An Analysis on Speech Acts in Guy de Maupassant's Short Story "The Necklace"

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and briefly explain the types of speech acts found in the utterances of Guy de Maupassant's short story "The Necklace." Using Yule's speech act theory, 51 utterances were analyzed and classified into representative (22), directive (25), expressive (8), commissive (2), and no declarative speech acts. The classification was based on primary acts supported by secondary or complementary acts reflected in the narration. The findings show that directive and representative speech acts dominate the story, functioning to advance the plot and reveal characters' experiences and beliefs. Expressive and commissive speech acts occur less frequently because emotions and commitments are mostly conveyed through narrative description rather than dialogue. The results may serve as useful material for EFL instruction, particularly in enhancing reading skills.

INTRODUCTION

Language, as a means of communication, plays a crucial role in our lives. It conveys one person's thoughts, ideas, and feelings to another. Through language, people exchange information and construct meaning in social interaction (Apriyanto 2020; Kurniati 2017:227; Nasution and Tambunan 2022). Related to this function, pragmatics are about communication. Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between linguistic forms and the users of the forms. Studying language through pragmatic approaches helps humans understand people's intentions, assumptions, and actions (Yule 2008:4).

Effective knowledge is obtained through interaction between speakers and listeners. To communicate their ideas to one another, they need to make

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numerous utterances, a process called as speech actions (Yule 2008:47). Speech acts are an aspect of everyday communication. They stand in for the various ways we express ourselves through our speech, including describing, expressing emotions, and posing questions (Christianto 2020; Drid 2018; Hidayat 2016). Speech acts are commonly found in our everyday lives. They can be found in conversation, on social media posts, and entertaining media, such as films and shows. Additionally, speech acts are also displayed in written media for example short story (Fitriani et al. 2023).

A short story is a form of prose with fictional or imagined content. Short stories can often be read in one sitting. This benefit makes short stories more successful in delivering their value without overwhelming the reader (Alia and Nurholis 2024; Mardiana and Ali 2021; Tucan 2016:5). Short stories embrace the application of speech acts in a simple and meaningful way. The conversations between the characters symbolize emotion and situations throughout the stories.

In EFL teaching, short stories are appropriate teaching materials. They provide students with unique chances for linguistic, intellectual, cultural, and educational growth (Alamsyah 2016; Pratiwi, Putri, and Suhadi 2020; Sinamo, Herman, and Marpaung 2023). They also enhance language skills and motivate students to perform language in distinctive experience (Zahra and Farrah 2016). Students, particularly those majoring in English, can comprehend several kinds of speech acts. Speech acts in sentences will make it easier for them to learn how to apply them (Christianto 2020). However, the direct application of understanding speech acts in short stories for EFL teaching is not specifically discussed; whereas teachers need to know how to encourage students in comprehending types of speech acts used in short stories.

Related studies have been done regarding speech acts. The first previous research focuses on commissive aspects in the film "Inside Out 2" (Baihaqi, Widyantari, and Refai 2025). The research only focuses on analyzing the impact of the presence of commissive speech acts towards the characters in the film. The commissive speech act is found as promise, threat, offer, and refusal spoken by the movie characters; despite the speech act analyzed, the researcher does not discuss any relationship with EFL teaching. The second previous investigation concentrated on full features of speech acts in the Road movie; nonetheless, the researcher did not notice any of the declarative utterances in the film (Ridha and Pratiwi 2025). The research shows that the movie includes most of these types: characters make statements and give information (assertive), give commands, warning, ask questions (Directive), express emotions and feelings (expressive), and make promises, threats, and vow (commissive). The absence of declaration in the movie happens because the setting of the movie is in a post-apocalyptic world where there is no authority figure that can make change to the world, making the speech act of declaration

is almost impossible. Overall, the study reveals the function and the importance of speech acts in movie dialogue; even so, the researchers does not write about its application in EFL field. The third research focused on the illocutionary utterances happening in the "Independent Curriculum" Playlist on the Learning Friends Channel (Azizah et al. 2024). The research shows illocutionary speech acts which included: assertive speech acts (showing, asking, and expressing an opinion), declarative speech acts (apologizing, inviting, and urging), directive speech acts (ordering, recommending, and prohibiting), commissive speech (offering), expressive speech acts (thanking and flattering. However, the researcher only discusses about the speech acts found in her source without stating any thought on it use in EFL classes.

