

Levi Kane's Utterances: Speech Acts in The Gorge Movie (2025)

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ABSTRACT

This research examines Levi Kane's speech acts in the 2025 romantic action-thriller *The Gorge*, using Searle's Speech Act Theory. The study classifies and analyzes Levi's utterances by type, form, and pragmatic level to show how language reflects his identity and emotional transformation. Using a descriptive qualitative method, 170 utterances from the film's transcript were analyzed. They were grouped into five speech act types (assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative), identified as direct or indirect, and evaluated across three pragmatic levels: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Results show that assertives are most frequent, followed by directives, expressives, and commissives, with no declaratives—highlighting Levi's role as an executor rather than an authority. Direct speech acts dominate, reflecting his concise, action-oriented style, while illocutionary acts are most common, indicating that Levi's speech is highly intentional and performative. Overall, his speech patterns reveal a shift from a reserved soldier to an emotionally engaged individual. This study demonstrates how pragmatic analysis can trace psychological depth and character development in film, offering insights for linguists, educators, and media scholars.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Searle's theory, Speech acts, The Gorge.*

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INTRODUCTION

The cinematic narrative offers a uniquely valuable environment for the study of pragmatics, particularly regarding speech acts. Analyzing speech acts in films is crucial for pragmatic studies because film dialogue provides controlled, accessible, and high-context data that is meticulously crafted to simulate complex real-world communication. Dialogue in film is a primary mechanism for driving the plot, defining character relationships, and establishing dramatic stakes (Cutting, 2002). This means that a character's commands, threats, or promises are not random; they are intentional actions designed to elicit a specific narrative or emotional response, making them ideal subjects for observing illocutionary and perlocutionary forces in action.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener, with a critical focus on context (Yule, 1996). It examines how language is used in actual communication and how utterances are analyzed depending on the situation. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics deals with aspects of meaning that go beyond the literal interpretation of words, such as implied meanings, assumptions, and speaker intentions. These aspects are especially observable in environments where communication is dynamic and layered with contextual cues, such as in film dialogue, where language reflects and constructs social reality (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

The Gorge (2025) is a romantic action-thriller that presents an emotionally intense narrative involving two elite operatives, Levi Kane and Drasa, who find themselves on opposite sides of a mysterious gorge. Despite their backgrounds as assassins, they gradually develop trust and affection amid danger and secrecy. Their conversations are filled with pragmatic nuances—commands masked as suggestions, expressions of love hidden within

casual talk, and power struggles conveyed through silence and implication. This makes the film an ideal subject for analyzing speech acts.

Particularly, this study focuses on the character Levi Kane, a former sniper whose speech reflects both emotional detachment and later vulnerability. At the beginning of the film, Levi speaks with military precision; his language is direct, concise, and rooted in tactical survival, reflecting his background as a trained operative shaped by isolation and trauma. However, as the story progresses and his bond with Drasa deepens, his communication style gradually shifts, becoming more expressive, emotionally nuanced, and interpersonally engaged. Through Levi, the film presents a wide range of speech acts shaped by personal conflict, moral decisions, and evolving intimacy. This dynamic evolution makes Levi an ideal subject for a speech act analysis, as his language not only conveys meaning but also mirrors his psychological transformation throughout the narrative.

Despite the film's rich dialogue and psychological depth, *The Gorge* (2025) has not yet been analyzed through the lens of pragmatic theory. This is particularly significant given the film's genre, a romantic action-thriller, which blends emotionally charged interactions with high-stakes tactical dialogue. Such hybrid genres remain underrepresented in pragmatic film studies, which tend to focus more on dramas, comedies, or social narratives. Furthermore, while speech act theory by Searle has been widely applied in linguistic research, its integration into cinematic analysis, especially through a comprehensive approach that combines speech act types, forms (direct/indirect), and levels (locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary), is still relatively rare. Most previous studies also emphasize general conversational patterns, rather than focusing on the speech development of a single character across an emotional arc.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the types and classifications of speech acts used by Levi Kane in *The Gorge* based on Searle's theory. It specifically analyzes how language in the film conveys meaning, emotion, and interpersonal dynamics through both direct and indirect speech acts. Through this analysis, the study contributes to pragmatic research in cinematic contexts, offering new insights into how speech reflects inner conflicts and relational shifts in emotionally charged narratives.

