

## **SPEECH ACTS ON WOMEN'S DOUBLE STANDARDS IN BARBIE'S MONOLOGUE (2023)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to examine the speech act on Gloria Vaughn's monologue utterances from the 2023 Barbie film, concentrating on the distribution of expressive, assertive, directive, and commissive utterances. The analysis aims to carefully examine the verbal techniques employed in Gloria's speech, elucidating its emotional impact, advocacy for change, and cultural importance. Descriptive, statistical and interpretative methods were used to examine the data in accordance with John Searle's speech act theory. The results demonstrate that 31.58% of Gloria's monologue consists of expressive utterances, 26.32% of assertive utterances, 26.32% of directive utterances, and 15.79% of commissive utterances. These figures highlight the emotional impact, call for change, and individual dedication intertwined within Gloria's persuasive speech. The analysis underscores the educational, artistic, and societal import of deconstructing Gloria's speech acts, accentuating its function as an instructive implement, a refraction instigator, and a potent artistic and emotive medium. The analysis results provide a more profound comprehension of the intricacies of womanhood and the resonant significance conveyed in Gloria's monologue. These insights are vital for academics, learners, and individuals engaging with societal challenges and self-recognition.

**Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Utterance, Barbie 2023**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Human beings and language are inherently entwined in society as individuals require language for communication and relationship building during social interactions. Language serves as the primary medium of communication in these circumstances, affording people the opportunity to express ideas, convey emotions, share humour, provide information, issue commands, and exert influence. Taylor and Taylor (1990:5) state that language is a means of communication using signs to convey messages. Language plays a crucial role in the transmission of meaning between individuals, whether through spoken or written communication. In daily life, it serves as a vital tool for fostering positive relationships, facilitating understanding and connection. Properly understanding the meaning of expressions is crucial in verbal interactions to avoid misinterpretation. People primarily use spoken language to effectively convey their intentions, leading to direct and clear expressions of purpose. Nevertheless, the wider significance of utterances frequently surpasses literal interpretations, strongly influenced by contextual factors surrounding the speech.

As individuals strive to achieve their goals, they integrate actions within their utterances, placing emphasis on the essential link between speech acts and conversations. Austin proposed a three-way taxonomy of speech acts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts refer to the act of saying something meaningful, that is, the act of uttering a fragment or a sentence in the literal sense, while illocutionary acts are the intended effect of an utterance, such as making a promise, giving an order, or

asking a question. Perlocutionary acts refer to the actual effect of an utterance on the listener, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even surprising or misleading (J.L. Austin, 1962: 109 [emphasis in original]). Austin's theory of speech acts, as presented by Searle (1976: 1-23), categorises five types: assertive, directive, commissives, expressive, and declaration. It is important to note that these classifications are objective and value-neutral in nature.

Assertive speech acts involve statements expressing the speaker's beliefs about the state of affairs, whether affirming or negating (Yule: 53). Examples of this category include statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions, all reflecting the speaker's representation of the world based on their beliefs. When using assertive, the speaker aligns their words with their beliefs about reality. Directive, on the other hand, aims to induce a specific action by the listener, encompassing behaviours like ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, and recommending, as the speaker communicates their desires (Leech: 106). Commissives constitute speech acts in which the speaker commits to future actions, expressing their intentions. Examples include promising, vowing, and offering. Commissives can be enacted by an individual speaker or by a speaker as part of a group. In utilizing commissives, the speaker pledges to align their actions with their stated words (Yule: 54). Expressive serves the purpose of conveying the speaker's psychological attitude towards a given situation, encompassing actions like thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, condoling, etc. (Leech: 106). In expressive speech acts, the speaker ensures that their words resonate with the emotions and feelings associated with the situation. Declaration, a distinct type of speech act, involves actions performed to establish a correspondence between propositional content and reality. Examples include resigning, demising, christening, naming, excommunicating, appointing, sentencing, etc. (Leech: 106). Typically carried out by individuals with specific authorization within a particular framework, declarations signify a performative aspect where the action itself transforms the state of affairs. Communication in society heavily relies on language, which consists of grammatical and structural elements to derive meaning from verbal expressions. Films often present conversations that exemplify different aspects of speech acts.

Films serve as a medium for conveying messages. A film is composed of a sequence of images that are projected onto a screen, typically accompanied by a prepared soundtrack. It serves not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a means of education, offering audio-visual presentations that enable easier comprehension. Films are utilised to showcase events, described as motion pictures, which are highly prized for their artistic and entertainment qualities. Although films often do not strictly adhere to language conventions, the primary objective is to comprehend the conveyed message. Additionally, films offer captivating entertainment, influencing the audience's engagement with the storyline and frequently imparting moral ideals relevant to real-life circumstances.

