



Exploring the pragmatics of ‘Don’t Look Up’ movie script: An analysis of illocutionary acts

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ABSTRACT

This study examines illocutionary acts in Adam McKay’s film Don’t Look Up. Randall and Kate, two amateur astronomers, are the main characters in this movie who make the startling discovery that a comet is heading straight for Earth, posing a catastrophic threat to all life on the planet. This study is intended to provide information about illocutionary acts found in the movie script of Don’t Look Up. The writers employ a qualitative approach in studying the types of illocutionary acts found in “Don’t Look Up” movie script. The script consisted of 127 pages and all the pages are used as the data. The data collection procedures are first, read the movie script. Second, identified the utterances that contain illocutionary acts. Third, classified the utterances that are found in movie script based on the five types of illocutionary acts. The writers then analyzed the data by using the theory of Searle (1968) to explore the most found type of illocutionary act in the movie script. The writers concluded that this movie contains five types of illocutionary acts: 29 percent assertive, 19 percent directive, 5 percent commissive, 39 percent expressive, and 8 percent declarative. According to the data, the most common category found in this movie is expressive for many unexpected, sad, funny, annoying, romantic, and other expressive words are voiced in the movie script.

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1. Introduction

According to Larasati et al. (2020), language in communication is important in human life because it is a tool for conveying messages such as ideas, emotions, and thoughts. The speaker’s language to the hearer employs gestures, sounds, or signals for a variety of reasons and intentions. In a meeting of individuals, language must be used to generate a conversation. Language is a tool for two or more people to communicate what they need, want, and so on. A study of a language is called linguistics.

One of a branch of linguistics is Pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of language in context and how language is used in communication to convey intended meanings (Crystal, 2003). Pragmatics is

the study of how context contributes to meaning in language and evaluates how human language is utilized in social interactions. It encompasses phenomena such as implicature, speech acts, relevance, conversation, and nonverbal communication. Pragmatics is concerned with understanding the relationship between the interpreter and the speaker, as well as the ability to comprehend another speaker's intended meaning, known as pragmatic competence. It is a branch of linguistic studies that focuses on the use and function of language in various contexts, and it emerged in the late 1970s as an affiliated field of linguistics. Pragmatics deals with utterances, which are specific events involving intentional acts of speakers at times and places, typically involving language (Korta et al, 2020).

Speech acts are utterances that serve a function in communication and are defined in terms of a speaker's intention and the effect they have on the listener. In the case of a speech act, pragmatic rules are the social rules that determine how language can be used to perform that act. They are used in various contexts, such as offering an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal. Speech acts are not only expressions of information but also actions that can influence the listener or effect change. The concept of speech acts was introduced by philosopher J. L. Austin (1975), who developed the idea of performative and constative utterances. According to Austin (1975), when a speaker utters a sentence, he or she engages in three distinct speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. The study of speech act is very important because it can make us comprehend what message that discovered in every utterance (Hutajulu, 2019).

Illocutionary acts are the most significant of the three speech act kinds to be studied, and they form the foundation of pragmatics comprehension analysis (Sihombing et al, 2021). Every type of illocutionary act differs in meaning and context. Searle (1968) stated that there are only five basic types of actions that one can perform when speaking, using the five types of illocutionary acts which are representatives, directives, commissive, expressive, and declarations. Here are the explanations and the examples of each type:

First, assertives (or representatives). This type of illocutionary act commits a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, including stating, claiming, hypothesizing, describes, telling, insisting, suggesting, asserting, or swearing that something is the case. Examples of assertive speech acts:

Stating : "The meeting is scheduled for 10:00 AM."

Claiming : "I have evidence to support my claim."

Hypothesizing: "If the hypothesis is correct, then the results should be consistent."

Describing : "The house is painted in blue and white."

Telling : "I'm telling you the truth."

Insisting : "I insist that I am right."

Second, directives speech act is designed to get the addressee to do something, including ordering, commanding, daring, defying, challenging, and requesting. Examples of assertive speech acts:

Ordering: "Please bring me a glass of water."

Commanding : “Stop talking and listen to me.”
Daring : “I dare you to jump over that fence.”
Defying : “I defy you to prove me wrong.”
Challenging : “I challenge you to a game of chess.”

