An Analysis of Speech Functions in Spider-Man: No Way Home's "I Lost Gwen" Scene

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the speech functions in the "I Lost Gwen" scene from the film Spider-Man: No Way Home using Halliday's interpersonal metafunction. It focuses on how statements, questions, offers, and commands convey emotional pain, compassion, and mutual understanding. A qualitative descriptive method was applied to 14 clauses from a 91:36-minute film segment known for its emotional impact and virality. The findings show a dominance of congruent speech functions realized through declarative moods, reflecting Peter Parker's expression of loss and vulnerability. Metaphorical realizations in clauses 7, 8, and 14 reveal indirect meanings, such as self-directed commands and disguised warnings, highlighting internal conflict and emotional nuance. The study demonstrates that speech functions choices reflect deeper interpersonal meanings and contribute to emotional depth in cinematic dialogue.

Keywords: Speech Functions, Spider-Man: No Way Home, Cinematic Dialogue

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis fungsi-fungsi ujaran dalam adegan "I Lost Gwen" dari film Spider-Man: No Way Home dengan menggunakan metafungsi interpersonal Halliday. Fokus penelitian ini adalah bagaimana pernyataan, pertanyaan, tawaran, dan perintah menyampaikan rasa sakit emosional, kasih sayang, dan saling pengertian. Metode deskriptif kualitatif diterapkan pada 14 klausa dari segmen film berdurasi 91 menit 36 detik yang dikenal karena dampak emosional dan viralitasnya. Temuan menunjukkan dominasi fungsi ujaran kongruen yang direalisasikan melalui modus deklaratif, mencerminkan ekspresi kehilangan dan kerentanan Peter Parker. Realisasi metaforis pada klausa 7, 8, dan 14 menunjukkan makna tidak langsung, seperti perintah yang ditujukan pada diri sendiri dan peringatan terselubung, yang menyoroti konflik batin dan nuansa emosional. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pilihan fungsi ujaran mencerminkan makna interpersonal yang lebih dalam dan berkontribusi pada kedalaman emosional dalam dialog sinematik.

***Kata Kunci:** Fungsi Ujaran, Spider-Man: No Way Home, Dialog Sinematik*

A. Introduction

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines language in its actual context of use. The term "discourse" itself is derived from the Latin word "discursus," meaning "conversation" or "speech." (Fairclough, et al. 2020). Meanwhile, Taylor (2013) explains that discourse analysis comes from various disciplines such as sociolinguistics, sociology, and social psychology are likely to have different reference sources.

Furthermore, Halliday and Matthiessen, in their seminal work Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar (4th ed., 2014), are among the primary pioneers in developing the framework for speech functions, especially within the context of systemic functional grammar. They argue that every utterance serves an interpersonal function, reflecting how the speaker interacts with the listener and positions themselves in the conversation. Morever, Renkema (2018) in Introduction to Discourse Studies (revised ed., 2018), also discusses speech functions as an integral part of how meaning is constructed in discourse. Renkema (2018) emphasizes that speech functions help us understand the pragmatic goals behind utterances. So, speech function is a category for classifying what a person does with language in an interaction. It's not just about what they say, but also about their purpose, intention, and impact within the communicative context.

Understanding speech functions is essential when analyzing various forms of communication, including those found in films, where dialogue and interaction play a significant role in conveying meaning. Film, also known as cinema or motion pictures, is a visual art form that utilizes a sequence of moving images, often accompanied by sound, to convey ideas, stories, perceptions, emotions, or atmospheres. As stated by Aramiko et al. (2019), language can be acquired through watching films. Meanwhile, Wahyudi (2017) argues that film can be considered a literary work because technological advancements have surpassed traditional boundaries in the field of literature. Literature and film are both capable of conveying texts in diverse ways, representing a concept or idea.

