

## **Illocutionary Speech Act Analysis of Kageyama Tobio in the Anime Movie Haikyuu the Dumpster Battle**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research aims at analyzing language events in Japanese mass media with respect to illocutionary speech acts that appear in conversations involving the main character Kageyama Tobio from Haikyuu The Dumpster Battle (2024). For the purpose of collecting the information, the researcher uses qualitative descriptive methodology relying on note taking as the tool for data gathering in authentic texts related to the character's discourse. Moreover, the arc are classified using Searle's typology and assessed with respect to their pragmatic aspects. Namely, attention will be paid to revealing the roles of speech acts performed by the character int the course of a very dynamic game of volleyball, when communication server both as a means of achieving some strategic goals and of fosteribg good interpersonal realtions between players. From the findings, it can be seen that among other speech act categories the most frequent one is directive acts because the role played by the character in question requires him to be a leader of the team. Moreover, expressive acts reveal an important pragmatic development of the character because their number suggests his emotional maturity..

**Keywords:** *Pragmatics, Illocutionary Speech Acts, Kageyama Tobio, Searle.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In terms of practicality, language is considered a functional instrument that facilitates the performance of actions through verbal communication apart from communicating information. In practice, the situational setting and the intentions of the speaker, termed speech acts, significantly affect how a sentence is understood. Anime, as a type of media that exploits language for characterization and storytelling purposes, can be considered a case in point. Permata and Arianingsih (2022) assert that illocutionary speech acts in anime commonly imply hidden meanings that demand proper understanding of the surrounding situation to represent the intentions of the speaker.

Tobio Kageyama serves as the protagonist in the movie Haikyuu The Dumpster Battle. His stress during the game definitely influences his communication, which, in turn, becomes the center of the strategy of the team Karasuno. One of the crucial fields for investigation is the transformation of Kageyama's verbal communication from that of an authoritative person to strategic communication. As started by Muchtar (2017), owing to his huge ego, at the beginning of the series, Kageyama had chosen speech actions that were burdened with communicational issues. However, in this particular movie, kageyama demonstrates a high level of maturity in choosing words.

The speech act dynamics in sports anime offer abundant data on numerous types of speech acts that occur in court independently. Pragmatic analysis of the power relations among the players is additionally augmented by the application of the Japanese plain form language, which is commonly used in sports environments. According to Rahayu (2021), the speech acts in pragmatics allow researchers to transcend grammatical structures and perceive the

actual social motive behind the communication process. Consequently, the words of Kageyama are not mere shouts but directives that are crucial for team performance.

It is important to conduct such research, as it proves how communication skills in real-life, especially in stressful situations, can be shown in fiction. (Khafaga et al., 2023) The character Tobio Kageyama is referred to as “The King of the Court” due to his autocratic nature; however, nowadays, he is much more democratic and has grown up. The aforementioned case shows how a person can develop both emotionally and professionally in a group of people by improving their linguistic skills.

To conclude the list, in the introduction part, the importance of analyzing anime as a linguistic corpus and the benefits of researching such cases from the viewpoint of learning a language is highlighted (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). One instance when a character, Kageyama, has to give preference to the pragmatic function of the language rather than form due to the quickness of the game is presented. The objective of the research, therefore, is to compose a comprehensive chart of pragmatic functions of the language and disclose the mechanism of linguistic power management.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of whole meaning identification, pragmatics stresses the relationship between language and the environment. An example of a sport event situation affecting the interpretation of any linguistic message is the score, player connections, and physical tiredness. Speech act classification by John Searle is among the most fundamental approaches in tackling this matter (Batubara et al., 2020). In this context, every message is categorized depending on what it seeks to communicate, which could be directives, representations, etc.

Direct commands are appropriate during emergencies, based on studies done on speech acts in sport anime. As explained by Hutagaol (2025), due to the importance of giving strategic commands instantly, the use of directives is the most common speech act in sports stories. Directives remove the time-consuming aspect of greetings by allowing one to command the other person to act. This is especially important with regards to Kageyama’s role as a setter, who must be quick in each exchange to defeat the opponent’s defensive tactics.

The strong cohesion among teams cannot be realized by not paying attention to the emotional aspect of language apart from its academic value. As Sudarma et al. (2025) argue, the expressive speech acts of anime are key motivational tools that help increase the spirit of a team when under pressure. It is in this sense that language helps to psychologically support players during matches where even a few players can change the result of a match.