Third, commissives speech act is designed to get the speaker (i.e., the one performing the act) to do something, including promising, threatening, intending, vowing to do or to refrain from doing something. Examples of commissives speech acts:

Promising : “I promise I will be there on time.”
Threatening : “If you don’t do what I say, there will be consequences.”
Intending : “I intend to finish this project by the end of the week.”
Vowing : “I vow to always be there for you.”
Pledging : “I pledge to donate a portion of my earnings to charity.”

Fourth, expressives speech act expresses the mental state of the speaker, including congratulating, thanking, deploring, condoling, welcoming, apologizing, and cursing. Examples of expressive speech acts in illocutionary acts:

Congratulating : “Congratulations on your promotion!”
Thanking : “Thank you for your help.”
Pardoning : “I pardon you for your past mistakes.”
Blaming : “It’s your fault we’re in this situation.”
Praising : “What a fantastic performance!”

The last type of illocutionary act is declarations. This speech act bring about the state of affairs to which they refer, including blessing, firing, baptizing, bidding, passing sentence, and excommunicating. The examples include:

Pronouncing someone guilty: “You are found guilty of the charges against you.”
Naming a ship : “I hereby name this ship ‘The Starship Enterprise.’”
Declaring a holiday : “I declare today a national holiday.”
Announcing a winner : “And the winner of the prize is...”

There are some studies done by researchers related to Illocutionary acts. The first study is Sembiring and Ambalegin (2019). They analyzed the types and the context of illocutionary acts in Aladdin movie. The second study entitled “An Analysis of Illocutionary Act in Maleficent 2 Movie” ia a undergraduate thesis by Namira (2021). Her study discussed the types and functions of illocutionary acts of the characters in the movie “Maleficent 2.” This study used Miles and Huberman’s procedures for data analysis and identified various types of illocutionary acts used by the characters in the movie.

The third one is done by Amalia et al. (2021) whose study is aimed to discover the types of illocutionary acts in Nadhira Afifa’s speech as a student’s speaker a Master of Public Health in Harvard Graduation 2020.

Analyzing literary work can be approached from various perspectives. For example, Putriwana and Yustisia (2021) delve into the characterization of the main protagonist, Belle, in the 2017 film “Beauty and the Beast,” directed by Bill Condon. The objective of the study is to examine the various aspects of Belle’s character, encompassing appearances, dialogues, personal descriptions, reactions of other characters, actions, and speeches. Another study, conducted by Karima and Lailiyah (2023), focuses on the analysis annotated translations of Susan Choi’s novel “Trust Exercise”. The goal of this study is to identify effective translation strategies for cultural-specific terms in the novel.

In this study, the writers focused on exploring the illocutionary act found in the *Don’t Look Up* Movie Script. The writers chose *Don’t Look Up Movie* for two reasons, the first one is because Yossman (2022) mentioned that this movie broke the record for the longest-watched movie in a week on the Netflix streaming service and IMDB (2022) mentioned that this movie received an American Film Institute Award for Best Film of the Year in 2022. In this study, the writers focused on exploring the illocutionary act found in the *Don’t Look Up* Movie Script.

2. Method

The writers employ a qualitative approach in studying the types of illocutionary acts found in “Don’t Look Up” movie script. According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 1) “Qualitative data usually in the form of words rather than numbers, have always been the staple of some fields in social sciences, notably anthropology, history, and political science”. The data in this study was the movie script of “Don’t Look Up” by Adam McKay. The script consisted of 127 pages and all the pages are used as the data. The data collection procedures are first, read the movie script. Second, identified the utterances that contain illocutionary acts. Third, classified the utterances that are found in movie script based on the five types of illocutionary acts. The writers then analyzed the data by using the theory of Searle (1968) to explore the most found type of illocutionary act in the movie script. At last, we drew a conclusion.

3. Results and Discussion

In this study, the utterances are categorized into five types of Illocutionary Acts and they are assertive type, commissive type, directives type, expressive type, and declarative type.

3.1. Assertive Type of Illocutionary Act

Here are some examples of assertive types of Illocutionary acts that are drawn from the entire data.

Table 1. Randall to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:03:21	RANDALL: It’s got to be an Oort cloud comet just based on where you saw it.

A “Party” is coming together with a group of 4 grad students in their mid 20s, Daniel, Nisha, Oliver, Win, and their Professor from Michigan State, Professor Randall Mindy, 50s, Midwestern, bearded, not so ambitious since he got tenure. The pictures transfix Randall. Randall uttered the utterance to Kate for stating that Kate found an Oort cloud comet. Thus, the utterance is included in the Assertive category because it reveals a fact that has happened (See Table 1).