Various research studies have delved into the analysis of speech acts in films and dialogues. One such investigation titled "THE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACT IN 'BARBIE AS RAPUNZEL' FILM" conducted by Hunsawati, Siti & Rohamana, Rohmana & Siam, Siam in 2019, focused on examining the speech acts of the main character in the film "Barbie as Rapunzel." The objective was to delineate both direct and indirect speech acts employed in the film. Another study, "A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACT OF REQUESTS EXPRESSED BY THE CHARACTERS IN OFFICE SPACE," conducted by Mochamad Rifki Fahrurrozi in 2015, specifically analyzed the speech act of requests made by characters in the film "Office Space." The aim was to comprehend how characters in the film expressed requests and the pragmatic implications of such acts.

In a third study, "A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN STATE OF PLAY" by Atika Krusdian Sari in 2014, the focus was on analyzing the speech acts of the main character in the film "State of Play." The study aimed to identify the speech acts and their communicative functions utilized by the leading character. This study provides valuable knowledge about the types of speech acts used in film and dialogue settings, leading to a deeper understanding of how language performs actions and achieves communicative goals in social interactions.

Speech acts are essential for achieving communication goals as they show the actions behind spoken words (Dawson and Phelan, 2016: 710). The upcoming 2023 film "Barbie" tackles problems faced by women in society, such as double standards and unrealistic expectations. In the third part of the movie, America Ferrera plays Gloria Vaughn, a Mattel executive who delivers a powerful speech employing speech acts to address these issues. Gloria talks about the difficulties women face, talking about Barbies and her daughter Sasha. She points out the hardships girls go through as they grow up, explaining how the perfect world shown by Barbies is not real. Gloria's speech has received praise for motivating the listener and empowering them. It inspires action and looks at the experiences of modern women in society. Women of all ages have shared it on social media, highlighting the challenges they face in a patriarchal society. This analysis will examine Gloria's speech acts in her monologue within the film "Barbie" (2023) and their role in addressing societal challenges faced by women. Objective is to analyse the functions of these speech acts in addressing the societal challenges faced by women.

## **METHODS**

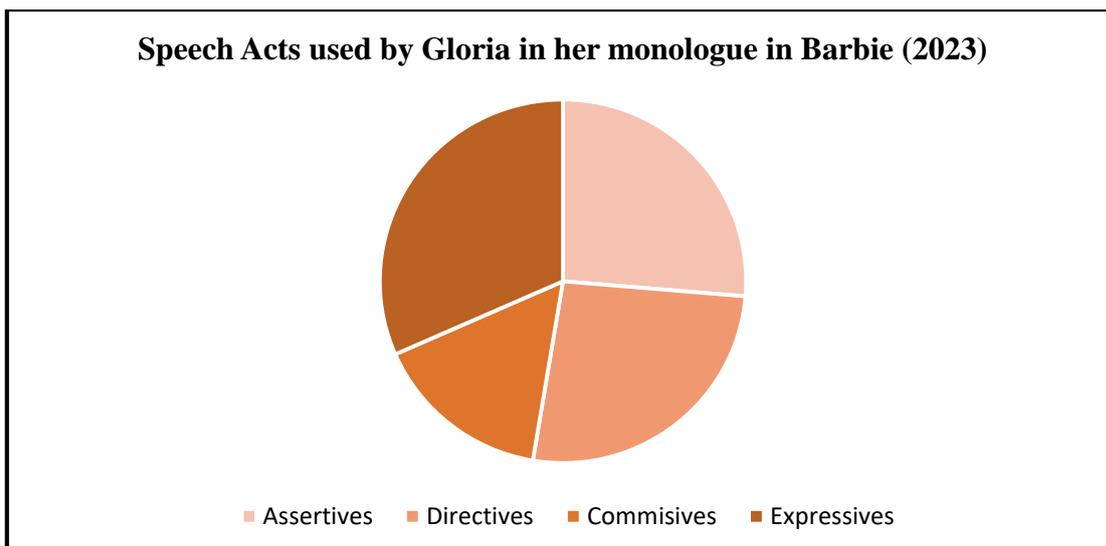
The study uses a descriptive technique to evaluate and measure the speech acts expressed in Gloria's monologue from the film "Barbie" (2023). The study examines content analysis, a method that entails scrutinising speech to ascertain its intended meaning. According to Cho and Lee (2014), content analysis is a technique in communication and linguistics that assembles data into different information categories about a given scenario, rather than formulating theories on it.