To understand how speech acts function in communication, it is essential to examine their classifications within pragmatics. Speech Act Theory (SAT) provides a crucial framework for analyzing how language is used not merely to convey information but to perform social actions. Two foundational scholars, John L. Austin (1962) and John R. Searle (1976), developed comprehensive models that classify speech acts based on their purpose, structure, and pragmatic function. Their theories categorize utterances by the specific actions they perform, laying the groundwork for much of the current research in linguistics and discourse analysis.

(Austin, J.L., 1962) introduced the idea that when people speak, they are not just producing sounds or sentences—they are performing actions. He proposed that speech acts operate on three levels: the locutionary act (the literal utterance), the illocutionary act (the speaker's intention), and the perlocutionary act (the effect on the listener). This three-tiered model helps reveal how language works beyond its surface structure and enables analysts to identify what speakers are doing with their words in real contexts. Building on Austin's work, (Searle, 1976) focused on the types or functions of speech acts, categorizing them into five main classes: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Each type reflects a different communicative function, such as stating facts, giving orders, making promises, expressing emotions, or enacting institutional changes. These classifications are especially valuable in understanding how people use language to achieve interpersonal, social, or institutional goals.

In addition to type and level, speech acts may also be analyzed in terms of directness. Direct speech acts clearly align form with function (e.g., "Close the window!"), while indirect speech acts convey meaning more subtly (e.g., "It's cold in here" as a request to close the window). These distinctions are particularly relevant in nuanced, emotionally charged conversations, such as those found in film dialogues, where meaning is often implied rather than explicitly stated. In the following sections, each category and level of speech act will be

explained further to provide a deeper understanding of how they contribute to meaningful communication.

Types of Speech Acts (Searle, 1976)

Declarative Speech Acts

Declarative speech acts are unique in that they create an immediate change in the external world simply by being spoken. These acts do not merely describe or report a change; they perform the change through the act of utterance itself. As (Searle, 1976) explains, declaratives are made possible through institutional or social authority, meaning that the speaker must have the recognized power or position to make the declaration effective. Similarly, (Huang, 2014 (in (Mey, 2009))) emphasizes that declarative acts result in immediate transformation of social or legal status. For example, when someone says "I hereby resign," that statement instantly alters the speaker's employment status. Other common examples include "I now pronounce you husband and wife," "You're fired," or "I declare this meeting open." Declaratives are typically used in formal or ritualized contexts, such as courtrooms, government settings, religious ceremonies, or official events. What sets them apart from other speech acts is their performative function; the utterance is the action. The effectiveness of a declarative act relies not only on the words spoken but also on the context, convention, and authority of the speaker involved.

Assertive acts

Assertive acts, also referred to as representatives, are speech acts in which the speaker expresses a belief or statement that is intended to represent how things are in the world. These acts reflect the speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition (Cutting, 2002). In other words, the speaker is stating something they believe to be true. Assertives are typically used in everyday communication to provide information, describe events, explain facts, or report on situations. Common examples include statements like "The Earth revolves around the Sun," "She is sleeping," or "It's raining outside." This type of speech act is frequently found in academic writing, journalism, conversations, and formal reports, where stating facts or providing accurate descriptions is important. Performative verbs often associated with assertive acts include state, affirm, conclude, describe, report, and claim. Assertive acts help establish shared understanding between speaker and listener by offering information that can be accepted, questioned, or challenged. As such, they form the basis of informative communication and play a vital role in knowledge exchange.

Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are used by the speaker to try to influence or direct the behavior of the listener. According to (Searle, 1976), these acts include commands, requests, suggestions, warnings, and instructions. The key characteristic of directives is that they are aimed at getting the hearer to do something, either voluntarily or under obligation. For instance, sentences like "Please sit down," "Could you pass the salt?" or "Don't touch that!" all function as directive speech acts because they attempt to prompt a specific action from the listener. The strength of the directive can vary from polite requests to firm commands. Verbs commonly used in directives include ask, order, request, advise, urge, and command. In everyday communication, directives are essential for expressing needs, giving instructions, managing behavior, or guiding interactions in both casual and formal settings.