Table 2. Randall to Dr. Calder

Scene	Dialogue
00:05:42	RANDALL: But we are seeing some awfully strange orbital numbers on this comet we just found. DR. CALDER: Okay... Hmm...yeah, yeah, okay...

Dr. Calder early 50s and political player, walks down a hallway fast in a sharp business suit. Calder takes the phone from a NASA. Data and pictures are on the computer screen in front of Dr. Calder. Dr. Calder takes a look. Randall uttered the utterance to Dr. Calder for stating the fact that the comet has a strange orbit number. Thus, the utterance is included in the assertive category because it states the facts that happened (See Table 2).

Table 3. Dr Calder to Dr Oglethorpe

Scene	Dialogue
00:06:28	DR. CALDER: We got a sighting of an N.E.O. from Subaru Telescope. DR. OGLETHORPE: Ok, why didn't you just report it to the Minor Planet Center.

An African American man in his late fifties, DR. Clayton “Teddy” Oglethorpe, whip-sharp, seen it all, answers his phone as he walks into the building Through a Light Sun Shower. Dr. Calder reads more and more printouts. Dr. Calder uttered the utterance to Dr. Oglethorpe for stating a new discovery: N.E.O from the Subaru telescope. Thus, the utterance is included in the assertive category because it states the facts that happened (See Table 3).

Table 4. Nasa Scientist to Dr. Calder

Scene	Dialogue
00:06:43	NASA SCIENTIST: We clocked it in at about 5 to 10 kilometers wide. DR. CALDER: About 5 to 10 kilometers wide.

Teddy makes his way into the building and waits for an elevator. DR. CALDER asks to NASA SCIENTIST about how large the comet. Nasa Scientist uttered the utterance to Dr. Calder for noting that the size of the Dibiasky comet is about 5 to 10 kilometers. Thus, the utterance is included in the assertive category because it states the facts that happened (See Table 4).

Table 5. Kate to Randall

Scene	Dialogue
00:07:28	KATE: A direct hit of earth in 6 months and 14 days. RANDALL Me too.

Kate does more calculations on her Matlabs. Kate uttered the utterance to Randall because she told him that the comet would collide with the earth in the near future, namely 6 months and 14 days. Thus, the utterance is included in the assertive category because it states the facts that happened according to the available data (See Table 5).

3.2. Directives Type of Illocutionary Act

There are a few examples of Directive types of Illocutionary Act that are drawn from the entire data.

Table 6. Randall to Students

Scene	Dialogue
00:03:29	RANDALL: Look at the arc on that thing. NISHA: How would we find out the comet's velocity and orbit Professor Mindy?

A "Party" is coming together with a group of 4 GRAD STUDENTS in their mid 20s, DANIEL, NISHA, OLIVER, WIN, and their PROFESSOR from Michigan State, PROFESSOR RANDALL MINDY, Midwestern, bearded, not-so-ambitious since he got tenure. Randall uttered the utterance to his students to see the comet that had been discovered by Kate. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 6).

Table 7. Randall to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:05:16	RANDALL: Hey Kate?...you stay.

The Grad students shuffle off. Randall has not taken his eyes off the board. The utterance was uttered by Randall to Kate to stay in place because there was something he wanted to talk to Kate about. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 7).

Table 8. Dr.Oglethorpe to Dr. Calder

Scene	Dialogue
00:08:04	DR. OGLETHORPE: OK, first move is to get the school field trip out here to DC. I need the person who first had eyes on the comet and the person in charge. DR. CALDER: OK, let's all calm down here!

Dr. Oglethorpe learns of the news that a very large comet will destroy the earth, and he immediately takes action. Dr. Oglethorpe uttered the utterance to Dr. Calder for asking to get the school field trip out here to DC. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 8).

Table 9. Randall to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:14:22	RANDALL: It's a Xanax (drug). I can only take a quarter or otherwise I get Kate takes the rest of the pill and dry swallows it. RANDALL: Kate! KATE: Thank you. RANDALL: You know, you should be careful with that much.

After a beat of eating, Randall reaches into his jacket pocket and takes out a pill. He bites the tip off and swallows with water. Kate looks at him. Randall uttered the utterance to Kate to advise her not to consume too much Xanax. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 9).

Table 10 Randall to June

Scene	Dialogue
00:17:08	RANDALL: It's just the protocol. Please don't worry. JUNE: And you can't tell me what's happening?