The analysis also employs the technique of document review to gather data. Bowen (2006), cited by Merriam, asserts that examining relevant documents can aid in uncovering the reality of the phenomenon under investigation. Bowen (2006) identifies several roles documents play in qualitative research. These include providing background and context information, raising questions for discussion, serving as supplementary information, and validating information and research findings from other sources.

Descriptive, statistical, and interpretative methods are utilised to examine the data. Then, Gloria's monologue is categorized based on the utterances she produces. This analysis reveals the dominant category of speech acts employed. Finally, the interpretation of the results exposes the character's intention behind their employment of specific speech acts in accordance with John Searle's speech act theory.

## **RESULTS**

After a thorough analysis, 19 utterances have been identified in the monologue. The breakdown is as follows.



**Figure 1.** Speech Acts used by Gloria in her Monologue in Barbie (2023)

The film "Barbie" (2023) addresses societal issues facing women, such as double standards and unrealistic expectations. In the third act, America Ferrera's character, Gloria, who is a Mattel executive, delivers a powerful monologue that brilliantly addresses these issues through speech acts. A preliminary analysis shows that Gloria's monologue contains about 19 different utterances. Referring to the pie, there are four types of acts found with the most dominant utterances stated being expressive. The type covers 31.58% of the total utterances. It is followed by assertive with 26.32%, directive with 26.32%, and commissives with 15.79%. Of the five types of speech acts, four types (assertive, directive, commissives, and expressive) are found, leaving the declaration type.

## DISCUSSION

The sample utterance covers all the categories of speech acts and below are the listed categories. Based on the kind of speech act, the author has divided the utterance as per John Searle (1976: 1-23).

### *Expressive (31.58%)*

Gloria's monologue in the third act of the film is dominated by expressive speech acts. Out of the 19 utterances, 31.58% of them contain expressive word clues. Yule and Widdowson (1996) classify word indicators used to express speech acts, which pertain to utterances conveying preferences, aversions, unpleasant sensations, pleasant sensations, remorse, regret, apologies, commendations, and congratulations. These clues include words that convey personal feelings and emotions. The purpose of this category is to convey the speaker's psychological state as outlined in the sincerity condition, pertaining to a particular state of affairs indicated in the propositional content (Searle, 1999:30). This means that the speaker aims to articulate their genuine psychological stance regarding the specified situation or circumstance. Below are the expressive utterances mentioned by Gloria.

	<b>Utterances</b>
<b>Gloria's monologue</b>	"I'm just so tired." "It kills me that you don't think you're good enough." "And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault." "I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us." "You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line." "But always stand out and always be grateful."

These utterances reflect Gloria's emotional state, frustrations, and the personal toll she perceives from societal expectations placed on women. They contribute to the expressive nature of her monologue. In the context of expressive speech acts, Gloria's statements, such as those reflecting her emotional state and frustrations, fall within this category. Expressive speech acts are characterized by the speaker's intent to express their psychological attitude or emotions toward a given state of affairs. Gloria expresses how societal expectations affect women emotionally and draws attention to the problem's women face. Her frustration and exhaustion are clearly expressed by Gloria, highlighting how these expectations affect women's emotional and mental health. This has the potential to increase awareness of the issue and motivate others to take action to alleviate the burden.

*Assertive (26.32%)*

Out of the 19 utterances made, 26.32% of them include assertive word clues. Assertive or representative speech acts consist of utterances where the speaker commits to the truth of the expressed proposition (Searle, 1999:27). Assertive speech acts are utterances that present facts, descriptions, claims, hypotheses, predictions and similar ideas. These utterances indicate that the speaker believes something to be true or false (Cutting, n.d.). Additionally, Qadir & Riloff (2011) expand on Searle's word clues for assertive speech acts by including other relevant clues and presenting them together. Assertive utterances present Gloria's perspective on the challenges and expectations placed on women. Assertive speech acts may take the form of complaints (Putri, S. A., & Juanda, J. 2021). The primary goal of assertive speech acts is to bind the speaker to the affirmation of a specific situation or the truth of a stated proposition. She communicates her beliefs about the difficulties of meeting societal standards and the conflicting nature of these expectations. Below are the assertive utterances used by Gloria.

	<b>utterances</b>
<b>Gloria's monologue</b>	"It is literally impossible to be a woman." "You are so beautiful, and so smart." "We have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong." "You have to be thin, but not too thin." "You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood."