Given the significance of speech functions in film as a medium of communication and storytelling, analyzing a popular film like *Spider-Man: No Way Home* can provide valuable insight into how language is used to shape characters, convey emotions, and advance narrative meaning. Spider-Man: No Way Home, a successful collaboration between Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures, captured global attention by bringing together three versions of Spider-Man in a multiverse narrative. The movie not only grossed over $1.9 billion, but also demonstrated significant emotional depth and entertainment appeal, even in the midst of the pandemic. Its popularity was further bolstered by the return of iconic characters that blended nostalgia with modern relevance. https://www.sonypictures.com/corp/press_releases/2015/02_15/020915_spiderman.html One of the most interesting scenes to examine is *"I Lost Gwen" delivered by Andrew Garfield.* This scene highlights the delivery of strong emotions and a deep reflection of trauma, where the function of speech dynamically shifts to express the character's inner conflict.

Thus, this research problem centers on the view that the film Spider-Man: No Way Home is a very rich text for linguistic study, combining cinematic narrative and interpersonal communication through emotional scenes, inter-textual references, and multimodal elements. This research will specifically focus on analyzing the speech functions of utterances in the scene "I Lost Gwen" to further understand how language is used in a cinematic context to express the complexity of characters' emotions and psychology.

This research aligns with previous studies that analyze the function of speech in film media. For example, Dwiningtyas et al. (2023) have conducted a similar study by analyzing the function of speech in the film "Over The Moon". Furthermore, this study is also relevant to Syamsiyah's thesis (2018) entitled "A Speech Function Analysis of Utterances in Beauty and the Beast Movie

Script by Bill Condon". Syamsiyah's study analyzes the types of speech functions in the "Beauty and the Beast" movie script using Halliday's theory, finds that the statement function is the most dominant, and discusses the implications of using speech functions in English language learning through film media. Thus, this study will enrich the treasure of film linguistics studies, especially in analyzing speech functions in the context of emotional expression and trauma. In addition, a relevant study to support this research is the article "An Analysis of the Experiential Function in Motivational Dialogue from the Movie 'Barbie' (2023): A Discourse Analysis" by Pohan et al. (2024). The researchers used Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyze the experiential function in the motivational dialogue of the movie Barbie, focusing on the Process, Participant, and State elements. These studies strengthen the theoretical basis of this research, particularly in the application of linguistic frameworks to the analysis of film dialogues, and will enrich the repertoire of film linguistic studies in analyzing speech functions in the context of emotional expression and trauma.

B. Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on Sugiyono (2018) states that qualitative research is a method based on the philosophy of post-positivism, and is used to examine phenomena in natural object conditions, in contrast to experiments. In line with this, Moleong (2017) defines qualitative research as an effort to understand phenomena in depth about what is experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions, which are presented holistically. Thus, this design allows researchers to explore and comprehensively describe the data obtained from the field.

C. Result and Discussion

The data for this research was obtained through in-depth observation and documentation of important footage from the movie Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021). In particular, the 91:36 minute of the movie was the focus of analysis, as the footage - which reads *"I lost... I lost Gwen, me, she was my MJ. I couldn't save her. I could never forgive myself for that. But I kept trying, trying to keep going, trying to keep being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, because I knew that's what she wanted. But at some point I just, I stopped pulling my punches, I got angry, I got bitter. I just don't want you to end up like, like me"* - proved viral and evoked deep emotions of sadness among viewers, making it a rich source of data for understanding speech function.

Table 3.1. Unmark Realizations of Speech Functions

No.	Realizations Clause	Speech Function	Unmarked Mood	Realization Type
1	I lost;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
2	I lost Gwen;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
3	my, um, she was my MJ;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
4	I couldn't save her;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
5	I'm never gonna be able to forgive myself for that;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
6	but I carried on;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
7	tried to, um, try to keep going;	Command (self-directed)	Imperative (elliptical)	Metaphorical
8	try to keep being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man;	Command (self-directed)	Imperative (elliptical)	Metaphorical
9	because I know;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
10	that's what she would have wanted;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
11	but at some point I just, I stopped pulling my punches;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
12	I got rageful;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
13	I got bitter;	Statement	Declarative	Congruent
14	I just don't want you to end up like me.	Command (disguised)	Declarative (negative)	Metaphorical

Based on the analysis of the 14 clauses extracted from the "I Lost Gwen" scene, it is evident that the emotional weight of the dialogue is heavily conveyed through statements realized congruently via declarative moods. This aligns with Halliday's assertion in Saragih & Saragih (2021) declarative mood is typically used to give information, which in this case, serves as a narrative of loss, guilt, and vulnerability. The speaker (Peter Parker) expresses personal grief and regret through clear, direct statements such as "I couldn't save her" and "I'm never gonna be able to forgive myself for that". These utterances reflect an open and honest self-disclosure, realized congruently, thereby emphasizing sincerity and emotional depth.