Randall's wife, JUNE, in her 40s, is understated but sharp. She is clear family rock. She is worried and calls Randall. Randall uttered the utterance to June for telling him not to worry about him. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 10).

Table 11 Randall to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:28:40	RANDALL: They want us on a show called The Daily Rip first thing in the morning tomorrow when the article comes out.

Kate and Randall followed by Phillip, Kate's boyfriend, are pulling their bags and looking for the Westin Hotel. Randall uttered the utterance to Kate and Philip for telling him that The Daily Rip had asked Rendall and Kate to come to the show. Thus, the utterance is included in the directive category because it asks other people to do something (See Table 11).

3.3. Commissive Type of Illocutionary Act

Below are some examples of the commissive type of Illocutionary Acts. Some of them are drawn from the entire data.

Table 12. Jason to Randall

Scene	Dialogue
00:49:15	JASON: And we are fully prepared to mobilize in an historic fashion to save this planet.

President Orlean and Jason speak to Randall, Teddy and Kate in Oval Office. Dr. Calder is also there. Jason uttered the utterance to Randall, Kate, and Dr. Oglethorpe for promising

that the government will do something to save this earth. Thus, the utterance is included in the commissive category because it takes several actions in the future (See Table 12).

Table 13. President Orlean to Earthlings

Scene	Dialogue
00:51:49	PRESIDENT ORLEAN: We will knock Comet Dibiasky off her course.

President Orlean and Jason speak to Randall, Teddy and Kate in Oval Office. Dr. Calder is also there. President Orlean uttered the utterance to Earthlings for announcing that the government would blow up the comet Dibiasky. Thus, the utterance is included in the commissive category because it takes several actions in the future (See Table 13).

Table 14. Randall to Earthlings

Scene	Dialogue
01:02:48	RANDALL: And with that, we are go for launch.

In White House Kate glances over at Randall. She sees he and Brie Evantee are holding hands. Randall takes an awkward sip of water. The utterance was uttered by Randall to Earthlings for stating that it was ready to go. Thus, the utterance is included in the commissive category because it takes several actions in the future (See Table 14).

Table 15. Yule to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
01:50:09	YULE: would you want to spend more time together? Maybe even get engaged or something? YULE (CONT'D): Are you laughing? No? KATE: I'm smiling. Well sure, why not?

Randall, Kate, and Yule drive back to the Midwest. The highway is completely empty. A pack of deer sprint across. Yule uttered the utterance to Kate for asking to be together and propose to Kate. Thus, the utterance is included in the Commissive category because it takes action in the future (See Table 15).

3.4. Expressive Type of Illocutionary Act

Below are some examples of the expressive type of Illocutionary Acts and they are drawn from the entire data.

Table 16. Randall to Students

Scene	Dialogue
00:03:06	RANDALL: This is nuts!! This is so crazy... NISHA: I've got a hard cider and a bag of Crossbone Crunch

A “Party” is coming together with a group of 4 GRAD STUDENTS in their mid 20s, DANIEL, NISHA, OLIVER, WIN and their PROFESSOR from Michigan State, PROFESSOR RANDALL MINDY, 50s, Midwestern, bearded, not so ambitious since he got tenure. Randall uttered the utterance to Kate because it showed his joy that Kate found a comet. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states what Randall feels (See Table 16).

Table 17. Randall to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:03:12	RANDALL: I’m just so, so thrilled for you Kate.

A “Party” is coming together with a group of 4 GRAD STUDENTS in their mid 20s, DANIEL, NISHA, OLIVER, WIN and their PROFESSOR from Michigan State, PROFESSOR RANDALL MINDY, 50s, Midwestern, bearded, not so ambitious since he got tenure. Randall uttered the utterance to Kate because it showed his joy that Kate found a comet. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states what Randall feels (See Table 17).

Table 18. Randall to Students

Scene	Dialogue
00:03:31	RANDALL: My god that’s amazing.

A “Party” is coming together with a group of 4 GRAD STUDENTS in their mid 20s, DANIEL, NISHA, OLIVER, WIN and their PROFESSOR from Michigan State, PROFESSOR RANDALL MINDY, 50s, Midwestern, bearded, not so ambitious since he got tenure. Randall uttered the utterance to his students because he had seen the comet so beautiful that Kate had found. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states what Randall feels (See Table 18).

Table 19. Daniel to Randall

Scene	Dialogue
00:05:10	DANIEL: You know what, I’m beat.