Commissive Speech Acts

Commissive speech acts are utterances in which the speaker commits to a certain future action, taking personal responsibility for carrying it out. According to (Searle, 1976), commissive acts include promises, threats, offers, vows, and refusals. These acts bind the speaker to a future behavior, regardless of whether the listener accepts or responds. For example, when someone says, "I will call you tomorrow" or "I promise to help you with your assignment," they are performing a commissive act. Such speech acts are essential in building trust and maintaining social obligations, as they reflect the speaker's willingness to act in line with their words. The performative verbs commonly associated with commissives include promise, swear, guarantee, vow, offer, and refuse. In both personal and formal interactions, commissives are crucial for expressing intentions and making commitments.

Expressive acts refer to speech acts that convey the speaker's psychological or emotional state. According to Yule (as cited in (Rahayu et al., 2018)), expressive acts are used to express feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, gratitude, or regret. These utterances do not describe the external world but instead reveal the speaker's internal state. Common examples include expressions like "I'm sorry," "Congratulations," or "Thank you." Performative verbs often linked with expressive acts include apologize, thank, congratulate, praise, regret, like, love, fear, and enjoy. Such expressions are central in social interaction as they help build and maintain relationships by acknowledging shared emotions or personal experiences between speaker and listener

Levels of Speech Acts (Austin. J.L, 1962)

Austin (1962) explains that speech acts operate on three levels:

Locutionary Act

The locutionary act represents the most basic level of speech acts, focusing on the literal utterance itself, its sound, structure, and conventional meaning. This level includes three key components: phonetic (the physical act of producing sounds), syntactic (grammatical structure), and semantic (literal meaning). For example, when someone says, "There's a snake behind you," the locutionary act involves producing this sentence in a grammatically correct and meaningful way. It refers to what is said, without considering the speaker's intention or the listener's reaction. The utterance simply conveys information about the presence of a snake behind someone.

Although it may appear straightforward, the locutionary act plays a crucial role in successful communication. It serves as the foundation upon which more complex layers of meaning are built. Suppose an utterance is not well-formed or lacks clear meaning. In that case, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the speaker's intended message to be conveyed or for the hearer to respond appropriately. In this sense, the locutionary act enables communication to take place, as it ensures that there is a linguistically valid and interpretable expression before deeper pragmatic functions come into play.

Illocutionary Act

The illocutionary act refers to the speaker's intention or purpose behind the utterance. While the locutionary act focuses on what is said, the illocutionary act is about what is done through saying something. These acts include warning, requesting, apologizing, ordering, promising, or questioning. For instance, when a speaker says, "There's a snake behind you," their goal may not be merely to state a fact, but rather to warn the listener. The act of warning is the illocutionary force that gives the utterance its intended communicative function.

Understanding illocutionary acts is vital in interpreting communication beyond surface meaning. Often, people say one thing but mean something else, depending on context, tone, and social relationships. The same sentence can function as a statement, a warning, or even a joke, depending on the speaker's intent. Illocutionary acts are at the core of pragmatics because they illustrate how language functions in social interactions. They require both the speaker and listener to share some degree of contextual awareness to correctly interpret the underlying purpose of the speech.

Perlocutionary Act

The perlocutionary act focuses on the effect that an utterance has on the hearer. It refers to the emotional, psychological, or behavioural responses that arise as a result of what has been said. For example, when someone hears "There's a snake behind you" and reacts by screaming, panicking, or running away, these actions are considered perlocutionary effects. This level emphasizes the listener's reception and reaction, which may or may not align with the speaker's original intent.

Unlike illocutionary acts, which are rooted in the speaker's intention, perlocutionary acts are unpredictable and heavily dependent on the hearer's perception and context. A single utterance can result in vastly different reactions depending on who hears it, how it is said, and the situation in which it occurs. This level highlights how language doesn't just convey ideas, it also acts upon people. It shows how communication can influence thoughts, feelings, and

behaviours, which is why perlocutionary effects are particularly important in fields such as education, media, marketing, and public speaking.