While the previous studies on speech acts used audio-visual media in their research, this research uses document which is short story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant as its object of research. A linguistic approach, specifically semantics, has been conducted in analyzing short story "The Necklace". The research only focuses in determining presupposition, utterance, and sentence. The research reveals that various sentences in storytelling and dialogue express different concepts depending on the circumstances and setting. In addition, a wide range of assumptions were found, including lexical, empirical, and existential; however, neither do the researchers discuss about EFL matters in the results (Apriliani and Rahmawati 2025). Meanwhile, this research will focus on analyzing types of speech act on each utterance found in the short story The Necklace and connect the results to EFL practice. This research contributes to help learners to understand and determine speech acts and the functions in utterances found in passages they use to learn English language.

Speech acts

Speech acts are typically defined as actions carried out through utterances; in English, they are sometimes labeled with more specific terms like apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request (Yule 2008:47). Yule in his book classified speech acts into five categories as follows (Yule 2008:53–54):

1. Declarations

    Declarations are speaking acts that, via their utterance, alter the world. When a declaration is spoken, the speaker uses words to alter the world. However, this type of speech act is restricted to only people who have big influences and authorities towards social change, such as principals, police, judges, et cetera.

2. Representatives

    Representatives are those kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. Statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions are all examples of the speaker portraying

the world as he or she sees it. The speaker adapts words to the world (of believe) by utilizing a representative.

3. Expressives

   Speech acts that convey the speaker's emotions are known as expressives. They are utterances of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow that convey psychological feelings. They are about the speaker's experience, but they might be brought on by the speaker or the hearer. The speaker makes words fit the world (of feeling) when they use an expressive.

4. Directives

   Directives are speech acts that are used by speakers to influence others to act. They convey the speaker's desires. They are commands, orders, requests, and recommendations. They may be favorable or unfavorable. When a directive is used, the speaker (through the hearer) tries to make the world suit the words.

5. Commissives

   Commissives are speech acts used by speakers to pledge to take a certain action in the future. They convey the speaker's intent. These include vows, threats, refusals, and promises. They can be delivered by the speaker in a group setting or by them alone. The speaker attempts to make the world suit the words (by the speaker) when they use a commissive.

Short story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant

A French author, Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893), is well recognized for his short stories. He was regarded as one of the all-time great authors of short stories. His battles with physical and mental disease throughout his life had a significant impact on his writing. "The Necklace" (also known as "La Parure" in French) is one of his short stories. The first edition appeared in the French journal Le Gaulois in 1884. This story takes place in late 19th-century Paris, France. Themes of consumerism and social class, appearance and truth, irony and fate, and human nature and psychology are all explored in "The Necklace." In this short story, a young woman named Mathilde borrows a diamond necklace from a close friend to go to a fancy party. Sadly, when she realizes she has misplaced the necklace, her entire world shifts, and she will have to deal with a harsh reality for years to come to replace her friend's diamond necklace. The narrative takes an unexpected turn at the end, revealing that Mathilde was underestimating the necklace's price (Yadav 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher employs qualitative method to describe the points that are being analyzed: five categories of speech act. The researcher

determines the utterances that occur in the short story using Yule's theory of speech act categories.

Data Source

The researcher used primary source and secondary source. The primary source was the short story The Necklace accessed from American Literature website https://americanliterature.com/author/guy-de-maupassant/short-story/the-necklace/. The secondary source was Yule's theory on categories of speech acts. There are five categories of speech acts that became the analyzing source, such as declarations, representatives, expressive, commissive, and directives.

Unit of Analysis

The researcher analyzed the utterances only in short story The Necklace, related to speech acts theory. Utterance is basic unit of social life. It acts to response actively, take positions upon others, and encounter others (Haye and Larrain 2011). In this story, utterances are written as a direct speech spoken by the characters. It has quotation marks for each utterance.

Data Collection

The researcher accessed the American Literature website to obtain the short story The Necklace. Then, she collected the data needed which were utterances happening in The Necklace. The researcher then found 51 utterances which were not classified yet. After finding the utterances, the researcher sorted the utterances by putting utterance number for each.