The Grad students shuffle off. Randall hasn’t taken his eyes off the board. Daniel uttered the utterance to Randall because it showed his tiredness that the calculation of the comet’s position could not be calculated that night. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states what Daniel feels (See Table 19).

Table 20. Daniel to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:05:13	DANIEL: Kate this was amazing.

The Grad students shuffle off. Randall has not taken his eyes off the board. Daniel uttered the utterance to Kate because it showed his joy that Kate found a comet. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states what Daniel feels (See Table 20).

Table 21. Kate to Randall

scene	Dialogue
00:08:43	KATE: I gotta go get high....

They hang up. Terrified Kate looks to Randall, who begins pacing around the room. Kate uttered the utterance to Randall because she was very dizzy, knowing that the comet she found would collide with the earth, which could destroy the earth. Thus, the utterance is included in the expressive category because it states the speaker's feelings (See Table 21).

3.5. Declaratives Type of Illocutionary in Don't Look Up Movie

Here are some examples of the declarative type of Illocutionary Acts and they are drawn from the entire data.

Table 22. Dr. Oglethorpe to President Orlean

Scene	Dialogue
00:21:14	DR. OGLETHORPE: There are government plans in place. Actions we can take through NASA. Drones that can be outfitted with nukes to deflect and hopefully change the orbit of this comet. But we must act now. PRESIDENT ORLEAN: Alright, alright, let me think here... When are the midterms?

In White House Randall, Kate, and Dr. Oglethorpe met President for tell her about comet is close to the earth. The utterance was uttered by Dr. Oglethorpe to President Orlean for conveying information that NASA had prepared a government plan. Thus, the utterance is included in the declarative category because it is an action that can change the world (See Table 22).

Table 23 DJ Chello to Riley Bina

Scene	Dialogue
00:36:27	DJ CHELLO: My little bumble bee, will you marry me?

On TV DJ Chello is getting engaged to Riley Bina. DJ Chello uttered the utterance to Riley Bina for proposing to Riley Bina. Thus, the utterance is included in the declarative category because it is an action that changes Riley Bina's status in the future (See Table 23).

Table 24. FBI Agents to Kate

Scene	Dialogue
00:47:53	FBI AGENTS FBI: You are under arrest for breach of national security secrets! KATE: Jesus Christ! You could have just called me! Or showed up to my apartment.

Suddenly A PASSING STUDENT, A BLIND MAN WITH A CANE, A COFFEE VENDOR reveal they are undercover FBI, tackle her and draw guns on her. The FBI Agents uttered the utterance to Kate by giving her a penalty for leaking state secrets. Thus, the utterance is included declarative category because it is an action that can change someone's life (See Table 24).

Table 25. Randall to Audience

Scene	Dialogue
00:56:50	RANDALL: But I can assure you our best and brightest are on the job.

Randall, in front of the World, promised that he would do his best. Randall uttered the utterance to the Audience because it gives certainty that great and smart people who are struggling will give good results. Thus, the utterance is included in the declarative category because it is an action that can change the world (See Table 25).

Table 26. Jason to Randall

Scene	Dialogue
01:07:55	JASON: Sorry to keep you waiting, but the situation is extremely fluid. (and then) Dr. Randall, you're now Chief Science Advisor to the White House. RANDALL: What?

Teddy, Randall, and Kate are in a generic office. Teddy tries the door. The door opens. It is Jason. Jason uttered the utterance to Randall because he gave information that Randall was appointed as Chief Science Advisor to the White House. Thus, this utterance is included declarative category because it is an action that can change the world (See Table 26). According to the findings of this final report, all five types of illocutionary acts were discovered, namely 29 percent assertive, 19 percent directive, 5 percent commissive, 39 percent expressive, and 8 percent declarative. All the data including the frequency and the percentage are included in table 27.

Table 27. Results

Illocutionary acts types	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	22	29
Directive	15	19
Commissive	4	5
Expressive	30	39
Declarative	6	8
Total	77	100

3. Conclusion

According to the data analysis, the most expressive character in this movie. The number of illocutionary act discoveries of each type is the result of frequency. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of illocutionary acts discovered by type by the total number of illocutionary acts discovered and multiplying the result by one hundred percent (See Table 27). According to the data, the most expressive character in this movie. The majority of the dialogue in this movie falls into the expressive category because many of the moments are surprising, sad, fun, annoying, romantic, and so on. Many dialogues express their emotions to one another.

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