



A Pragmatic Analysis of Assertive Illocutionary Acts in *Anyone But You* Movie

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: Revised: Accepted: Keywords: pragmatics; speech acts; assertive illocutionary acts; movie dialogue; Anyone But You DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11993 Corresponding Author: Devy Purnama Sari devypurnama04@gmail.com Department of English Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Universitas of Mahasaraswati Denpasar	<i>Although assertive illocutionary acts have been examined in various communicative contexts, previous studies have largely focused on illocutionary acts in general or on speech acts in monologic discourse, leaving the pragmatic distinctions among assertive subcategories in dialogic movie interaction insufficiently explored. This study aims to identify and analyze the subcategories of assertive illocutionary acts produced by the characters in the movie Anyone But You (2023), based on Searle's (1979) speech act theory and the classification proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985). A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through observation and note-taking of the movie dialogues, supported by the English subtitles and the official script. Utterances were classified using operational criteria distinguishing informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting. The analysis identified 35 assertive utterances classified into five subcategories: informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting. The results show that informing was the most dominant subcategory (40.00%), followed by stating (25.71%), claiming (20.00%), reporting (8.57%), and objecting (5.71%). These findings indicate that the characters predominantly used assertive speech acts to provide information and to share their beliefs and opinions during interaction, reflecting how information exchange functions as a central interpersonal dynamic within romantic comedy dialogue. This study contributes to pragmatic studies by offering a more detailed understanding of how assertive speech acts and their subcategories are realized in romantic comedy movie dialogues.</i>

1. Introduction

Language enables people to express ideas, feelings, and opinions, and successful communication depends not only on the literal meaning of an utterance but also on the speaker's intended meaning within its context. The study of meaning in context is known as pragmatics. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics examines how speakers convey intended meanings and how hearers interpret utterances in particular situations. One

important area of pragmatics is speech act theory, first introduced by Austin (1962), who argued that producing an utterance is also an act of performing an action. This theory was further developed by Searle (1979), who classified illocutionary acts into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Among the five categories, assertive speech acts are frequently used because they express propositions that speakers believe to be true. According to Searle (1979), assertive speech acts commit speakers to the truth of the propositions they express. They are commonly used to provide information, express opinions, report events, and describe situations. For this reason, assertive speech acts are important because they reveal speakers' knowledge, beliefs, and perspectives during communication.

Speech acts are not only found in everyday conversations but also in movie dialogues. Although movie dialogues are scripted discourse rather than naturally occurring conversation, they are constructed to represent plausible patterns of interpersonal communication, which makes them a useful, if indirect, source for pragmatic analysis. One movie that contains numerous examples of assertive speech acts is *Anyone But You* (2023), an American romantic comedy directed by Will Gluck. The story follows Bea and Ben, whose first meeting ends in misunderstanding before they unexpectedly reunite at a destination wedding in Australia.

Throughout the movie, the characters frequently exchange information, express opinions, report events, introduce other characters, and defend their beliefs. As a romantic comedy centered on evolving relationships, misunderstandings, and social gatherings, the movie provides a communicative setting in which characters continually negotiate information, opinions, and disagreements with one another making assertive speech acts particularly relevant to examine within this genre. These interactions make the movie an appropriate source for examining the realization of assertive speech acts from a pragmatic perspective.

Several previous studies have examined illocutionary acts in different communicative contexts. One group of studies analyzed illocutionary acts across all five categories rather than focusing specifically on assertives: Turnip et al. (2024) found assertive speech acts to be the most dominant category in the documentary *Einstein and the Bomb*; Lutviana and Hendar (2024) reported a similar dominance of assertives in *Black Adam*; Davina et al. (2024) found assertives to be the most frequent category across several talk shows, mainly functioning to inform, state, and boast; and Maharani and Mubarak (2023) showed that assertive acts in the movie *Searching* contributed significantly to advancing the storyline. In contrast, other studies found different categories to be more dominant depending on genre and context: Apriesa et al. (2023) found expressive acts more dominant than assertives in *After*; Panduputra and Nugraha (2024) found assertive acts occurring alongside expressive and directive acts in *Midway* (2019); and Cahyanti (2025) similarly found expressive acts more dominant than assertives in *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*.