Data Analysis

The procedure of this research follows Creswell's qualitative method. Qualitative method analyzes and comprehends the meaning of the objects of research by focusing on the process, environment, and interpretation rather than numerical results (Creswell 2013). After finishing the data collection, the researcher read the short story thoroughly to understand the situation happening in The Necklace. She classified each utterance by paying attention to narrations around the utterances along with Yule's theory of speech acts and put a brief description about the classification of utterances.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher had done the analysis on the short story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant. The researcher then found the four categories of speech act based on Yule's theory in 51 utterances of short story, except Declarations because there was no stakeholder or official authority involved in the utterances. The result is as displayed on the following table:

Table 1. Number of speech act categories

found in short story "The Necklace".

Categories	Amount
Declaration	0
Representative	22
Directive	25
Expressive	8
Commissive	2
Total of Category	57

Results
Determining Speech Acts Found in "The Necklace"

The researcher had classified the utterances and described how the utterances were being classified. The researcher symbolized each utterance by writing e.g. **U1** (U as Utterance, 1 as the order where the utterance was placed). Here are the elaborations as follows:

No.	Code	Utterance	Classification
1.	U1	*"Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that,"*	Expressive Speech Act
2.	U12	*"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."*	
3.	U13	*"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."*	
4.	U15	*"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."*	
5.	U16	*"How stupid you are!"[1] her husband cried.*	
6.	U26	*"What! --how? Impossible!"*	
7.	U38	*"Good-day, Jeanne."*	
8.	U41	*"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"*	
9.	U2	*"There," said he, "there is something for you."*	Directive Speech Act
10.	U3	*"What do you wish me to do with that?"*	
11.	U5	*"And what do you wish me to put on my back?"*	
12.	U7	*"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he answered.*	
13.	U8	*"… Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I am[2]."*	
14.	U9	U9: *"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could*	

		use on other occasions--something very simple?"	
15.	U11	*"… And try to have a pretty gown[2])."*	
16.	U14	*"You might wear natural flowers[1])," said her husband.*	
17.	U16	*"Go look up your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."[2])*	
18.	U18	*"Choose, my dear."*	
19.	U19	*"Haven't you any more?"*	
20.	U20	*"Why, yes. Look further[1]) …"*	
21.	U21	*"Will you lend me this, only this?"*	
22.	U23	*"Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will call a cab."*	
23.	U24	*"What is the matter with you?" demanded her husband, already half undressed.*	
24.	U27	*"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.*	
25.	U30	U30: *"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"*	
26.	U31	*"No. And you--didn't you notice it?"*	
27.	U34	*"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."*	
28.	U35	*"We must consider how to replace that ornament."*	
29.	U43	*"Of me! How so?"*	
30.	U44	*"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"*	
31.	U45	*"Yes. Well?"*	
32.	U47	*"What do you mean? You brought it back."*	
33.	U49	*"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"*	
34.	U4	*"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad[1]). You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity[2]). I had great trouble to get it[3]). Everyone wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks[4]). The whole official world will be there[5])."*	Representative Speech Act
35.	U6	*"Why, the gown you go to the theatre in. It looks very well to me."*	

36.	U8	*"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball[1] …"*	
37.	U10	*"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."*	
38.	U14	*"They're very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses[2]."*	
39.	U17	*"True! I never thought of it."*	
40.	U20	*"…; I don't know what you like[2]."*	
41.	U22	*"Why, yes, certainly."*	
42.	U25	*"I have--I have--I've lost Madame Forestier's necklace," she cried.*	
43.	U28	*"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the minister's house."*	
44.	U29	*"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."*	
45.	U32	*"No."*	
46.	U36	*"It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."*	
47.	U37	*"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."*	
48.	U37	*"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."*	
49.	U39	*"But--madame! --I do not know---- You must have mistaken."*	
50.	U40	*"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."*	
51.	U42	*"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life, since I last saw you, and great poverty--and that because of you!"*	
52.	U46	*"Well, I lost it."*	
53.	U48	*"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last, it is ended, and I am very glad."*	
54.	U50	*"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very similar."*	
55.	U51	*"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"*	
56.	U11	*"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs[1] …"*	Commissive

57.	U33	*"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."*	Speech Act

Discussion

Speech acts found in The Necklace

Expressive Speech Acts

According to Yule's theory, expressive speech acts convey the speaker's feelings. The researcher took an example on: **U41: *"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"***. The situation happening when Madame Loisel finally met her friend, Madame Forestier, after her struggle. In this utterance, Madame Forestier showed her sympathy, surprise, and pity seeing her friend's condition that did not look as she used to be.

