
Race and Gender Discriminatory Utterance through Speech Acts in *Hidden Figures* Movie 2016

Siti Alkhaerani¹, Ruminda², Erfan Muhammad Fauzi³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Jawa Barat, Indonesia.

*Correspondence: ✉ sitalkha07@gmail.com

Abstract

*Discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, nationality, religion, or social class. This social issue often arises due to differences in race, nationality, religion, and social class. This study analyzes the types of speech acts that reflect discrimination in the 2016 film *Hidden Figures*. The research aims to identify the types of speech acts and the meanings behind the discriminatory utterances appears in the *Hidden Figures* movie. The study adopts a qualitative method with a pragmatic approach, utilizing Searle's speech act theory. According to Searle, speech acts can be categorized into five types: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The data collection process involves observing the movie, understanding the plot, and taking notes of utterances that contain race and gender discrimination. As the result, this research reveal 15 discriminatory utterances categorized as representative speech acts, one utterance categorized as a directive speech act, one utterance as a commissive speech act, two as expressive speech acts, and one as a declaration speech act. These findings were obtained from the dialogues between the three main characters and other characters. The characters who more frequently exhibited discriminatory utterances were those holding higher positions than the three main characters. Using a pragmatic approach, this research also analyzes the meaning contained within the discriminatory utterances identified in the data. These results provide insight into how discriminatory language manifests in movie dialogue and the types of speech acts used to convey race and gender discrimination.*

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INTRODUCTION

Discrimination is a social issue that should be an important discussion in pursuing a peaceful life. As social beings with diverse identities, people must be able to understand one another. However, the fact remains that discrimination

still occurs in many forms, whether due to differences in religion, culture, behavior, gender, or skin color. According to Theodorson & Theodorson (1979) in Fulthoni et al (2009), discrimination is unfair treatment of groups or individuals based on something, such as differences in race, nation, religion, or social class differences (Fulthoni et al., 2009).

Discrimination remains a complex issue to this day. Despite numerous efforts and movements to put an end to discrimination, the problem continues to persist and even evolve. Many anti-discrimination movements have been initiated to combat this issue, such as Civil Rights Movement, this movement fought for racial equality, particularly for African-Americans people. The Black Lives Matter movement, this movement emerged as a response to discrimination faced by Black people, demanding that Black individuals also have the right to live, as well as fair and equal treatment comparable to that of white people. In addition to movements advocating for the rights of Black people, gender-based discrimination also continues to occur frequently, leading to the emergence of feminist movements, which remain a significant social issue and topic of discussion in society today.

Discrimination can take various forms, including verbal expressions, written statements, body language, or other signals used to convey discriminatory attitudes toward a particular group. The nature of utterances, which involve interaction with others, the utterance can produced just not in positive way but can also be categorized as negative utterances. One example is discriminatory utterance, which contains negative statements directed at certain groups, such as marginalizing, belittling, ostracizing, or judging. Andres Haye and Antonia Larrain (2011) state utterance is the unit of social life and describe the utterance as an event of becoming, it show that utterance not static but an action happened in certain context. Utterance also encounter with the other (Haye & Larrain, 2011). In pragmatics, it is essential to understand the context because an utterance can only be fully understood when the context in which it occurs is comprehended. Understanding the context is important to interpret the meaning (Indrawati, 2009).

Speech acts are one of the subjects that will be studied when encountering utterance. Topics that can be studied using this theory may come from various aspects, such as politics and including discrimination (Zou & Yiye, 2022). According to Yule (1996), a speech act is an action performed via an utterance. In English, speech acts are given specific labels such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, and request (Yule, 1996). According to Austin (1962) in Cutting (2002) there are three dimensions of speech act, namely, the locutionary act which is the act of saying something. The perlocutionary act is a speech act aimed at producing an effect from the hearer. The Illocutionary act is referred to as the act of doing or ordering something through the utterance (Cutting, 2002).

Speech acts classified by Searle (1976) are divided into five, namely declaration, representative, commissive, directive, expressive (Cutting, 2002). Each type of speech act serves its own specific function. For example, utterances classified as representatives function as assertions, statements, claims, and suggestions. Directives serve functions such as requests, commands, invitations, and challenges. Commissive function as promises, offers, threats, or vows (Mukhroji et al., 2019). Expressive speech acts convey various expressions such as forgiveness, sympathy, or excuses. Lastly, declarative utterances serve several functions, including appointment, nomination, resignation, and others. (Leilei & Chunfang, 2023).