For example, in "There's a snake behind you!", the locutionary act is the statement, the illocutionary act is a warning, and the perlocutionary act is that the hearer runs away in fear. Together, these three levels, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, form a comprehensive model of how language functions in human interaction. Each level builds on the previous one: a speaker must produce a meaningful utterance (locution), express a communicative intention (illocution), and potentially bring about a change in the listener's response (perlocution). Austin's theory helps explain the complexity of everyday communication, where what we say, what we mean, and how others react are not always perfectly aligned. Understanding these distinctions is essential for analyzing speech in both formal and informal settings. Whether interpreting a political speech, classroom instruction, or casual conversation, recognizing the different layers of speech acts allows us to unpack not just the language used but the social action performed. In short, Austin's model underscores that speaking is never a neutral act; every utterance performs something, carries intention, and produces consequences, whether intended or not.

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Beyond the three levels of speech acts, Searle also distinguished between direct and indirect speech acts based on the alignment between syntactic form and communicative function. As cited in (Lestari & Hartati, n.d.), Huang in (Mey, 2009) notes these classifications as follows:

Direct Speech Acts

According to (Searle, 1975), a direct speech act is one in which the speaker's communicative intention is explicitly conveyed through the grammatical structure, for example, using an imperative sentence to issue a command, such as "Close the door." In this case, the sentence form and its function are aligned. In contrast, an indirect speech act occurs when the speaker's intention is not directly expressed in the sentence form but must be inferred by the listener. For instance, the utterance "Can you close the door?" is interrogative in form but often functions as a polite request rather than a literal question about the hearer's ability (Searle, 1975). This distinction highlights how speakers often rely on context and shared understanding to convey meanings that go beyond surface structure.

Indirect Speech Acts

As (Levinson, n.d.) explains, indirect speech acts are a pervasive feature of natural language and serve important social functions, such as expressing politeness, avoiding confrontation, or maintaining social harmony. Similarly, (Yule, 1996) notes that indirectness in speech acts allows speakers to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, especially in situations where directness may be considered rude or inappropriate. In cinematic contexts, this indirectness can be a powerful tool for revealing character intentions, managing tension, or conveying subtle emotional undercurrents. (Cutting, 2002) also emphasizes that recognizing indirect speech acts is essential in uncovering the pragmatic force of an utterance, especially when characters operate under social constraints or conflicting motivations. Therefore, examining the use of both direct and indirect speech acts in film dialogue can provide valuable insights into the psychological depth and relational complexity of characters.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design, which is appropriate for analyzing language use in non-numerical form. According to (Ary et al., 2010), qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the participants, making it suitable for analyzing how speech acts are used in film dialogue. The descriptive approach enables the researcher to interpret and explain how the characters in *The Gorge* (2025) perform various speech acts through their utterances without manipulating variables or applying statistical tools.

Respondents

The subject of this study is the fictional character Levi Kane, the protagonist in the film *The Gorge* (2025). Levi's utterances were selected as the primary data because of his dynamic character development, which reflects a broad range of speech acts influenced by emotional, tactical, and interpersonal contexts. His transformation throughout the narrative, from emotionally detached to increasingly vulnerable, makes him a rich source for pragmatic analysis.

Instruments

The main instruments used in this study are:

- The subtitle script of the film The Gorge (2025), used to capture the verbal data (utterances),*
- The film itself, which was repeatedly viewed to observe paralinguistic and contextual cues such as tone, facial expressions, and body language,*
- A data sheet, developed by the researcher, to document each utterance along with relevant contextual information (speaker, scene description, pragmatic interpretation).*

Data Collection

The data were collected through content analysis of the film's subtitle script. Content analysis, as defined by (Krippendorff, 2004), is a systematic technique used to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns within communication.

The sampling process involved a census of all Levi Kane's verbal contributions throughout the film. Initially, all lines of dialogue spoken by Levi Kane from the beginning to the end of the film were extracted from the subtitle script. This extraction resulted in a total population of approximately 185 lines. After filtering out non-verbal utterances (such as sighs or grunts) and incomplete lines, the final body of data for analysis, referred to as the sample, consisted of 170 complete utterances. These 170 utterances represent the totality of Levi Kane's spoken dialogue in *The Gorge*, thus maximizing the opportunity to trace his linguistic development across the entire narrative arc.