In addition to that, the illocutionary act of what the character says can be made more powerful through the use of certain elements in the language such as sentence-ending particles. According to Setiawan (2025), the use of certain particles such as “na” and “ne” in anime language not only has a grammatical purpose but also serves the purpose of emphasizing the emotions of the speaker or the level of intention behind what he or she said. For example, for Kageyama, the use of certain particles always makes his team feel secure in the way he handles the ball.

Firstly, there is prior research done on Haikyuu’s first season by Pratama & Zuliastutik (2023) In this series, Kageyama is shown to have initial problems with “cooperative principles.” As per their findings, Kageyama’s initial directive statements lack empathy, which often causes their failure to be perlocutionary. Modern-day research can analyze how Kageyama’s pragmatic competence has evolved by referring to this study. Linguistically speaking, it is an interesting transformation from being a “King,” one who gives orders, to a “Partner,” one who gives instructions.

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is that of qualitative description which entails the analysis of meaning within the audio recordings but does not employ statistical generalization of any form. The choice of qualitative description methodology in this study as stated by (Dumlao, 2020) is informed by the fact that qualitative research methodologies are extremely helpful in comprehending a social process holistically. This enables the researcher to undertake an analysis of the whole speech delivered by Tobio Kageyama in the context of the game such as positions of players.

All authentic conversations held between characters in Japanese were analyzed through the use of notes during the collection process. All data collected were then classified according to the five illocutionary categories proposed by

Searle. This was achieved after translating all authentic conversations in the movie into Romaji format. In order to ensure that the illocutionary force was achieved, other factors such as voice tone and facial expressions were observed (Kartika & Riza, 2022). This step was necessary to avoid misinterpretation of the context conveyed only by the textual data without considering the visual context.

In line with Pratama and Zuliastutik's (2023) analysis procedure, the perlocutionary verb is identified to see how the utterance affects other players. The first cycle of analysis comprised data reduction, corpus table presentation, and concluding statement creation. For an elaborate description of the pragmatic value of each spoken word, the discoveries made were correlated with the situation on the volleyball court, such as the score and time left.

Moreover, data triangulation between the transcribed data and the official subtitles as well as the visual information in the scenes ensured validity of the data collected (Yang et al., 2021). This ensures that the illocutionary force of each utterance is consistent with the progression of the story as well as the behavior of the character. Through this approach, the study intends to come up with an accurate depiction of the communication methods used by Kageyama.

In the end, by guaranteeing the accuracy of the representation of the original Japanese texts, all of the issues of ethics in conducting the research were addressed. It should be noted that special attention was paid to the "honorific" and "plain" styles of Japanese due to their significant impact on the illocutionary effect of the directive (Tenzer et al., 2025). With respect to the linguistic and cultural nuances of the original source, the study highlights the accurate phrase from Kageyama.

## DISCUSSION

### Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are the most dominant type found in Kageyama's dialogue. As a setter, Kageyama acts as the "field general" who must direct his teammates movements and synchronize their timing. Utterances such as "もっとはやくとべ!" (jump faster!) are clear commands intended to modify the teammate's physical action in real time. This high frequency reflects the heavy tactical burden placed on the setter during the match against Nekoma.

Hutagaol (2025) asserts that directive acts are crucial for communicating critical strategic instructions in sports-themed anime without the superfluous social graces. Kageyama eschews civility in high-stress situations in order to guarantee prompt obedience, which is essential for the team's rhythm. In this situation, the absence of "hedging" or indirectness is a sign of effective communication, which is necessary in the professional environment of a national-level match rather than rudeness.

Additionally, Kageyama's instructions have changed from being "demands" to "requests for coordination." The pragmatic intent is based on shared success, yet the grammatical form is still a command. Analysis reveals that because Kageyama's demonstrated skill supports the illocutionary force, Hinata and other players respond to these commands with a high success rate. This establishes a "directive-action" loop that characterizes Karasuno's quick-witted attack throughout the film.

### Assertive Speech Acts

Assertive speech acts, where Kageyama binds himself to the truth of a proposulition. In the context of the match, these are used to report factual conditions on the court, such as the opponent's blocking positions or the state of their own fatigue. For example, when Kageyama states, "やつはもうきずいてる" (He has already noticed), he is asserting a critical fact about the opponent's awareness. These utterances serve as the "intelligence report" that the team needs to pivot their strategy.