Speech acts are used in many situations because they are inseparable from everyday life. This includes utterances used by someone to mock, insult, and discriminate against others. As social beings with their own cultures and ideologies, discrimination against things that differ from one's own culture is very common. Social strata have existed since ancient times and continue to exist even today. According to Fulthoni et al. (2009), discrimination occurs when small groups are oppressed by larger groups, with "larger" meaning consisting of many people who unite to create stereotypes that portray their group as superior to others (Fulthoni et al., 2009).

The use of speech acts is familiar in everyday life, even in some entertaining works such as movies and novels speech acts are presented to make a work more animated. Movie is one of literary work that can produce moral values in many genres (Anggraeni et al., 2018). One of the movies that will be discussed for this research is *Hidden Figures* which aired in 2016. This movie is an adaptation of a non-fiction book with the same title by Margot Lee Shetterly. This movie tells the story of three female mathematicians of African-American origin. The three main characters are dark-skinned women who get discrimination, namely Katherine Goble played by Taraji P. Henson, Dorothy Vaughan played by Octavia Spencer, and Mary Jackson played by Janelle Monae.

Several studies have examined speech acts, one of which was conducted by Ida Ayu Agung Trisna Ambawa Patni (2023) titled "*Speech Act Analysis in The Lion King (2019) Film*". The research conducted by Ida Ayu Agung Trisna Ambawa Patni found that: (1) The research conducted by Ida Ayu Agung Trisna Ambawa Patni is a qualitative descriptive research (2) The data analyzed in this study are in the form of conversation fragments of *The Lion King 2019* movie, (3) Speech acts yang found in Ida Ayu Agung Trisna Ambawa Patni's research is 14 locutionary act, 14 illocutionary act, and 14 perlocutionary act (Ida Ayu Agung Trisna Ambawa Patni, 2023). The main differences between this research and previous research lie in the theory of speech acts applied and the object of the study. The previous research used Austin's speech act theory, whereas this research employs Searle's speech act theory. Additionally, the

object of the previous research was *The Lion King* (2019) movie, while this study research focuses on the *Hidden Figures* movie.

The next research related to pragmatic analysis using speech acts theory is Tri Lestari and Elysa Hartati's research (2017) titled "*A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Act in Thor Movie*". This research uses *Movie* as the object to be studied, namely *Thor* movie. The analysis of speech acts in this study is based on Searle's theory which classifies speech acts into 5 kinds, namely declaration, representative, commissive, directive, and expressive. The result of this study shows that the utterances containing representative speech acts appeared 56 times, (Lestari & Hartati, 2017). This previous research employed the same speech theory as this research but with a different focus and object of study. The previous research focused on representative utterances, while this research concentrates on race and gender discriminatory utterances.

The next research related to discrimination analysis using *Hidden Figures* movie is research by Regzi Sri Haryanti, Singgih Daru Kuncara, and Nita Maya Valiantien (2019) analysis using speech acts theory is titled "*Discrimination towards African-American Women as Potrayed in Hidden Figures Film*" (Sri Haryanti et al., 2019). This previous research uses the same movie as the object to be studied, namely *Hidden Figures*. The different between this previous research and this research is the analysis of discrimination in this research using mimetic approach and descriptive qualitative method. The data used derived from utterances, actions, and explanation of a situation. From the analysis, the data showed there two types of discrimination in *Hidden Figures* movie, there are race discrimination and gender discrimination. Based on the previous researches, a research gap has been identified, specifically the lack of analysis on the types of speech acts related to race and gender discrimination. Therefore, this study aims to examine the types of speech acts found in race and gender discriminatory utterances depicted in the *Hidden Figures* movie.

Analysing speech acts to identify forms of discrimination is crucial to understanding the root causes of discrimination. Many literary works have addressed the theme of discrimination, yet this issue remains a widely discussed and relevant topic. Therefore, research on discrimination expressed through speech acts is necessary to help understand discrimination based on the types of speech acts. Exploring discriminatory utterances in a film can serve as an effective medium to educate the public about race and gender discrimination, as films have the power to inform and introduce concepts to society (Faisal, 2011). Speech act theory helps researchers understand the functions of utterances in the film, particularly those related to race and gender discrimination. According to Saragi, et all (2019), analysis uses speech act gives more detailed result (Saragi et al., 2019). Therefore, providing education to readers about race and gender discrimination through the medium of film is necessary to raise general awareness about discrimination using the theory of speech acts.

