

**COVID-19 SUPPORTING MESSAGE PORTRAYED IN BTS – PERMISSION TO DANCE SONG LYRICS**

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**Abstract**

This study concerns with the messages that contain support for the people after COVID-19 pandemic in BTS song lyrics titled Permission to Dance portrayed by illocutionary act. The data in this article are obtained from BTS song lyrics titled Permission to Dance. Speech act theory by Searle (1979) and Function of Illocutionary Act by Leech (1983) are used to analyze the illocutionary act used in the song lyrics and the function of uttering them. Context is applied in obtaining the message in those song lyrics while descriptive qualitative analysis is used to present the data. Furthermore, two types of illocutionary acts were found in this data with form of stating and commanding. This data mostly showed competitive function.

**Keywords:** illocutionary act, message, BTS song lyrics, COVID-19

**Introduction**

Language is a main tool to communicate with other people in daily basis. It is formed by a sentence that has meaning and function. In general, the meaning of the utterance can be showed by the language structure and words in that sentence. However, determining the function needs the other aspects other than the language itself. In pragmatics, it is called a context. Context refers to an environment or condition of a place from the language used (Brown & Yule, 1983). In addition, context is also considered as the cause and reason for the occurrence of a conversation (Mulyana, 2005). Knowing the function is necessary in order to achieve the goal in communicating, which the message that is willing to be delivered by the speaker can be obtained by the listener.

Apart from daily conversations, using other media is also another alternative for conveying a message. The use of media is considered to be able to have a greater influence on society, considering that the message can be consumed by a wider audience than by having a conversation. In addition, support from several aspects can also attract the attention of the public to be able to understand and obtain the message conveyed by speakers. One of the media that supports this is song.

Song refers to pieces of music that have words. Songs also have elements in common with speech and poetry. Both songs and speech are vocally produced, are linguistically meaningful and have melody (Griffe, 1992). Songwriters often use this media to convey various kinds of messages, whether it is something about the writer's life or to convey a larger issue.

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One of the big issues faced by the society at the end of 2019 and getting massive in 2021 is COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic presents a lot of challenges from various aspects and all parts of the world community which are certainly not easy to overcome. This has inspired many songwriters to create songs with messages of support for their listeners. Considering that the song is universal, it is hoped that the support from the song can be spread more widely and give new spirit to listeners in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which is not easy to overcome.

BTS, is one of the famous songwriters and singers from South Korea who are aware of this issue and created an English song entitled Permission to Dance to give support regarding to COVID-19 pandemic. Through this article, the message will be dissected from the song lyrics along with the context related to the certain context using illocutionary acts consisting of representative, directive, assertive, commissive and declarative.

Based on the introduction above, there are two research problems formulated in this study, specifically: 1) What Illocutionary Act used by BTS in Permission to Dance song lyrics? and 2) What is the function of applying such illocutionary act?

### **Data Source**

The data source of this article is obtained from BTS song lyrics entitled Permission to Dance and the context followed behind the song lyrics itself that contain support message related to COVID-19. The scope of the context is taken from the situation of COVID-19 and the diction choice of the song lyrics. Furthermore, the finding data will be classified into the illocutionary acts and the function available on the theory.

### **Research Method**

The data in this study are presented qualitatively in a description which it is a method to explain the data in more detail and interpret the song lyrics based on the types of illocutionary acts and the context behind it. The data is collected by documentation method and analyzed by descriptive qualitative approach which describe the finding data qualitatively start from the classification of illocutionary act, explaining the context, and tell the function of each data based on the context. Hereafter, speech act theory, focused on illocutionary act theory by Searle (1979) is used to describe the data. This theory is used to gain the support message in the long lyrics more deeply based on the context of speech.

### **Illocutionary Act**

Searle (1979:12-17) proposes five types of illocutionary acts as follows: directive, representative, commissive, expressive, and declarative which are described completely below.

