

ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS IN THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT: PRAGMATIC STUDY

Akhmad Mulyana¹, Ida Zuraida Supri²

^{1,2} English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Widyatama, Bandung, Indonesia

akhmad.mulyana@widyatama.ac.id, ida.zuraida@widyatama.ac.id

Corresponding author: Akhmad Mulyana, Universitas Widyatama

E-mail: akhmad.mulyana@widyatama.ac.id

Volume 10

No. 2

September 2026

Page 137-145

Abstract

Speech acts are central in pragmatics because they reveal how language functions to perform actions in communication. Although many previous studies have discussed illocutionary acts in films, novels, and daily conversations, research in interactive media such as video games is still limited. This study aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts and analyze their functions in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt. The research applied a qualitative descriptive method with a pragmatic approach, using Austin's and Searle's classifications of illocutionary acts, along with Leech's principles for analyzing functions. The data consisted of thirty utterances purposively selected from dialogues and narrative texts in the game. The results showed that directive acts were the most dominant with 14 data (46.7%), followed by assertive 6 data (20%), commissive 5 data (16.7%), expressive 3 data (10%), and declarative 2 data (6.6%). In terms of functions, competitive was the most dominant with 14 data (46.7%), followed by convivial 8 data (26.7%), collaborative 7 data (23.3%), and conflictive 1 data (3.3%). These findings indicate that The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt not only presents a complex and interactive narrative but also demonstrates the use of linguistic strategies that reflect pragmatic purposes in character communication. This research contributes to linguistic studies in interactive media and provides opportunities for further exploration of language use in digital games.



Keyword: pragmatics; illocutionary acts; speech acts; The Witcher 3; qualitative, functions, types

Cite this as: Mulyana, Akhmad., & Supri, Ida Zuraida. (2026). Illocutionary Speech Acts in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt: Pragmatic Study*. English Journal Literacy Utama. <https://doi.org/10.33197/ejlitama.vol10.iss2.2026.2655.455>

Article History:

Received: 16 April 2026; Revised: 7 June 2026;

Accepted: 3 August 2026

INTRODUCTION

Digital role-playing games (RPGs) such as *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* offer rich, branching dialogues where players' choices trigger different responses, social alignments, and narrative consequences. Within these interactive exchanges, utterances do not merely describe states of affairs; they are

chosen to accomplish actions—requesting help, negotiating rewards, promising aid, threatening enemies, or expressing gratitude—exactly the domain of illocutionary acts. While a substantial body of work has mapped illocutionary behavior in films and other scripted media, comparatively less attention has been paid to how illocutionary types and functions operate in game dialogue where sequentiality, player agency, and task structure can reshape pragmatic choices mid-interaction. Addressing this space advances our understanding of how pragmatic strategies support gameplay goals and world-building in interactive narrative media. Prior scholarship has established robust descriptions of illocutionary patterns in non-interactive corpora. Rahayu, Arifin, and Ariani (2018) classified 55 utterances in *Mirror Mirror* and found directives dominated, reflecting characters’ frequent moves to get others to act. Focused studies of expressives similarly show patterned distributions tied to plot conflict: Reningtyas (2016) reported greeting and anger as the most frequent expressive functions in *Comme Un Chef*, while Rasyid and Sutopo (2023) identified praising, apologizing, and thanking as salient in *Mulan* (2020). Expanding to series discourse, Anastasya and Supri (2024) observed that “thank” and “forgive” categories led expressive acts in *The Summer I Turned Pretty* Season 2. Outside cinematic data, Legiansyah and Supri (2020) examined museum tour interactions and showed that assertives and direct strategies predominated alongside conversational implicatures, highlighting how task-oriented settings condition pragmatic form. Together, these studies situate how media genre and activity type (screen drama vs. guided tours) shape the balance of illocutionary categories (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) and the preference for directness.