A smaller group of studies focused specifically on assertive subcategories rather than illocutionary acts in general: Putra and Putri (2024) examined assertive subcategories in a monologic speech video, while Wulan and Tustiawati (2024) examined assertive subcategories in the movie *Wish*. Taken together, these studies indicate that the distribution of illocutionary acts varies depending on communicative context and genre, and that research specifically targeting assertive subcategories rather than illocutionary acts in general remains comparatively limited.

Compared with previous studies, the present study differs in both focus and scope. Putra and Putri (2024) analyzed assertive speech acts in a monologic speech video, whereas the present study examines dialogic interactions in a movie, where assertive acts are

shaped by interaction between speakers rather than produced by a single speaker addressing an audience. Furthermore, while several previous studies (for example: Turnip et al., 2024; Lutviana & Hendar, 2024; Apriesa et al., 2023) investigated illocutionary acts across all categories, this study focuses specifically on the subcategories of assertive speech acts based on the classification proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

Although Wulan and Tustiawati (2024) also examined assertive subcategories, their analysis centered on a single main character, whereas the present study examines assertive subcategories as they are realized across multiple characters in dialogic exchange, allowing for comparison of how different speakers use the same subcategory for different communicative purposes. What remains insufficiently addressed in prior research is how the pragmatic distinctions among informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting are contextually realized and operationally distinguished from one another a gap this study addresses by proposing explicit criteria for classification, rather than relying solely on the novelty of the data source. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has specifically examined these assertive subcategories in *Anyone But You* (2023), which provides a fresh dialogic dataset for testing these distinctions.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to identify and analyze the subcategories of assertive illocutionary acts produced by the characters in *Anyone But You* (2023) based on Searle's (1979) theory. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What subcategories of assertive illocutionary acts occur in *Anyone But You* (2023)? (2) How are these subcategories pragmatically realized in different communicative contexts within the movie? The findings are expected to contribute to pragmatic studies by providing a deeper understanding of how assertive speech acts are realized in romantic comedy movie dialogues.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to examine assertive illocutionary acts in *Anyone But You* (2023). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it emphasizes the interpretation of meaning, communicative intention, and language use within their communicative context rather than numerical measurement. This approach allows the researcher to explore not only what illocutionary acts occur but also how they function within specific conversational situations. Rather than treating language as isolated linguistic units, a qualitative approach enables a closer examination of the relationship between form, context, and speaker intention. This is particularly important in pragmatic research, where meaning cannot be separated from the situational and interpersonal context in which an utterance is produced. Accordingly, this study focuses on describing and interpreting the communicative functions of assertive utterances rather than measuring their occurrence statistically.

The source of the data was the movie *Anyone But You* (2023), directed by Will Gluck. The research data consisted of utterances produced by the movie characters that contained assertive illocutionary acts. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher also referred to the English subtitles and the official movie script as supporting sources. These supporting sources were used to verify the exact wording of each utterance and to avoid misinterpretation caused by mishearing or rapid dialogue delivery. By cross-checking the dialogue with both the subtitles and the script, the researcher aimed to ensure that the transcribed data accurately reflected what was actually spoken by the characters.

Since the analysis in the following sections refers to several main characters throughout the movie, a brief description of each character is presented in Table 1 to help readers interpret the data within its proper context.

Table 1. Brief Description of the Characters Involved in the Representative Utterances

Character	Brief Description
Bea	The female protagonist of <i>Anyone But You</i>
Ben	The male protagonist of <i>Anyone But you</i>
Claudia	Bea's close friend
Pete	Ben's close friend
Halle	Claudia's girlfriend
Leo	Bea's father

The data were collected through observation and note-taking techniques. The researcher watched the movie several times to understand the storyline and the context of each conversation. The dialogues were then compared with the English subtitles and the official movie script to ensure the accuracy of the utterances. After that, utterances containing assertive illocutionary acts were identified based on Searle's (1979) theory and documented for further analysis.

An utterance was included as data when it satisfied Searle's (1979) criteria for assertive illocutionary acts, namely that the speaker committed to the truth of the expressed proposition. Utterances functioning primarily as directives, commissives, expressives, or declaratives were excluded from the dataset. The unit of analysis in this study was a single utterance carrying one illocutionary force, corresponding to one conversational turn or part of a turn in which a complete assertive act was performed.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by applying Searle's (1979) theory of illocutionary acts, supported by Yule's (1996) theory of pragmatics. Each utterance was interpreted by considering its contextual meaning, the relationship between the speakers, and the communicative intention conveyed in the dialogue. The utterances were then classified into the subcategories of informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting based on the classification proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985). Finally, the findings were described and interpreted to explain how assertive illocutionary acts are realized in *Anyone But You* (2023).