In this study, the researcher utilizes discriminatory utterances related to race, skin color, and gender found in the film *Hidden Figures* as the primary data source. The film narrates the struggles of three main characters – Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson—who face various forms of discrimination in their workplace at NASA during the era of segregation in the United States. The discrimination experienced by the protagonists is depicted through their interactions with other characters. Therefore, *Hidden Figures* is considered a relevant subject for this research, particularly in examining the dynamics of discrimination based on race and gender, as portrayed in a specific historical and cultural context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method combined with a pragmatic approach. Qualitative method is research method that effective to identifying intangible factor (Mack et al., 2005), in this research will identifying the types of speech acts of discriminatory utterance. In the meantime, the pragmatic approach is research that focuses on the context of language use and interaction that can influence the way language is used to convey meaning. This approach use to ensure that the analyzed utterance reflects the social relationships and the real-world context surrounding the communication situation. (Cutting, 2002). The used of qualitative method with pragmatic approach in this research is to help identifying the data and analysing the meaning behind the data found. In this analysis, the use of context is crucial to ensure the accuracy of the analysis, as context plays a significant role in interpreting meaning (Indrawati, 2009).

The analysis is carried out by identifying and analysing the race and gender discriminatory utterance that appears in *Hidden Figures* Movie 2016. The results of the analysis will be associated with Searle's speech acts theory. In collecting data, there are several stage, specifically as a follow:

- Firstly, watching the entire movie to understand the storyline and ensure that the analysis in this research aligns with the context of the story.
- Secondly, Note-taking utterances containing race and gender discrimination.
- Lastly, the data will be shown in table. The use of tables is highly beneficial for presenting a more detailed and comprehensive overview of the analysis results.

After collecting the data, the analysis in this study will follow several stages: (1) Data the collected will be categorized according to Searle's speech act theory. Searle (1976) classifies speech acts into five micro-types: declarations, representatives, commissives, directives, and expressives, (2) Explain the

context of the utterances to ensure the analysis is more accurate, and (3) Analysing the meaning of the utterances to determine what makes the data discriminatory acts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the analysis conducted, the researcher identified utterances containing discrimination and categorized them according to the types of speech acts based on Searle's theory. The results revealed 15 discriminatory utterances classified as representative speech acts, one utterance as a directive speech act, one utterance as a commissive speech act, two utterances as expressive speech acts, and one utterance as a declaration speech act. The research provides the table that contain example of race and gender discriminatory utterance with the type of speech act, data will be shown in table 3.1 below:

Table 1 Examples of Discriminatory Utterances

No	Utterance	Duration	Speech act classification	Classification of discrimination
1.	<i>"There are quite a few women working in the space program."</i>	00:05:03	Representative – statement fact	Gender discrimination
2.	<i>"Didn't think I'd come all the way down here."</i>	00:11:52	Commissive promise	– Race discrimination
3.	<i>"just calculate with what you have."</i>	1:18:57	Directive command	– Gender Discrimination
4.	<i>"Sorry for underestimating you."</i>	00:53:17	Expressive apologizing	– Gender Discrimination
5.	<i>"No more colored restrooms. No more white restroom. Just plain old toilets."</i>	1:04:04	Declaration abolishing	– Race discrimination

Discussion

1. Representative

Datum 1 (00:05:00)

Police Officer: NASA? Now that's something. I had no idea they hired...

*Dorothy: **There are quite a few women working in the space program.***

- Context: Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy, they are African-American who work at NASA, were on their way to work. On the way, their car broke down. Not long after, a police officer was on patrol and stopped at the spot where their car broke down. The police officer asked them why they had stopped in the middle of the road, as it was not a place to park a car and asked them where they were from and asked for their business cards. Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy replied that they worked at NASA and gave the police their business cards. Afterward, the police didn't seem to believe they worked at NASA but the fact that they did work there was proven by the business cards of the three of them.
- Analysis: Dorothy's utterance "**There are quite a few women working in the space program.**" is a representative speech act that functions to state the facts. She conveys the fact that there are several women who are capable of working at NASA. When she was questioned by the police officer, Dorothy quickly stated the truth that it was true that she worked at NASA. From the utterance, it can be seen that there is gender discrimination, especially against women. In this context, the police do not believe Katherine, Mary, and Dorothy work in a big company, namely NASA. Hence, the utterance appears to oppose the discrimination and state the fact that there are women working in a space program company. It also corrects the stereotype that the world of science and technology is only for men.