In The Necklace, expressive speech acts are not all written using adjectives of emotion in its utterances. They are found to be exclamations and character's thoughts: for example, on **U26: *"What! --how? Impossible!"*** (Exclamation). The utterance was said because Mr. Loisel as the speaker heard a shocking reality that his wife had lost the diamond necklace. The tone of the utterance expressed disbelief on what he just heard from his wife. The utterance shown with exclamation mark on "what!", followed with adjective word: "impossible!" that clearly showed a disbelief. **U16: *"How stupid you are!"*[1]** (Exclamation) also showed the same pattern without explicitly speaking adjectives of emotions; however, the utterance still clearly showed an expression of anger and disappointment. An example on character's thoughts was shown by **U13: *"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."*** The situation narrated before the utterance said what that Madame Loise felt insecure and sad because she was not having a proper jewelry to pair with her gown for the ministerial ball. She felt she would look poor without any ornament to put on her. The utterance expressed feelings through how the character spoke her mind. The expressive point was mainly displayed using the verb: annoy. This type of speech acts mainly showcased disappointment, disbelief, pity, and any negative feeling throughout the story due to the characters' condition of living and struggling in poverty.

Directive Speech Act

Directives are those kinds of speech acts that speakers use to get someone else to do something. They express what the speaker wants. An example on **U14: *"You might wear natural flowers[1]," said her husband,*** showed directive speech act in the form of suggestion. In the utterance, Mr. Loisel

suggested her wife to wear natural flowers. By using "might", the utterance became indirect direction for the speaker asking the hearer to do something.

Throughout the story, directives were shown in asking for, request, suggestion, and order. Asking for as a directive speech act can be seen on ***U19: "Haven't you any more?".*** The utterance was intended to gain an information by asking for. The situation was that Madame Loisel wanted to know if Madame Forestier had more jewels to show her. The direction was displayed as speaker wanted the hearer to answer (do something for her) her question by giving an information. The directive in this utterance was shown by using "have …?". Request type can be seen on **U21: *"Will you lend me this, only this?".*** The utterance happened when Madame Loisel saw the pretty diamond necklace, so she wanted to borrow that one from Madame Loisel. The direction was shown in question using modal verb "will…?" which is a common characteristic of request. Suggestion in this story can be seen for example on ***U35: "We must consider how to replace that ornament.".*** The utterance happened when Mr. and Madame Loisel could not find the borrowed necklace. The speaker, Mr. Loisel directed Madame Loisel to find a way for replacing Madame Forestier's necklace. In the utterance, suggestion was shown using modal verb "must". Directive speech act as in order was shown by, for example, **U16: *"Go look up your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."[2)]*.** The order can be seen using verbs "go" and "ask" placed without subjects preceding the verbs. Directive Speech Acts, as the researcher found here, dominated most utterances. They were shown mainly as most of questions that reveal many events throughout the story, as request that was shown for permission to borrow the necklace, as suggestion to wear something and to take an action for the lost necklace, and as order to give the invitation to others and to borrow the jewels.

Representative Speech Acts

Based on Yule's theory, representative speech acts show what the speaker believes to be the reality. An example of representative speech act: **U42: *"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life, since I last saw you, and great poverty--and that because of you!"*,** showed a statement spoken by Madame Loisel. Since representatives reveal what the speaker believes to be the case, the utterance was written as an explanation of what the character had gone through. In this utterance, Madame Loisel stated a reality or fact happening lately to her life, which was a great poverty that she believed it started because of replacing Madame Forestier's necklace.