To distinguish the five subcategories, the following operational criteria, adapted from Searle and Vanderveken (1985), were applied in the classification process. Informing refers to an utterance that introduces information previously unknown to the hearer, typically to increase the hearer's knowledge of a person, event, or situation. Stating refers to an utterance that presents the speaker's own condition, opinion, or assessment as true, without necessarily introducing new information to the hearer. Claiming refers to an utterance that advances a proposition based on the speaker's personal judgment, belief, or inference rather than verified fact, thus carrying a weaker commitment than stating.

Reporting refers to an utterance that relays information or events sourced from another person or a prior occurrence, rather than from the speaker's direct observation or belief. Objecting refers to an utterance that communicates the speaker's opposition or disagreement toward a proposition, action, or situation. When an utterance appeared to overlap between two categories, such as between informing and stating, classification was determined by identifying which criterion was most central to the speaker's communicative intention within the surrounding context.

To support the reliability of the classification, the identification and categorization of the utterances were carried out independently by both authors. Disagreements in classification were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached, guided by the operational criteria described above. Although this study reports frequencies and

percentages, these figures function as descriptive summaries used to illustrate the distribution of the qualitative classification, rather than as inferential statistics.

3. Results

This section presents the findings of assertive illocutionary acts identified in *Anyone But You* (2023). Based on the analysis, a total of 35 assertive utterances were classified into five subcategories: informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting, following the classification proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985). The distribution of each subcategory is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Assertive Illocutionary Act Subcategories

No	Subcategories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Informing	14	40.00%
2	Stating	9	25.71%
3	Claiming	7	20.00%
4	Reporting	3	8.57%
5	Objecting	2	5.71%
	Total	35	100%

As shown in Table 2, informing was the most dominant subcategory with 14 occurrences (40.00%), followed by stating with 9 occurrences (25.71%), claiming with 7 occurrences (20.00%), reporting with 3 occurrences (8.57%), and objecting with 2 occurrences (5.71%). These findings indicate that informing was the most frequently used assertive subcategory in the movie, whereas objecting occurred least frequently. This distribution suggests that the characters' assertive utterances were oriented mainly toward establishing and sharing factual ground such as introducing people, explaining situations, and clarifying context rather than toward overt disagreement or relaying secondhand information.

The relatively high combined proportion of stating and claiming (45.71%) further indicates that the characters frequently asserted personal conditions, opinions, and inferences about one another, which is consistent with the interpersonal dynamics typical of the film's romantic comedy narrative. However, this numerical dominance should not be read as an indication that informing is pragmatically more significant than the other subcategories; rather, it reflects how frequently each function was employed within the specific communicative situations captured in the data. A detailed discussion of representative utterances from each subcategory is presented in the following section.

4. Discussion

The findings presented in Table 2 provide an overview of the distribution of assertive speech act subcategories in *Anyone But You* (2023). However, the frequency of occurrence alone does not explain how each utterance functions within its communicative context. Therefore, the following discussion examines representative utterances from each subcategory to explain their illocutionary functions based on Searle's (1979) theory and the classification of assertive verbs proposed by Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

Informing**Data 1****Scene (11.25)**

Claudia: "Ben, this is Halle, my new girlfriend"

Context

This conversation takes place when Ben arrives at the engagement party and meets Claudia. Since Ben has never met Halle before, Claudia introduces her as her girlfriend.

Analysis

Claudia introduces Halle to Ben because he has never met her before. By providing this new information, Claudia helps Ben recognize Halle and understand their relationship. The dialogue is categorized as informing because its primary function is to introduce a person and increase the hearer's knowledge through factual information.

Data 2**Scene (18.38)**

Pete: "My stepdad's house. Super important for them to keep the wedding party together"

Context

This conversation takes place when Pete explains to Ben and Bea why the wedding is held at his stepfather's house. He provides information to help them understand the importance of the location for the wedding celebration.

Analysis

Pete explains why his stepfather's house is important for the wedding celebration. His statement gives Ben and Bea additional background information about the significance of the venue. Therefore, the dialogue is classified as informing because it functions to explain a situation by providing factual information to the hearers.