The steps followed in data collection included watching the film multiple times, extracting all 170 complete utterances spoken by Levi Kane, and recording them into a structured data sheet. Each entry included the speaker, utterance, scene context, and preliminary interpretation to ensure that both linguistic and contextual features were considered.

Data analysis

The analysis was guided by the classification of speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Each utterance was further examined to identify whether it was expressed directly or indirectly, following (Searle, 1975), and categorized according to (Austin, J.L, 1962) levels of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. References from (Cutting, 2002) and (Yule, 1996) supported the interpretation of pragmatic functions, especially in identifying indirectness and contextual meaning. The analysis considered not only sentence structure but also emotional tone, character relationships, and narrative development to explore how Levi Kane strategically uses language to reflect power, emotion, and relational dynamics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis of 170 utterances spoken by Levi Kane in *The Gorge* (2025), using Searle's classification of speech acts, the level of speech act (locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary), and the form of expression (direct or indirect). The data are presented in tabular form and summarized below without interpretation, which will be addressed in the Discussion section.

Table 1. Quantitative summary of Searle's five speech act types on Levi Kane's dialogue (N=170)

Speech act type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Examples
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Levi Kane's Utterances: Speech Acts in The Gorge Movie (2025)

1) Assertive	61	35.88%	"3,800 meters. World record." "It was just outside of Belize."
2) Directive	39	22.94%	"Run!" "What's the truth about this place?"
3) Commissive	15	8.82%	"We need to destroy the Gorge." "I had to get back to you."
4) Expressive	27	15.88%	"I fucking loved the rabbit pie." "That's as close to hell as I ever want to get."
5) Declarative	0	0.00%	-
6) Unclassifiable*	28	16.47%	"Hmm," "Okay," "Uh-huh," or incomplete sentences.
Total	170	100.00%	-

*Note on Formulaic/Unclassifiable Utterances: These utterances are lines such as "Hmm," "Okay," or fragmented speech that lack sufficient illocutionary or propositional content for classification into Searle's five categories, but they are included in the total N of 170 utterances for complete reporting.

Table 2. Direct and Indirect Speech Acts (N=170)

Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Example
1) Direct	114	67.06%	"Cut the rope." "I love you."
2) Indirect	28	16.47%	"Do you know why I got this job?"
3) Unclassifiable*	28	16.47%	-
Total	170	100.00%	-

*Note on Unclassifiable Utterances: The 28 utterances categorized as Formulaic/Unclassifiable in Table 1 are also excluded from the Direct/Indirect classification due to their non-propositional nature.

Table 3. Speech Act Level (N=170)

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Example
1) Locution	42	24.71%	"Delta, Theta, four, one, Omega."
2) Illocution	80	47.06%	"We need to destroy the Gorge." (command and moral stance)-
3) Perlocution	20	11.76%	"I wasn't going to say goodbye." (intended to comfort and affirm connection)
4) Unclassifiable	28	16.47%	-
Total	170	100.00%	-

*Note on Unclassifiable Utterances: These are the same 28 utterances (Formulaic/Fragmented) that could not be assigned a specific locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary purpose beyond basic acknowledgement.

It is important to note that the total number of classified speech acts across the three tables is 142. The remaining 28 utterances (16.47%) were classified as Formulaic/Unclassifiable (e.g., simple acknowledgments, fragmented, or non-propositional speech like 'Hmm' or 'Okay'). While these utterances contribute to the character's presence, they lack sufficient illocutionary force to be meaningfully categorized under Searle's five types, the Direct/Indirect dichotomy, or the three-level model. They are thus consistently placed in the Unclassifiable category across all tables to maintain a consistent total sample size of N=170 for reporting clarity.

The findings indicate that Levi Kane's speech behavior is dominated by assertive and directive acts, reflecting his identity as a soldier shaped by discipline, precision, and responsibility. This dominance of assertive acts shows that Levi is often concerned with sharing facts, making observations, and explaining situations. Meanwhile, the frequency of directive speech acts emphasizes his operational role, especially in combat and survival scenarios. As the film progresses, Levi's use of expressive and commissive acts becomes more apparent, particularly in his growing emotional connection with Drasa. These acts are not just linguistic shifts but narrative markers of personal transformation. For instance, the

commissive “I had to get back to you” or the expressive “I love you” signify a move from detachment to vulnerability and intimacy.