Representatives were mostly written as statements during the story plot to reveal what each character believed in the short story, another example was **U25: *"I have--I have--I've lost Madame Forestier's necklace," she cried.*** The

utterance happened during the realization of the lost borrowed necklace. The situation seemed to be fine before Madame Loisel knew that she had lost the necklace. In the story, this couple of Mr. and Madame Loisel enjoyed the ministerial ball to its end, especially Madame Loisel for having such a pretty diamond necklace and being noticed by rich people at the ball. Reality changed when she said that the necklace was gone somewhere when they were going back to their house. They were trapped in a great poverty since the accident of losing necklace happened. However, seeing the situation happening for this utterance, it might have had slightly expressive tone as the complimentary speech act. An example on **U51: *"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"*** The utterance revealed the truth about Madame Forestier's necklace which was only fake one. The utterance also slightly expressed her pity towards Madame Loisel after knowing that she was in terrible poverty for assuming Madame Forestier's necklace was valuable and paying the expensive replacement. These two representative utterances have gotten the researcher's attention because they functioned as the turning points of the story: as the change to poverty and as the revelation of unnecessary struggle in the end of the story.

Expressive Speech Acts

According to Yule's theory, expressive speech acts convey the speaker's feelings. The researcher took an example on: **U41: *"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"*.** The situation happening when Madame Loisel finally met her friend, Madame Forestier, after her struggle. In this utterance, Madame Forestier showed her sympathy, surprise, and pity seeing her friend's condition that did not look as she used to be.

In The Necklace, expressive speech acts are not all written using adjectives of emotion in its utterances. They are found to be exclamations and character's thoughts: for example, on **U26: *"What! --how? Impossible!"*** (Exclamation). The utterance was said because Mr. Loisel as the speaker heard a shocking reality that his wife had lost the diamond necklace. The tone of the utterance expressed disbelief on what he just heard from his wife. The utterance shown with exclamation mark on "what!", followed with adjective word: "impossible!" that clearly showed a disbelief. **U16: *"How stupid you are!"*[1)]** (Exclamation) also showed the same pattern without explicitly speaking adjectives of emotions; however, the utterance still clearly showed an expression of anger and disappointment. An example on character's thoughts was shown by **U13: *"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."*** The situation narrated before the utterance said what that Madame Loise felt insecure and sad because she was not having a proper jewelry to pair with her gown for the ministerial ball. She felt she would

look poor without any ornament to put on her. The utterance expressed feelings through how the character spoke her mind. The expressive point was mainly displayed using the verb: annoy. This type of speech acts mainly showcased disappointment, disbelief, pity, and any negative feeling throughout the story due to the characters' condition of living and struggling in poverty.

Commissive Speech Acts

According to Yule's theory, commissive is one kind of speech acts that show the speaker committing into future action. Commissive speech acts found in The Necklace were displayed as promises, as shown on **U11: *"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs[1) ...".*** The utterance used a modal verb "will" to show a promise in which the speaker intended. The speaker, Mr. Loisel promised to give four hundred francs for his wife buying pretty ball gown. Another example on ***U33: "I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."*** Showed mainly commissive speech act by using modal verb "shall". Mr. Loisel intended to search the borrowed necklace by walking along the street where they were passing by. This type of speech acts did not take many parts in the story because most of the utterances showed more direct actions rather than committing in many promises.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies and provides a brief explanation of the speech act categories found in Guy De Maupassant's short story "The Necklace." There are numerous speaking acts throughout the story's 51 utterances. Yule's theory, which served as the fundamental framework for this study, states that there are 0 declarative speech acts, 22 representative speech acts, 25 directive speech acts, 8 expressive speech acts, and 2 commissive speech acts in this story. The classification of the utterances is based on the primary acts and followed by secondary or complimentary acts that supported by the narration written through the story. The results shows that Directive Speech Acts and Representative Speech Act dominate the short story. They function to lead the story plot by leading and revealing information through directives and stating what the characters goes through and believes using representatives. Meanwhile, the presence of expressives and commissives does not take many utterances. Expressives are only shown less in utterance because the emotional situations are mostly narrated in paragraphs instead of character's speech. So are commissives, they are shown less because most of utterances written to be direct action now.

The results of this study can be used to explore topics in EFL classes and are applicable to all language proficiency levels. However, because she uses textual data as her object, the researcher recommends her findings for improving reading proficiency. To apply this result, EFL teachers need to give

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an overview and emphasis on the basic theory of speech acts before asking the students to read. Teachers may guide their students using this story to understand the application; they need to be careful in giving the application because written utterance is more difficult to classify due to lack of visualization. The researcher encourages further research in analyzing speech acts in more specific field in the short story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant.

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