- a) **Directive**, as attempts by the speaker to persuade the listener to do something. This illocutionary act may consist of entreating, permitting, advising, inviting, raving, pleading, begging, questioning, requesting, commanding, ordering, and asking.

Here are one of the sample: "Call me when you arrive home, Biru".

This utterance shows that the speaker wants the listener in this conversation (Biru) to do something (text). The speakers used the word *call* to indicate the use of illocutionary acts in the type of directive (commanding).

- b) **Commissive**, it commits the speakers to do action in future. According to Searle, quoted in Huang (2007, p. 107), commissive expresses the speaker's purpose to accomplish something. Furthermore, he stated that while using this type of illocutionary acts, the universe adapts to

the words through the speaker. The act of offering, swearing, mocking, vowing, and promising can be classified as this type.

This utterance is classified as commissive: "I'll come back in a few minutes."

In this statement, the speaker uses the word *I'll come back* to indicate the illocutionary acts of commissive (promising). The speaker in the utterance above commits that he will come back in a few minutes.

- c) **Representative**, is also familiar as assertive commits the speaker to something being true, to the truth of what is conveyed. "When executing this type, the speaker describes the world as their beliefs and fitting the word to the world of belief" (Searle in Huang, 2007, p. 106). Asserting, claiming, describing, concluding, stating, reporting, insisting, agreeing, denying, believing, disagreeing, concluding, complaining, and informing can be categorized as representative.

For example: "The doctors are struggling to handle the patients".

The speaker in this utterance states that the doctors are struggling to handle the patients. In this utterance, the speaker used representative illocutionary act by stating something.

- d) **Expressive**, is used to express a psychological condition of the speaker. While conveying this type, the speaker is not attempting to make the world match the words, but instead the truth of the conveyed premise is assumed. This illocutionary act may consist of thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, deploring, welcoming, wishing, appreciating, blaming, disliking and praising.

The sample considered to be expressive illocutionary act is presented as follows: "Congratulations on your graduation, Chava."

Here, the speaker expressed their psychological condition to Chava as the listener. The speaker uses the word *congratulations* that indicates illocutionary acts of expressive in the form of congratulating.

- e) **Declarative**, is a type of illocutionary act to change the situation of status of someone or something because the declaration was successfully accomplished. "Declaration may produce immediate changes in such current condition of events because it relies on an intricate extralinguistic institution" (Searle in Huang, 2007:108). Nominating a candidate, firing from employment, excommunicating, deciding, naming and declaring war are some forms classified as declarative.

As the sample: "President: I declare a state of national emergency because of COVID-19 has already spread everywhere in the country."

Here, the president as the speaker brings the changes in his or her country by his words. The president declares that his or her state is in a national emergency due to COVID-19 pandemic has already spread in the country. The speaker (president) uses the term "declare" to indicate the illocutionary acts of declaration (declaring).

### The Function of Illocutionary Act

As the continuation, stating a speech with certain illocutionary act must have a function in communicating between the speaker and listener. Leech (1983:104-105) proposed the functions of them that are classified below:

- a) **Competitive**, which has a function related to social objective, such as begging, demanding, requesting, and ordering, was competitive. This illocutionary function has a negative politeness and seeks to minimize the implied disagreement.
- b) **Convivial**, this function is focused on the social goal, such as congratulating, thanking, greeting, inviting, and offering. This illocutionary function is more polite and seeking for opportunities for comity.
- c) **Collaborative**, it aims to be indifferent with the social objective, such as asserting, reporting, announcing, and instructing. This illocutionary function does not include any politeness because politeness is less important in this function.
- d) **Conflictive**, this function of illocutionary act is competing with social goal, such as reprimanding, cursing, accusing and threatening. This illocutionary function contained no politeness because it was supposed to provoke offense.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Result**

There are 10 data of total occurrences in this study presented by classifying the types of illocutionary act found in Permission to Dance song lyrics sung by BTS. Among five types of illocutionary acts, directive lead the function with 8 data, followed by representative with 2 data. The message of COVID-19 support in several chosen data are further presented in the discussion section.