In terms of delivery, direct speech acts are significantly more frequent than indirect ones. This is consistent with Levi's straightforward personality and military training, where efficiency and clarity are essential. However, the presence of indirect speech acts, particularly in emotionally vulnerable or relational moments (e.g., “You're all alone out here?”), signals his growing emotional complexity. These instances of indirectness are used to soften his tone or express care without full vulnerability, illustrating an internal shift as he becomes more open in his connection with Drasa.

Based on the findings, the most frequently used speech act by Levi Kane in *The Gorge* is the assertive type, with 61 utterances. Assertive acts are used to express beliefs or describe the world and are aligned with (Searle, 1976) definition of representatives. These include Levi's factual statements, such as “3,800 meters. World record,” which reflect his precision as a trained sniper. These assertives serve not only to inform but to establish credibility and convey confidence. His use of assertives emphasizes his grounded nature and role as an informant in the narrative.

Directive speech acts are the second most common, with 39 occurrences. These utterances aim to influence the actions of the hearer, such as when Levi says, “Run!” or “Cut the rope.” As (Searle, 1976) notes, directives include commands, requests, or instructions, all of which Levi uses frequently due to his background as a military operative. His use of this type reveals his leadership in high-pressure situations.

Expressive speech acts appear 27 times in Levi's dialogue, highlighting moments when he communicates his internal state. According to (Cutting, 2002), expressive acts show the speaker's feelings or attitudes. For example, Levi's line “That's as close to hell as I ever want to get” reveals his emotional reaction to traumatic events. These utterances indicate that Levi's stoic character begins to unravel as he forms an emotional bond with Drasa.

Commissive speech acts are less frequent but significant, totaling 15. These utterances commit Levi to future actions, such as “We need to destroy the Gorge” or “I had to get back to you.” (Searle, 1976) identifies commissives as including promises, refusals, or threats. Levi's commissives mark a turning point in his character development, reflecting his shift from obligation to emotional investment. No declarative speech acts were found. This absence is expected, as declaratives require institutional authority to enact change (e.g., “I now pronounce you husband and wife”), which Levi does not possess. As a field agent, he executes commands rather than enacts formal declarations.

In terms of speech act form, Levi dominantly uses direct speech acts (114 out of 142 total). According to (Searle, 1975), a direct speech act is when the sentence form aligns with its function, for example, using an imperative form to give a command. This is exemplified in Levi's frequent use of short, efficient sentences like “Run!” or “Open it on the ground.” This prevalence of directness reflects his pragmatic, action-oriented persona as a soldier trained to communicate with clarity. However, indirect speech acts also occur (28 instances), particularly in more emotionally sensitive situations. As (Levinson, 1983) and (Cutting, 2002) explain, indirectness often signals politeness or emotional caution. When Levi says, “You're all alone out here?”, he uses a question format that masks concern, revealing emotional depth. These utterances align with his personal growth and softening over time, adding layers to his interactions.

The illocutionary level is the most dominant (80 instances), showing that most of Levi's speech has a clear communicative intention or force. According to (Austin, J.L., 1962), the illocutionary act reflects what the speaker does in saying something, such as warning, commanding, or committing. Levi's illocutionary acts include making strategic decisions, expressing emotion, or voicing intent, such as in “I had to get back to you.” The locutionary level (42 instances) reflects what is said—these include statements that are primarily descriptive or factual, such as giving coordinates or identifying military protocols. This is consistent with Levi's early communication style: detached and operational. The perlocutionary level (20 instances) refers to the effect Levi's words have on others, such as

influencing, reassuring, or affecting Drasa emotionally. For example, "I wasn't going to say goodbye" is intended to provide comfort and avoid emotional finality. These moments demonstrate the increasing interpersonal stakes and emotional connection in his speech.