These sources converge in three ways relevant to the present study. First, they collectively show that contextual purpose (commanding action in quests or tasks; managing rapport) predicts which illocutionary types are most frequent (e.g., directives and assertives in goal-driven talk) (Rahayu et al., 2018; Legiansyah & Supri, 2020). Second, they indicate that expressives cluster around emotionally charged plot points (Reningtyas, 2016; Rasyid & Sutopo, 2023; Anastasya & Supri, 2024). Third, they predominantly analyze scripted, linear media or institutional encounters, leaving open how interactivity and branching choice in games might reweight both the *type* distribution (Searle, 1979) and the *function* profile (Leech, 1983). In particular, there is limited comparative work that simultaneously (a) classifies illocutionary types following Austin–Searle and (b) interprets *functions* using Leech’s competitive–convivial–collaborative–conflictive taxonomy within the same dataset, especially in an RPG where persuasion, bargaining, and morality systems incentivize strategic language use.

Accordingly, this article examines dialogues and narratorial scaffolding in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* to map (1) the distribution of illocutionary types (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) and (2) the illocutionary functions (Leech, 1983) that they realize in an interactive quest ecology. By integrating these frameworks, the study contributes: (i) an empirically grounded account of how gameplay goals align with specific pragmatic strategies; (ii) evidence on whether the directive dominance reported in films extends to choice-driven RPG dialogue; and (iii) a functional profile that clarifies how competitive and convivial moves support negotiation, cooperation, and role-play in branching narratives.

Objective of this study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the types and functions of illocutionary acts in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, a

narrative-driven role-playing game renowned for its complex dialogue systems. The objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the types of illocutionary acts found in the selected dialogues of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* based on Searle's (1979) classification.
2. To analyze the pragmatic functions of these illocutionary acts using Leech's (1983) framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how language is used in context to achieve communication goals. Levinson (1983) defined pragmatics as the study of language use from a functional perspective, highlighting how contextual pressures shape linguistic structure. Similarly, Leech (1983) emphasized that pragmatics cannot be separated from communication, as it concerns the principles governing how utterances convey meaning beyond their literal form. Yule (1996) further explained that pragmatics investigates meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener, focusing on utterances situated within specific contexts. These views converge on the idea that understanding language requires analyzing both linguistic form and the contextual variables (time, place, participants, goals) that determine interpretation.

Speech Acts

Speech act theory was introduced by Austin (1962) in his seminal work *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin argued that utterances are not only descriptive but also performative—they are actions in themselves. For instance, when a speaker says "*I apologize*", the act of apologizing is accomplished by the utterance itself. Austin distinguished three levels of speech acts:

1. **Locutionary act:** the act of producing a meaningful utterance (e.g., stating "It is raining").
2. **Illocutionary act:** the communicative function performed (e.g., warning someone to take an umbrella).
3. **Perlocutionary act:** the effect on the listener (e.g., persuading them to stay indoors).

Searle (1969, 1979) further developed the theory by systematizing illocutionary acts into categories and arguing that the basic unit of communication is the performance of these acts. According to Searle, utterances are not neutral but always produced with a communicative intention that listeners must infer.

Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary acts are central to speech act theory, referring to the action a speaker performs through utterances. Habermas (1998) described illocution as the intention realized in communication to achieve a specific outcome. Unlike locutions, illocutions are not assessed for truth or falsity but for their appropriateness in achieving communicative goals. For example, the utterance "*I now pronounce you husband and wife*" does not describe reality but **creates** a new social status when uttered by an authorized speaker (Austin, 1962).

Types of Illocutionary Acts

Searle (1979) categorized illocutionary acts into five main types, each with distinct characteristics and original examples:

1. **Assertives:** Commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition.
Example: *"The earth revolves around the sun."* (Searle, 1979)
2. **Directives:** Attempt to get the hearer to do something.
Example: *"Could you pass the salt?"* (Searle, 1979)
3. **Commissives:** Commit the speaker to a future course of action.
Example: *"I promise to return your book tomorrow."* (Searle, 1979)
4. **Expressives:** Convey the speaker's psychological state.
Example: *"I'm really sorry for your loss."* (Searle, 1979)
5. **Declarations:** Change the external situation through speech.
Example: *"You are fired."* (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979)

These categories reveal that speech acts are not simply descriptive but action-oriented, shaping social interaction and institutional processes.

