Language as a tool for communication and for disclosing cultural reality*.
- Rosida, A. (2024). Analyzing Expressive Speech Acts in The Late Late Show with James Corden. *INSPIRING*, 340-350.
- Setiawan, A. *Felicity Condition Analysis in Prabowo Subianto's Q & A Sessions at the 2023 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue* (Bachelor's thesis, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora).
- Setyawan, I., & Cahyaningrum, I. D. (2022). *Felicity Analysis on The Main Character in The Game Movie Resident Evil 2 Remake* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Surakarta).
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Siregar, D. Y., Rizkiara, I., Hawa, P., Neifa, K., & Putri, L. (2024). Exploring Meaning: A Pragmatics Analysis in Everyday Communication. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(6), 3524-3535.
- Thomas, J. A. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. Routledge.
- Toisuta, E. G., & Aritonang, P. (2024). An Analysis of Directive Speech Acts and Their Felicity Conditions in Jokowi's G20 Session I Speech. *MATAI: International Journal of Language Education*, 2(1), 100-112.

- Traesar, L., Sujiwa, K., & Adhitya, G. N. (2025). *A gender performativity analysis on gender norms portrayed in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women*. *JDLAL: Journal of Language and Literature*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.35842/jolali.v3il.48>
- Yunita, A., & Simatupang, E. C. (2022). Felicity Conditions of Speech Acts in Emma Watson's Social Media: Pragmatics Study. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 5(2).