### **Discussion**

Illocutionary Acts found in BTS-Permission to Dance Song Lyrics

- (1-1) It's the thought of being young  
When your heart's just like a drum  
Beating louder with no way to guard it

This data shows **representative** illocutionary act as BTS as the song writers and singers belief that being a teenager is full of passion and ambition. It is portrayed the most in the second and third line 'when your heart's just like a drum, beating louder with no way to guard it' which means as teenager and young generation, we do have goals to achieve more than when we are still a kid and sometimes it is just unbearable. Related to the context of COVID-19, this song was released in 2021. It was the year when people in the world suffered from many things due to COVID-19. Young generation, especially fresh graduated students had a lot of plans to do in order to make a living and earn money. Yet, there were no much opportunities for them to do it.

Based on that context, it is presented that BTS used these lyrics with representative illocutionary act to show **collaborative** function by reporting their feeling about being young.

- (1-2) When it all seems like it's wrong  
Just sing along to Elton John  
And to that feeling, we're just getting started

These lyrics are classified as **directive** illocutionary act as they ask the readers and listeners, especially young generation to do their plan although they are not sure about their action. The

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first line 'when it all seems like it's wrong' represents that the singers place themselves to be someone that confirm the youth generation's confusion of their action. As a young generations whom just finished their school life and start their real life usually have no one to show what action is wrong or right for them to do. It is also added by COVID-19 situation when they do not have much opportunity to do in terms of starting their career. In that situation, BTS validate their confusion and tell that the feeling is normal and the beginning of a good path for them. They also tell them to just enjoy that feeling on 'just sing along to Elton John' as singing is one of the action to relax our mind.

There is also a function pictured in these lyrics. The singers used these lyrics to assert and instruct the listener to relax which is categorized as **collaborative** function. They want to show that the young generations are not alone and they are not failed generation. Only the situation didn't support them at that time. BTS delivered that they also had been through hard times caused by some bad situations and they tried to give support for them to keep their spirit.

(1-3) Then you say

I wanna dance, the music's got me going

Ain't nothing that can stop how we move, yeah

In these lyrics, the writers use 'we' for an action they actually do themselves. It shows **directive** illocutionary act as the writers indirectly refer the readers to do the same thing like them. 'I wanna dance' lyrics show that they want to express themselves and no one can stop it because they enjoy doing it. Thus, directive illocutionary act is used to portray **competitive** function by requesting them to do their best and not give up on something they like.

(1-4) Let's break our plans and live just like we're golden

And roll in like we're dancing fools

It can be classified as **directive** illocutionary act for the invitation from the writers to do our plan by using 'let's'. The next lyrics represent the enthusiasm that they enjoy what they are doing and believe that they are precious and special from 'live just like we're golden' lyrics. 'roll in like a dancing fools' shows an enjoyment to express our passion although we are not doing that good (fool). These lyrics also show **competitive** function to be confident on everything they do for achieving their goal.

(1-5) We don't need to worry

'Cause when we fall, we know how to land

It is seen that these lyrics show **directive** illocutionary act as BTS convinced the readers not to worry about failure and making mistake in their process of achieving their goal and dream. The message is portrayed directly on the first line, while the second line shows the meaning indirectly. The word 'fall' in the second line represented a failure and mistake that the young generation afraid to do and 'land' points the solution they can actually do. Combining it in a sentence is interpreted as a reason the young generation do not need to overthink because actually despite of being new in starting their real life, BTS members believe that young generations have more than one plans to do if one plan does not work well since BTS also did the same when they were new by using 'we'. Hence, BTS members want the young generations to be brave to decide an action as they have another plan.

BTS as the song writers show **convivial** function by comforting the listeners about their doubt. They have willingness to make young generation to be brave in choosing their path although after COVID-19 situation itself is already hard to overcome. Hard doesn't mean it is

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impossible.