2. Commissive

Datum 2 (00:11:53)

Vivian: I need these calculation before lunch. Space Task Group needs a computer, ASAP. Someone with a handle on analytic geometry. We can't fill that position out of the East group.

Dorothy: Permanent or temp?

Vivian: Everything is temporary, Dorothy. You have someone?

Dorothy: Yes, ma'am. Katherine is the gal for that. She can handle any numbers you put in front of her.

*Vivian: I'll check her credentials. **Didn't think I'd come all the way down here.***

- Context: It can be seen from the dialog between Dorothy and Vivian in the Hidden Figures movie that NASA needs someone who can handle analytic geometry. The context of the workspace for black people is different from that of white people, where in the movie it is seen that they seem to work in a room that contains all black women who are on the lower floors of the company.

- Analysis: Because of the context that has been explained, that is what causes Vivian to say the sentence “**Didn't think I'd come all the way down here**”. The utterance is included in the commissive speech act as a promise. In the utterance, there is discrimination against black employees who seem to be placed in a separate area. The utterance also shows the status hierarchy between white and black employees. In Vivian utterance, who belongs to the white employee, contains a commissive speech act. The utterance explains his unexpectedness of coming to the workspace where the black employees are. She never predicted that she would go to that place in the future.

3. Directive

Datum 3 (01:18:57)

*Paul: Katherine, that's the job. Then, you ask for the assignment **just calculate with what you have.***

Katherine: if I could attend briefing, I could...

Paul: Katherine, we have been through this, it's not possible, there is no protocol about women who could attending.

- Context: Katherine seeks permission from Paul, Katherine's supervisor, to attend the meeting regarding the orbital launch; however, Paul denies her request, stating that there are no procedures allowing women to participate in such meetings..
- Analysis: The utterance falls under the category of a directive speech act, specifically a command, as Paul's statement implies an expectation that Katherine can calculate the orbital trajectory using the available data without attending the meeting. This reflects gender discrimination, as the absence of procedures allowing women to attend does not necessarily mean women should be excluded from such meetings.

4. Expressive

Datum 4 (00:53:01)

Jim: I'm sorry Katherine.

Katherine: For what, Jim?

*Jim: **Sorry for underestimating you.***

- Context: At their first meeting at a party, Jim, Katherine's husband, said something related to Katherine's job. Jim couldn't believe that NASA would hire women as mathematicians because he thought only men could work as mathematicians.
- Analysis: From the context of the utterance, it is evident that Jim discriminated against Katherine. The utterance, '**Sorry for underestimating you,**' falls into the category of expressive speech acts, specifically apologizing. Jim expressed his apology to Katherine for doubting her capability as a woman working as a mathematician at NASA. This indicates gender discrimination against women and seems to perpetuate the stereotype that only men can work at NASA.

5. Declaration

Datum 5 (1:04:03)

Harrison: No more colored restrooms. No more white restroom. Just plain old toilets.

- Context: Harrison, one of the chief at NASA and Katherine's boss, noticed that Katherine was frequently away from her desk, which made him angry. However, Katherine explained that she had to walk 800 meters to find a restroom because the building did not provide toilets for Black people. After hearing Katherine's explanation, Harrison tore down the 'colored restroom' sign that separated the restrooms for white and Black people
- Analysis: Harrison's statement, **"No more colored restrooms. No more white restrooms. Just plain old toilets,"** falls into the category of declaration speech acts specifically abolishing, because the utterance has the power to abolish something. In this context, By declaring, **"No more colored restrooms."** Harrison removing of separate restrooms labeled as "colored" or "white," leaving only common restrooms that anyone can use. The existence of the 'colored restroom' label signifies discrimination against Black people, even for basic public activities. Harrison uses his authority as a chief to change the social and reality of the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the types of speech acts in race/color skin and gender discriminatory in Hidden Figures movie, the researcher concluded that all the types of speech act using Searle Theory is used in Hidden Figures movie. There are 15 representative speech acts, one directive speech act, one commissive speech act, two expressive speech acts, and one declaration speech act. Total of race and gender discriminatory utterance in Hidden Figures movie 2016 is 20 utterances.

After analyzing the discriminatory utterances found in the movie Hidden Figures, the researcher discovered that the most frequently encountered type of speech act in this film is the representative speech act. Representative speech acts are widely used in the movie because many characters express discriminatory utterances that they believe to be true, such as describing, stating facts, asserting, or insisting.

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