Considering all aspects, speech act type, form, and level, it becomes clear that Levi Kane's language use is strategically aligned with his character role and narrative journey. The most frequently used speech act type is assertive, which reflects his military background and identity as a trained sniper and observer. As (Searle, 1976) stated, assertive speech acts represent a speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition, and Levi uses these to convey observations, strategic assessments, and facts. These utterances ground him as a reliable, composed, and pragmatic character who prefers precision and verifiability in communication.

In terms of speech act form, Levi dominantly uses direct speech acts (114 out of 142 total). According to (Searle, 1975), a direct speech act is when the sentence form aligns with its function, for example, using an imperative form to give a command. This is exemplified in Levi's frequent use of short, efficient sentences like "Run!" or "Open it on the ground." This prevalence of directness reflects his pragmatic, action-oriented persona as a soldier trained to communicate with clarity. However, indirect speech acts also occur (28 instances), particularly in more emotionally sensitive situations. As (Levinson, 1983) and (Cutting, 2002) explain, indirectness often signals politeness or emotional caution. When Levi says, "You're all alone out here?", he uses a question format that masks concern, revealing emotional depth. These utterances align with his personal growth and softening over time, adding layers to his interactions.

At the speech act level, illocutionary acts were the most prominent. According to (Austin, J.L, 1962) and further elaborated by (Searle, 1976), illocutionary acts represent the speaker's intention, the core of what speech performs. Levi's language performs multiple functions: commanding action, expressing emotional transformation, and showing commitment. For instance, his statement "We need to destroy the Gorge" is more than informative; it carries moral weight and personal resolve. This suggests that Levi's utterances are deeply intentional and impactful, aimed not just at sharing but doing.

Together, the dominance of the assertive type, direct form, and illocutionary level shows that Levi is a character who uses language as a tool for precision, control, and, eventually, emotional expression. He begins the film as someone who follows commands and relays facts, but over time, his speech becomes more personal and vulnerable. His transformation is linguistically visible: from declarative military language to expressions of love, regret, and resolve. This arc confirms the power of pragmatic analysis in revealing how language both reflects and shapes human identity in extreme contexts.

This study highlights how speech act analysis can serve as a powerful tool to trace character development, especially in cinematic narratives where emotion, conflict, and interpersonal dynamics intersect. The findings reaffirm the relevance of Searle's theory in contemporary storytelling and reveal the nuanced function of pragmatic strategies in expressing psychological transformation. These insights can inform future research in film linguistics, character discourse, and even scriptwriting pedagogy. Moreover, educators and linguists can better understand how language performs identity and emotion in narrative contexts by analyzing how a single character shifts from assertive to expressive and directive to commissive speech acts. The shift from mostly direct, locutionary statements to more nuanced illocutionary and perlocutionary acts mirrors his growing emotional awareness and relational depth.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the pragmatic function of 170 utterances spoken by Levi Kane in *The Gorge* (2025), classified by type, form, and pragmatic level based on Speech Act Theory. The analysis highlights three core findings central to understanding Levi Kane's communication style and character arc: first, his dialogue is overwhelmingly characterized by assertive speech acts (35.88%), underscoring his primary role as a source of information and

factual statements rather than institutional authority (declaratives were 0.00%); second, his discourse is dominated by direct speech acts (67.06%), reflecting a concise, action-oriented communication style consistent with his training as a sniper; and third, the utterances predominantly carry a clear illocutionary force (47.06%), demonstrating that his language is highly intentional and performative. Collectively, this dominance of assertive, direct, and illocutionary speech reveals a character whose language is pragmatic and operational, though this pattern gradually shifts toward a more expressive style, signaling his emotional transformation throughout the film. The value of this analysis lies in how it demonstrates the practical application of speech act theory in cinematic discourse while providing insight into how language reflects psychological depth, interpersonal dynamics, and emotional shifts in a character's development—thereby contributing to both pragmatic studies and the interdisciplinary field of film linguistics. However, this study is limited to one character and one film, and it does not consider the speech acts of other characters or non-verbal cues that might further influence interpretation. Future research could involve comparative analyses among multiple characters, across different film genres, or through multimodal data—including tone, gestures, and facial expressions—to deepen the understanding of speech acts in filmic communication.

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