Comparison of Data 1 and Data 2

Although both dialogues belong to the informing subcategory, they perform different communicative functions. Data 1 introduces a person, while Data 2 explains a situation. Even though the purposes differ, both dialogues provide factual information that increases the hearer's knowledge. This result is consistent with Putra and Putri (2024), who found that informing is commonly used to communicate factual information in different communicative contexts. A similar pattern also appeared in Wulan and Tustiawati (2024), who found that informing was one of the most frequently used assertive subcategories in the movie *Wish*, particularly to reinforce beliefs and convey information to other characters.

Stating**Data 3****Scene (12.57)**

Bea: "I'm engaged"

Context

This conversation takes place when Bea unexpectedly meets Ben at the engagement party. To convince Ben that she has moved on, Bea tells him that she is engaged.

Analysis

Bea's utterance could superficially resemble informing, since it introduces a fact Ben did not previously know. However, following the operational criteria applied in this study, the utterance is categorized as stating rather than informing because its primary communicative function is not to increase Ben's factual knowledge for its own sake, but to assert Bea's personal condition as a claim about herself that she intends Ben to accept foregrounding her own status rather than the informational content itself. Therefore, the dialogue is categorized as stating because it presents the speaker's own condition as true, consistent with Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) distinction between stating and informing.

Data 4

Scene (19.46)

Ben: "You're right. This place is insane"

Context

After arriving at the wedding venue, Ben reacts to the surroundings. He agrees with the previous speaker and expresses his opinion about the place.

Analysis

Ben describes the wedding venue by expressing his opinion about its impressive atmosphere. His statement communicates his personal assessment of the place and invites the hearer to share the same understanding. Therefore, the dialogue is classified as stating because it conveys the speaker's view of a particular situation.

Comparison of Data 3 and Data 4

Although both dialogues belong to the stating subcategory, they perform different communicative functions. Data 3 states the speaker's personal condition by informing Ben that Bea is engaged, whereas Data 4 states the speaker's opinion about the wedding venue. Despite these differences, both dialogues present information that the speakers intend the hearers to accept as true, which characterizes them as stating assertive speech acts. This finding aligns with Pratama (2025), who reported that characters in the movie *Up* frequently used assertive utterances to state their personal views and assessments of a situation.

Claiming

Data 5

Scene (10.28)

Pete: "My boy's in love!"

Context

This conversation takes place after Pete notices Ben's behavior toward Bea. Based on his observation, Pete believes that Ben has fallen in love and expresses his conclusion to others.

Analysis

Pete's utterance is categorized as claiming rather than stating because it is based on inference from observed behavior rather than on a condition Pete directly possesses or has been told. Following the operational criteria applied in this study, claiming involves a proposition advanced through the speaker's own judgment or inference, carrying a comparatively weaker commitment than stating, which presents the speaker's own condition or opinion directly. Since Pete infers Ben's emotional state from external behavior rather than asserting his own condition, the dialogue is categorized as claiming, consistent with Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) treatment of claiming as an inference based assertive act.

Data 6**Scene (12.51)**

Pete: "I thought she looked familiar, but I don't see faces. I just see souls"

Context

This conversation occurs when Pete realizes that he has seen Bea before. He explains his perspective on how he recognizes people.

Analysis

Pete expresses a personal belief about the way he perceives people. The dialogue is categorized as claiming because it conveys a proposition based on the speaker's own belief rather than objective evidence.

Comparison of Data 5 and Data 6

Although both dialogues belong to the claiming subcategory, they differ in their communicative functions. Data 5 contains Pete's claim about Ben's feelings based on his observation, whereas Data 6 expresses Pete's personal belief about how he recognizes people. Despite these differences, both dialogues represent the speaker's belief rather than an objectively verified fact, which characterizes them as claiming assertive speech acts. A comparable tendency was found by Widyawanti et al. (2024) in the short movie *The Translator*, where assertive utterances were also used by the characters to express personal beliefs rather than verified facts.

Reporting**Data 7****Scene (15.16)**

Ben: "Claud told me you dumped him"

Context

This conversation takes place when Ben talks to Bea about her previous relationship. Ben repeats information that he heard from Claudia regarding Bea's past.

Analysis

Ben reports information that he received from Claudia about Bea's previous relationship. Rather than expressing his own opinion or belief, he conveys what someone else has told him. Therefore, the dialogue is categorized as reporting because its main function is to relay information from another speaker.