Functions of Illocutionary Acts

Beyond classifying types, Leech (1983) proposed that illocutionary acts also serve broader **functions** depending on their pragmatic orientation:

1. **Competitive:** Utterances that compete with the hearer's face wants, often involving requests or commands.
Example: *"Lend me your pen."* (Leech, 1983)
2. **Convivial:** Utterances that are socially oriented, aiming to maintain harmony and politeness, such as offering, inviting, or thanking.
Example: *"Please join us for dinner."* (Leech, 1983)
3. **Collaborative:** Utterances that serve to exchange information without face-threatening implications.
Example: *"The meeting starts at 9 a.m."* (Leech, 1983)
4. **Conflictive:** Utterances that oppose or threaten the hearer, such as insults or challenges.
Example: *"Shut up and get out."* (Leech, 1983)

By combining Searle's typology of illocutionary acts with Leech's functional framework, scholars can analyze not only what type of act is performed but also how it operates within the dynamics of social interaction. This dual perspective is particularly useful for analyzing dialogues in interactive narratives, where language functions simultaneously to advance plot, negotiate relationships, and accomplish gameplay objectives.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. As Creswell (2014) explained, qualitative research seeks to explore and interpret meaning in natural settings, while descriptive analysis presents the findings in words rather than numbers. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is to describe and analyze the types and functions of illocutionary acts in dialogues.

Object of the Research and Source of Data

The object of the research is the illocutionary acts found in the dialogues of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. The data were purposively selected from thirty utterances spoken by the main character, Geralt of Rivia, and other characters interacting with him throughout the main and side quests.

Instruments

The researcher served as the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing the data, supported by tools such as transcription notes and subtitles from the game.

Procedures

The data collection procedures included: (1) playing and observing the game; (2) recording and transcribing relevant dialogues; (3) selecting utterances that contain illocutionary acts; (4) classifying the utterances based on their types and functions.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through qualitative descriptive analysis. Utterances were categorized according to Austin (1962) and Searle's (1979) classification of illocutionary acts and further examined using Leech's (1983) framework of illocutionary functions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on illocutionary speech acts found in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. A total of 30 utterances were identified and classified into five main categories of illocutionary acts: **representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative** (Searle, 1976). Each utterance was then analyzed based on its illocutionary function as proposed by Leech (1983), including **convivial, competitive, collaborative, and conflictive functions**.

From the 30 data, seven representative utterances were selected to be discussed in detail. These samples were chosen because they best illustrate the diversity of illocutionary acts and their functions, ranging from factual statements, warnings, and polite requests, to expressions of gratitude, promises, and formal declarations. By analyzing these examples, the discussion highlights not only the types of illocutionary acts employed but also the communicative purposes and social functions behind them.

Data 1: Directive Illocutionary Act – Competitive Function

Context: This utterance is delivered by a village guard to the player as a warning about the danger that lurks inside a cave. The guard provides this information when the player asks about the location to be explored, aiming to increase awareness before entering the hazardous area.

Utterance: *"Do not venture into the caves alone."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is classified as a **directive illocutionary act** because the speaker (the guard) intends to influence the hearer's action by giving a strict prohibition. The imperative construction *do not venture* clearly shows that the speaker wants the hearer to avoid a specific action—entering the cave alone—because it is considered dangerous.

The **illocutionary function** of this utterance falls under the **competitive category**, as the prohibition is aimed at regulating the hearer's behavior. While the intention is ultimately for the hearer's safety, the form of the utterance carries an authoritative demand that requires compliance. This reflects a social dynamic where the speaker holds a position of cautionary authority over the hearer, reducing the hearer's freedom of choice for the sake of survival.

Data 2: Directive Illocutionary Act – Convivial Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a villager in Velen to Geralt, reflecting the community's desperation during wartime. The villager appeals to Geralt to help them find a missing woman, considered vital for their people. The request emerges in a situation where the village is devastated by war, and the citizens feel hopeless.

Utterance: *"We've all lost something in the war, but this one's different, Witcher. Please, help us find her."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is classified as a **directive illocutionary act** because the speaker explicitly asks the hearer (Geralt) to perform an action—helping to locate the missing woman. The use of *please* indicates politeness while still maintaining the intention to influence the hearer's behavior.