These utterances communicate her beliefs about the impossibility of meeting societal standards. By pointing out the conflicting expectations, she highlights the impossible and unrealistic standards that women must uphold. This reveals the overwhelming stress and emotional weight that women experience as they try to meet these expectations. This reveals the overwhelming stress and emotional weight that women experience as they try to meet these expectations. Gloria's assured statements draw awareness to the social pressures and unfair double standards that women face. By sharing her opinions on the challenges women face, she helps her audience understand and empathise with the struggles women endure in society. Gloria uses her confident statements in her speech to highlight the problems women encounter, facilitate meaningful conversations, foster empathy, and push for a positive shift in societal expectations.

*Directive (26.32%)*

Out of the 19 utterances made, 26.32% of them also include directive word clues. As the name suggests, this category of speech act directs the listener to carry out the speaker's intention. According to Searle (1999:28), directive speech acts are characterized by the speaker's intention to prompt the listener into taking a specific action. According to Yule (1996:54), individuals communicate their desires through acts. When expressing directive utterances, the speaker informs the listener of what he or she wants the listener to do. Gloria uses directive utterances, which can be positive or negative and include commands, requests, orders, suggestions and prohibitions (Yule & Widdowson, 1996). Below is an example of Gloria's use of directive expressions.

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	<b>utterances</b>
<b>Gloria's monologue</b>	"Find a way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful." "You can never say you want to be thin." "You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin." "But never forget that the system is rigged." "So, find a way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful."

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Gloria employs directives in her speech, offering advice, guidance, and recommendations to address societal issues affecting women. Her use of directive utterances is key to her talk, as it helps women navigate through challenges they face. Through the imparting of guidance, encouragement for action and advocacy, cultivation of empathy, and stimulation of dialogue and reflection, Gloria's monologue emerges as a potent catalyst for women to confront and combat societal expectations and double standards. These directives extend beyond mere information dissemination; they function as persuasive tools, influencing the audience to take action in addressing prevalent issues. Gloria's speech transforms into a compelling call to action, utilizing directives to empower and mobilize individuals against the obstacles faced by women.

*Commissive (15.79%)*

Commissive speech acts appear in the monologue taking only 15.79% of the total utterances. Searle (1999:29) defines commissives as illocutionary acts in which the speaker commits to a forthcoming course of action and states their intentions. When using commissive speech acts, the speaker not only states their commitment but also assumes the responsibility of ensuring that their actions match their words, effectively promising to achieve the intended result. These acts are characterized by sentences expressing promises, offers, threats, refusals, vows and volunteering (Cutting, n.d.). In other words,

commissive speech acts commit speakers to future actions. Commissive speech acts are not so much emphasized in Gloria's monologue.

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**Utterances**

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<b>Gloria's monologue</b>	"I'm just so tired of watching myself." "I don't even know." "You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time."
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These utterances involve expressions of personal commitment, resolution, or decisions. In the first statement, Gloria is stating her commitment to initiating change, while in the second, she expresses uncertainty. The third statement addresses societal expectations surrounding motherhood. Gloria's committed expressions are crucial in tackling the societal challenges women face. These statements not only signal her personal dedication to instigating change but also convey contemplation and introspection, addressing distinct societal expectations. In this way, they enhance understanding of the complexities and challenges linked to womanhood.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussion, it is evident that the category of expressive language holds the highest representation among all utterances in the monologue, accounting for 31.58% of the identified speech acts. This prevalence of expressive statements within Gloria's monologue highlights her emotional depth and intimate connection she builds with her audience. By narrating personal anecdotes and evoking a range of emotions, Gloria compellingly appeals to the sensitivities of her audience, urging them to reflect on the social obstacles encountered by women. This emotional connection strengthens her argument and fosters a deep rapport with the listeners.

The significant representation of assertive utterances in Gloria's monologue highlights her firm perspective on the challenges and contradictions inherent in societal expectations. Through these assertive utterances, Gloria effectively raises awareness about the unrealistic and unattainable standards placed on women, advocating for change and empowerment while fostering empathy and understanding among her audience. Furthermore, the inclusion of directive utterances in Gloria's monologue provides guidance, advice, and motivation for taking action. Gloria empowers women by offering recommendations to navigate societal expectations, encouraging self-advocacy, and prompting reflection on the nuances of womanhood and the societal need for change. Finally, the use of commissive utterances in Gloria's monologue demonstrates her dedication to initiating change and addressing societal expectations. These statements convey introspection, determination, and a subtle comprehension of the complexities and challenges of womanhood, enhancing the depth of her thought-provoking and impactful message.

Gloria's monologue skillfully employs a strategic combination of expressive, assertive, directive, and commissive utterances, effectively communicating her profound insights on societal expectations and the significance of self-acceptance. This meticulous breakdown of speech acts highlights the emotional depth, advocacy for change, empowerment, and personal commitment that are woven into the fabric of Gloria's compelling message.

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