Data 8**Scene (18.46)**

Pete: "they think you guys hate each other, so they didn't wanna poke the bear"

Context

This conversation occurs when Pete explains why the other guests have avoided interfering with Ben and Bea's relationship. He reports what the others believe about them.

Analysis

Pete conveys the opinion of other people regarding Ben and Bea's relationship. Instead of expressing his own view, he reports the belief held by others to explain their behavior. Therefore, the dialogue is classified as reporting because it communicates information originating from another source.

Comparison of Data 7 and Data 8

Although both dialogues belong to the reporting subcategory, they perform different communicative functions. Data 7 reports information received directly from a specific person, namely Claudia, whereas Data 8 reports the opinion shared by a group of people. Despite this difference, both dialogues function to convey information obtained from

another source rather than expressing the speaker's own viewpoint. This is in line with Sianipar (2022), who found that reporting was the most frequent type of assertive illocutionary act used on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter.

Objecting

Data 9

Scene (13.45)

Leo: "I have an objection"

Context

This conversation takes place during the wedding ceremony. Leo interrupts the ceremony by expressing his disagreement before the wedding can continue.

Analysis

Leo openly expresses his disagreement with the wedding ceremony. Instead of accepting the situation, he states his opposition to stop the ceremony from proceeding. Therefore, the dialogue is categorized as objecting because it communicates the speaker's rejection of the ongoing event.

Data 10

Scene (13.48)

Leo: "I have to, Innie, it's just not right. There's no way I can bless this union, without their friends and family joining us to celebrate"

Context

After objecting to the wedding, Leo explains the reason for his objection. He believes that the marriage should not proceed without the presence of the couple's friends and family.

Analysis

Leo explains the reason behind his objection by emphasizing that the wedding should not continue without the attendance of friends and family. His statement reflects his disagreement while providing justification for his decision. Therefore, the dialogue is classified as objecting because the speaker rejects the situation and supports his objection with an explanation.

Comparison of Data 9 and Data 10

Although both dialogues belong to the objecting subcategory, they perform different communicative functions. Data 9 expresses a direct objection to stop the wedding ceremony, whereas Data 10 provides the reason for the objection by explaining why the ceremony should not continue. Despite these differences, both dialogues communicate the speaker's disagreement with the situation, making them examples of objecting assertive speech acts.

This function shares a surface similarity with the directive acts of rejection found by Isyra and Supri (2024) in *Spider-Man: No Way Home* and by Kurnia and Yuhdi (2022) in the film *Sejuta Sayang Untuknya*, in that both involve the speaker opposing an action. However, this comparison should be treated with caution, as assertive objecting and directive rejection differ in illocutionary point: objecting, as an assertive, primarily commits the speaker to the truth of a negative evaluation, whereas directive rejection is aimed at getting the hearer to not perform an action. The similarity noted here is therefore functional rather than categorical.

Taken together, the five subcategories do not merely differ in frequency but perform distinct pragmatic functions within the film's dialogic interaction. The dominance of informing (40.00%) suggests that much of the characters' communication is oriented toward establishing shared factual ground introducing people, situations, and background

details necessary for the audience and other characters to follow the unfolding relationships. Stating and claiming, which together account for nearly half of the remaining data, reflect characters frequently asserting personal conditions, opinions, and inferences about one another, consistent with the interpersonal uncertainty and evolving relationships central to the romantic-comedy genre.

Reporting and objecting occur comparatively rarely, which may reflect the film's dialogic structure, where characters more often assert firsthand knowledge or beliefs than relay others' statements or directly oppose ongoing events. It should also be noted that these patterns are drawn from scripted discourse constructed for narrative and comedic effect; while they illustrate how assertive subcategories can be pragmatically distinguished and contextually realized, they should not be generalized to spontaneous, everyday conversation without further empirical support.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the assertive illocutionary acts found in *Anyone But You* (2023) based on Searle's (1979) speech act theory. The findings revealed five subcategories of assertive speech acts, namely informing, stating, claiming, reporting, and objecting. Among these, informing was the most dominant subcategory, indicating that the characters frequently used assertive speech acts to convey factual information throughout the movie.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that assertive speech acts play an important role in shaping communication between the characters and supporting the development of the movie's storyline. This study contributes to pragmatic studies by providing a better understanding of the realization of assertive illocutionary acts in movie dialogues. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate assertive speech acts in different movies or other communicative contexts to gain broader insights into their use.

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