However, a notable shift occurs in clauses 7, 8, and 14. These are realized metaphorically, where the mood does not align directly with the speech function. For example, clause 14 ("I just don't want you to

end up like me") appears as a declarative mood, but functions as a disguised command or warning. This indirectness softens the instruction, making it more empathetic and emotionally appropriate given the context. Clauses 7 and 8 reflect self-directed commands, as Peter motivates himself to keep going: "try to keep going; try to keep being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man". Though imperative in tone, the absence of explicit subjects makes them metaphorical realizations, indicating internal conflict and personal struggle.

Overall, the pattern of realizations in this dialogue reveals how language reflects the speaker's psychological state. The dominance of congruent realizations indicates a desire to communicate truthfully, while the few metaphorical clauses reveal layers of self-struggle, indirect persuasion, and emotional nuance. This supports the notion that speech function realization is not only a structural choice but also a reflection

of interpersonal meaning, especially in emotionally complex discourse like film dialogue.

The following percentages for each speech function were observed:

a. **Statement:** Approximately 78.57% of the clauses are statements. This dominance indicates that the speaker, Peter Parker, primarily uses language to convey information, specifically his personal grief, loss, guilt, and vulnerability through direct declarations such as "I couldn't save her" and "I'm never gonna be able to forgive myself for that". These congruent realizations emphasize sincerity and emotional depth.

b. **Command (self-directed):** Approximately 14.29% of the clauses are self-directed commands. These are metaphorical realizations where Peter motivates himself, for example, "try to keep going" and "try to keep being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man". The elliptical nature of these imperative tones without explicit subjects reveals internal conflict and personal struggle.

c. **Command (disguised):** Approximately 7.14% of the clauses are disguised commands. An example is "I just don't want you to end up like me" , which appears as a declarative mood but functions as an indirect instruction or warning. This indirectness softens the instruction, making it more empathetic and emotionally appropriate for the context.

Overall, the prevalence of congruent realizations (statements) highlights a desire for truthful communication, while the metaphorical clauses (commands) unveil layers of self-struggle, indirect persuasion, and emotional nuance within the dialogue. This pattern demonstrates how the choice of speech function realization reflects the speaker's psychological state and interpersonal meaning in emotionally complex discourse.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

The analysis of speech functions in the "I Lost Gwen" clip from *Spider-Man: No Way Home* reveals Peter Parker's strategic use of language to convey deep emotional states and psychological struggles. The dominance of congruent realizations through declarative moods effectively communicates his sincere grief, guilt, and vulnerability, aligning with Halliday's theory in Saragih & Saragih (2021) states that declaratives serve to provide information. Furthermore, the presence of metaphorical realizations, particularly self-directed commands and disguised warnings in certain clauses, highlights the intricate layers of his internal conflict and subtle interpersonal communication. This interplay demonstrates that speech function realization is not merely a structural choice, but a profound reflection of the speaker's psychological state and interpersonal meaning within emotionally charged cinematic dialogue. The findings thus enrich the understanding of how film dialogue functions as a powerful medium for expressing complex emotions and trauma through linguistic choices.

For further research, it would be beneficial to conduct a comparative study of speech functions across different Spider-Man films or other superhero narratives to explore how character development influences linguistic choices in expressing trauma and emotional evolution. Additionally, future studies could investigate the audience's perception and interpretation of these nuanced speech functions in film, perhaps using quantitative methods to gauge emotional resonance. Educators in linguistics or film studies can also utilize scenes like "I Lost Gwen" as rich teaching materials to illustrate the application of systemic functional grammar in discourse analysis of cinematic texts.

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