The **illocutionary function** of this utterance belongs to the **convivial category**, as the request is delivered politely and is meant to preserve social harmony. The villager appeals to Geralt with respect and humility, showing gratitude and reliance rather than authority. This highlights the speaker's effort to strengthen cooperative bonds, acknowledging Geralt's freedom of choice while still conveying urgency and emotional weight.

Data 3: Assertive Illocutionary Act – Collaborative Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a village guard to Geralt during a monster-hunting mission. The guard delivers factual information about the beast's location, based on reports from local villagers. The statement is intended to prepare Geralt before he takes action.

Utterance: *"The beast has been spotted near the old mill."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is an **assertive illocutionary act** because the speaker asserts a fact believed to be true: the location of the beast. The guard provides information that reflects his conviction about the situation, aiming to give Geralt knowledge of the danger.

The **illocutionary function** is **collaborative**, as the guard is not issuing a command or making a request but rather sharing reliable information to support Geralt's decision-making. By providing factual data, the speaker contributes to mutual understanding and cooperative problem-solving. The utterance serves as a foundation for further action while maintaining neutrality and objectivity.

Data 4: Commissive Illocutionary Act – Competitive Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a sorcerer to Geralt during a negotiation. The sorcerer offers to teach a spell but emphasizes that it comes with a price. This reflects both willingness to help and an expectation of something in return.

Utterance: *"I can teach you the spell, but it comes with a price."* (Act 2, Skellige)

This utterance is a **commissive illocutionary act** because the speaker commits to a future action—teaching a spell. The use of *"I can teach you"* indicates readiness to perform an action, but the additional clause *"it comes with a price"* places conditions on that commitment.

The **illocutionary function** is **competitive**, since the utterance introduces a negotiation that benefits the speaker. Although cooperation is possible, the focus is on ensuring that the speaker's interest (receiving payment) is met. The commissive act here balances offering help with asserting the speaker's own requirements, highlighting a transactional dynamic in the interaction.

Data 5: Commissive Illocutionary Act – Convivial Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a villager asking for Geralt's help in finding his missing brother. To persuade Geralt, the villager promises to repay the kindness with any help he can offer in the future.

Utterance: *"If you find my brother, I swear I will help you in any way I can."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is a **commissive illocutionary act** because the speaker expresses a strong commitment to act in the future, indicated by the phrase *"I swear I will help you."* The utterance binds the speaker to a promise contingent upon the listener's action.

The **illocutionary function** is **convivial**, since the speaker frames the promise in a cooperative and socially positive way. Rather than imposing or demanding, the villager builds solidarity and trust by offering sincere gratitude in advance. This act seeks to maintain harmony, showing empathy and willingness to reciprocate, which strengthens the social bond between the speaker and listener.

Data 6: Expressive Illocutionary Act – Convivial Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a villager after Geralt saves their village from a monster attack. It represents the villager's emotional response of gratitude for the Witcher's heroic action.

Utterance: *"Thank you, Witcher! You really saved our village from destruction."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is an **expressive illocutionary act** because the speaker conveys their psychological state—specifically gratitude and relief—toward the listener's action. The utterance does not request or command action, but rather reflects the speaker's sincere feelings in response to what the Witcher has done.

The **illocutionary function** is **convivial**, as the utterance aims to strengthen social ties by expressing appreciation. Gratitude creates a sense of harmony and reinforces mutual respect between the speaker and the listener. This type of expression maintains positive relationships and affirms the Witcher's role as a valued protector of the community.

Data 7: Declarative Illocutionary Act – Competitive Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by Baron of Crow's Perch in a formal setting. The Baron uses his official authority to appoint Geralt as the protector of the territory, formally changing his social status.

Utterance: *"Hereby, I, Baron Crow's Perch, officially appoint you as the protector of this territory."* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is a **declarative illocutionary act** because the speaker's words themselves create a new social reality: Geralt is officially assigned as protector. The performative verb *appoint* signals the act of declaration, and the authority of the Baron ensures the utterance has binding force.

The **illocutionary function** is **competitive**, since the declaration imposes duties and responsibilities on Geralt. Although it acknowledges his value, the main effect is authoritative—placing obligations upon him in service of the Baron and the community. This reflects a hierarchical relationship where language is used to enforce rules and redistribute responsibilities.