- (1-6) Don't need to talk the talk, just walk the walk tonight  
'Cause we don't need permission to dance

These lyrics emphasize the support by BTS members for young generation to achieve their dream. Although they are classified as **directive** illocutionary act as previous data are, the message in these lyrics has different point. The writers desire the listeners nor the readers to do the action without thinking and planning too much with 'don't need to talk the talk, just walk the walk tonight' lyrics. The message is similar to a saying 'talk less do more'. Sometimes planning too much affects in being overthinking and ended up producing less than what we have planned. It also wastes our time. Hence, the writer said it is better to do the plan immediately after considering it well, not too much.

The writers want to show **competitive** function by using this illocutionary act. They want to ask the readers to do their plan bravely without being doubt.

- (1-7) Just keep the right vibe, yeah, 'cause there's no looking back  
There ain't no one to prove, we don't got this on lock, yeah

From these lyrics, **directive** illocutionary act is shown by doing the things we are doing before. It refers to the plan of the young generation do. 'just keep the right vibe' becomes the point of the directive illocutionary act by telling the readers to keep doing their plan as what it has been set without being doubt, as long as they do it in a good way. In addition, the rest lyrics tell the reason of it. 'there ain't no one to prove' means not to be afraid of the result because actually they do not need to prove their plan and value to anyone. Just believe in their plan and be consistent.

In addition, **competitive** function is used in these lyrics as the writers ask the listeners to not be afraid on doing their plan.

- (1-8) The wait is over  
The time is now, so let's do it right

This data is included in the chorus of the song and represents **directive** illocutionary act to convince the readers to do their best for their future as COVID-19 has been handled gradually. If COVID-19 is handled, it means that the opportunity of many people, especially young generation whom has just started their career is opened widely. It was the time when people can start their business and work at the office as many industries are opened. Hence, 'let's do it right' refers to do our plan immediately and do their best to achieve their dream. These lyrics also show **competitive** function to do their plan well.

- (1-9) Yeah, we'll keep going  
And stay up until we see the sunrise

These lyrics are the continuation of the message the previous lyrics have delivered. It is still classified as **directive** illocutionary act. From the surface, it may be seen that these lyrics belong to representative illocutionary act because it portrays mostly a statement that the writers will keep going on their plan. However, the use of 'we' intensifies that other than them, they also want the readers to do the same thing. It is the other way to convince the readers. In addition, 'stay up until we see the sunrise' lyrics show two things. First, the readers are asked to work hard without taking any rest to achieve their goal. Second, they are requested to keep doing their work and be focus until they can find a good result (sunrise) after it. **Competitive** function is used in this lyrics as the writers requested the listeners to do their best on achieving their dream.

(1-10) Well, let me show ya  
That we can keep the fire alive  
'Cause it's not over  
Till it's over say it one more time, say

This data is taken from the lyrics before the reff. It can be classified into **representative** illocutionary act. In this context, the word 'fire' means ambition. It shows a statement that they will prove that the writers can make the ambition and passion into reality. They want to show that dreaming is not a bad things and by dreaming and working hard, they can gain a good result for their life. In addition, it is hoped to be an inspiration for the people to pursue their dream and passion without worrying too much of the result. Thus, **convivial** function is used to show that they will support and accompany them to be success.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the finding and discussion part explained on the previous chapter, it can be concluded that among five types of illocutionary act, only two of them were found in BTS-Permission to Dance song lyrics to portray support messages to the listener related to COVID-19 issues. Directive illocutionary act is placed as the most frequently appear in the data with 8 data, followed by representative illocutionary act with two data. It means that BTS as the songwriters mainly state and believe something, especially positive thoughts to show support for all people affected by COVID-19 pandemic, focused on youth.

Moreover, the data mostly show competitive function. It happens because the data focuses on the support showed on the lyrics, which competitive function plays a big role in that case. Furthermore, collaborative function also appears with 2 data.

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