According to Permata and Arianingsih (2022), collaborative decision-making during competition depends on facts being stated clearly. The team may lose a point if the assertive conduct is ambiguous because it will take longer for them to respond. Kageyama's assertions in the "Dumpster Battle" are distinguished by their clarity and precision. By reporting the actual state of the court, he enables the team to adjust to Nekoma's "slow-strangulation" style of play.

Furthermore, these assertive behaviors frequently serve as an introduction to a direction. Kageyama justifies his next order, "Attack from the right," by expressing a fact, "The blockers are focusing on the left." His speech act patterns exhibit a high degree of strategic thinking due to their logical flow. It demonstrates that his leadership is

founded on a consistent, accurate assessment of the environment, which he then shares with his colleagues for coordinated action, rather than on whims.

### **Expressive Speech Acts**

Expressive speech acts, reflecting Kageyama's internal psychological state. In this movie, Kageyama frequently uses the phrase “ナイスさあ!” (nice serve!) to appreciate his teammates after a successful play. This is a significant evolution in his character, as he was previously depicted as socially detached and unable to offer praise. The inclusion of these expressive acts suggests that he now understands the importance of psychological reinforcement in a high stakes environment.

According to Sudarma et al. (2025), expressive speech acts in anime are essential for preserving team spirit and strengthening social ties. According to Kageyama, these behaviors serve as psychological stimulants that improve team cohesion. The team understands he is a perfectionist, so when he compliments a colleague, it carries a lot of weight. One of the movie's main attractions is its “expressive maturity,” which depicts a figure who has realized that a team cannot operate solely on technical instructions.

Furthermore, self-correction and displays of collective discontent are common in Kageyama's expressives. He breaks the “King” reputation by putting himself on the same level as his colleagues by stating things like “My bad” or “That was close.” A more robust team environment is produced by this democratic utilization of expressive acts. According to the analysis, these emotional outbursts are deliberately positioned following lengthy rallies in order to reset the team's mental state prior to the start of the next point.

### **Commissive Speech Acts**

Lastly, commissive speech acts carry significant weight in building trust between the setter and the hitters. These are utterances where Kageyama commits himself to a future course of action, such as promising a perfect set or guaranteeing a point. When Kageyama says, “次は、もっといいものを見せてやる” “next, I will give you an even better set,” he is making a linguistic commitment that boosts the attacker's confidence. This act of “committing” is the ultimate sign of a setter's reliability.

Commissive acts in Haikyuu serve as a “guarantee” of performance that holds the speaker to a high standard, according to Muchtar (2017). His colleagues can concentrate fully on their jump and swing because of his dedication, which lessens their psychological load. When Nekoma's defense appears unbreakable in the “Dumpster Battle,” Kageyama's commissives serve as the team's pillars. He prevents the hitters' morale from plummeting by offering a remedy.

These acts' illocutionary power is actually strengthened by their rarity. When Kageyama makes a commissive declaration, the squad takes it as gospel because he doesn't make pledges lightly. The “Freak Quick” attack is successful despite extreme pressure because of its “trust-based pragmatics.” Based on the intensity of Kageyama's verbal commitment, the hitters fully commit to their attack, making the setter's vow a self-fulfilling prophesy.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

According to the study, Tobio Kageyama's mastery of a variety of illocutionary speech actions in the film The Dumpster Battle indicates that he has attained a high degree of pragmatic maturity. His effectiveness as a strategic leader who successfully manages Karasuno's intricate offensive rhythm under tremendous pressure is demonstrated by the predominance of clear instructions and insightful assertions. Additionally, his communication now provides crucial psychological support to sustain team cohesiveness, as evidenced by the notable presence of expressive acts. These actions strengthen social ties, demonstrating Kageyama's transformation from a despotic leader to a cooperative collaborator who strikes a balance between tactical authority and emotional intelligence.

Based on these results, it is advised that future researchers broaden the scope of this study to concentrate on the perlocutionary elements in order to assess the direct psychological effects of Kageyama's statements on the Nekoma High athletes. Furthermore, a more thorough sociolinguistic examination of sentence-final particle usage might offer more complex insights regarding the level of assurance and emotional intensity shown by Japanese sportsmen in competitive contexts. Lastly, contrasting Kageyama's practical tactics with those of other well-known setters from various teams may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the language variances and leadership

philosophies found in the Japanese sports subculture as it is portrayed in contemporary media.

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