Data 8: Assertive Illocutionary Act – Conflictive Function

Context: This utterance is delivered by a villager to Geralt (Witcher) after a tragic event that harmed the village. The villagers feel betrayed, believing that Geralt failed to fulfill their trust.

Utterance: *“How could you let this happen, Witcher? We trusted you!”* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is categorized as an assertive illocutionary act because the speaker expresses a belief about reality—namely, that Geralt failed to uphold their trust. It is not a request or a promise, but a statement of judgment and accusation. The phrasing “We trusted you” reflects the villager’s conviction and disappointment.

The **illocutionary function** is **conflictive**, since the utterance is designed to create confrontation and express anger. Rather than maintaining harmony, the villager attacks the hearer verbally, producing tension. This highlights how assertive acts can also serve negative, emotionally charged purposes depending on context.

Data 9: Expressive Illocutionary Act – Convivial Function

Context: This utterance is spoken by a villager to Geralt after realizing their mistake caused harm to the village. The villager apologizes with deep regret.

Utterance: *“Forgive me, Witcher. I had no idea that my actions would bring disaster to this village.”* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is an expressive illocutionary act because it directly conveys the speaker’s psychological state—remorse and guilt. The performative “Forgive me” clearly shows the intention of apology.

The **illocutionary function** is **convivial**, since the apology aims to restore social harmony and rebuild trust. By admitting fault and seeking forgiveness, the villager attempts to reduce conflict and maintain cooperative relations with Geralt.

Data 10: Directive Illocutionary Act – Collaborative Function

Context: This utterance is given by a healer NPC to Geralt when explaining how to craft a healing potion. The healer provides instructions in a neutral way.

Utterance: *“You’ll need to gather herbs from the swamp if you want to make the healing potion.”* (Act 1, Velen)

This utterance is a directive illocutionary act because the speaker instructs the hearer to take a particular action—gathering herbs. Unlike commands, it frames the action as a necessary condition for the potion to be made.

The **illocutionary function** is **collaborative**, as the instruction supports the hearer’s goal without pressuring them. The healer shares practical knowledge, fostering cooperation rather than imposing authority.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of thirty utterances in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the research identifies five types of illocutionary acts: directive, assertive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Directive speech acts appear as the most dominant type with 14 data (46.7%), followed by assertive with 6 data (20%), commissive with 5 data (16.7%), expressive with 3 data (10%), and declarative with 2 data (6.6%). These findings indicate that directive

utterances play a central role in shaping the interaction between characters, particularly in advancing quests and guiding the player's actions.

In terms of illocutionary functions, the study reveals that competitive functions dominate with 14 data (46.7%), convivial appear in 8 data (26.7%), collaborative in 7 data (23.3%), and conflictive in 1 data (3.3%). The dominance of competitive functions highlights the authoritative and task-oriented nature of communication in the game, while the presence of convivial and collaborative functions reflects the effort to maintain social bonds and cooperative interaction within the narrative.

This research contributes to the study of pragmatics by showing how illocutionary acts and their functions operate within interactive media, particularly video games, where language is not only used for storytelling but also for guiding player engagement. Future research is suggested to expand the scope by analyzing other genres of games or comparing speech act functions across different interactive platforms to gain deeper insights into the pragmatics of digital communication.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Habermas, J. (1998). *On the pragmatics of communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London, UK: Longman.
- Legiansyah, R., & Supri, S. (2020). Implicature and speech acts in museum guiding interactions at the Museum of the Asian-African Conference. *English Journal Literacy Utama*.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rahayu, E., Arifin, Z., & Ariani, D. (2018). Illocutionary acts in the main characters' utterances in Mirror Mirror. *English Journal Literacy Utama*.
- Rasyid, I., & Sutopo, A. (2023). An analysis of expressive illocutionary acts by characters in the film Mulan (2020). *English Journal Literacy Utama*.
- Reningtyas, W. (2016). Fungsi tindak tutur ekspresif dalam film Comme Un Chef karya Daniel Cohen. *English Journal Literacy Utama*.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1-23.
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Anastasya, R., & Supri, S. (2024). Expressive speech acts in The Summer I Turned Pretty season 2. *English Journal Literacy Utama*.