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Analyzing Illocutionary Acts in Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari Team Conversation on Radio in Formula One Race in Miami GP 2025

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the illocutionary acts found in the conversation between Lewis Hamilton and the Ferrari team during the Formula One Miami Grand Prix 2025. The conversation contains several sarcastic and frustration-driven exchanges, making it relevant to analyze the types and functions of illocutionary acts produced by a top athlete and a leading race-car team in a high-pressure competitive context. The study adopts a qualitative research design using content analysis as the primary methodology. The data were collected from radio communication recorded during the live race broadcast and were analyzed through several systematic steps. Searle's (1976) classification of illocutionary acts serves as the main theoretical framework for identifying and categorizing the utterances. The findings indicate that four types of illocutionary acts emerge throughout the conversation: assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives. Specifically, the data reveal the presence of four assertive utterances, three directive utterances, two commissive utterances, and two expressive utterances. Assertive acts function to state or complain, while directive acts are used to ask or instruct. Commissive acts reflect commitments or vows, and expressive acts function to criticize or express emotional reactions. The most dominant category is assertive, suggesting that Lewis Hamilton frequently conveyed strong emotional responses such as irritation, disappointment, and restrained anger, often expressed with a sarcastic tone. These findings illustrate how emotional intensity and competitive pressure shape communication patterns between drivers and team engineers in professional motor racing.

Kata kunci: Illocutionary Acts, Lewis Hamilton, Ferrari, Formula One, Speech Act, Utterances

1. Introduction

As with getting out of bed in the morning, many of us find speaking to be an automatic part of our daily lives (Fulcher, 2003). This is something we do all the time without even realizing it since it is unconscious. As a result, we do not usually give much thought to the idea that what we say might affect other people, generate disagreements, or even start fights. People seldom give thought to how their spoken words could influence conversations, start arguments, or cause misunderstandings because of how natural it is (Burns & Joyce, 1997). An individual's ability to use spoken language to convey thoughts, feelings, or information is one of the four linguistic abilities (Cahyono and Indah, 2012). The radio is one of several means of communication. According to Sterling (2007), radio is a kind of mass communication that transmits sound using radio waves. Radio broadcasting is sending audio and video material from a central location to a large audience that has radio receivers, allowing them to listen to music, news, and other programming. Radio, which first gained traction in the early 20th century, was a cultural powerhouse on par with newspapers, movies, and sports, and it shook up the way people got their news and entertaining in real time (Hilmes, 2013). It dominated public discourse and gave people immediate access to world news as the first electronic mass medium (Douglas, 2004).

Sport refers to a certain kind of game or physical activity. The physical abilities and talents of sport workers are often utilized, maintained, or improved, and the workplace is often highly organized and competitive (Parry, 2019). Athletes and, on occasion, spectators find them entertaining as well. Many different kinds of sports are played, with some involving as few as one person and others hundreds (Vasil, 2018). Formula One, the pinnacle of open-wheel single-seater formula racing vehicles sanctioned by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), is one of the sports that makes use of radio. With its blend of top-tier engineering, physical prowess, and strategic communication, Formula One has been considered motorsport's summit since its start in 1950 (Jenkins,

2010). Since its first race in 1950, the FIA Formula One World Championship has been ongoing, and by many accounts, is the most prestigious racing event in the world.

The racing subsidiary of the high-end Italian carmaker Ferrari, Scuderia Ferrari, currently competing under the banner of Scuderia Ferrari HP is one of the Formula One teams. With participation in every Formula One World Championship since 1950, it is both the longest-running and most successful Formula One team. As far as Formula One constructors, Ferrari has the record with sixteen. Most recently, they won the Constructors' Championship in 2008. Lewis Hamilton, one of the most successful Formula One (F1) Grand Prix drivers of all time, was born in Stevenage, England, on January 7, 1985, and signed a contract with Ferrari in 2025 to race for the team until at least the end of 2026. According to Smith (2023), he has the record for most career race victories in Formula One and is tied with Michael Schumacher for the most driver titles with seven. The 2008 Formula One World Drivers' Trophy was his to claim, making him the first Black driver to do so.

In addition, Bach and Harnish (1979) proposed a more detailed taxonomy of illocutionary acts. They identified six broad categories influenced by the speaker's psychological state or attitude. Two are conventional *verdicatives* and *effectives* while four are *communicative speech acts*, namely *directives*, *commissives*, *constatives*, and *acknowledgements*. The latter four categories correspond partly with Austin's classification but more closely resemble Searle's framework of *directives*, *commissives*, *representatives*, and *expressives*. Meanwhile, Vanderveken (1990) divided illocutionary force into six components: *illocutionary point*, *mode of achievement*, *propositional content condition*, *preparatory condition*, *sincerity condition*, and *degree of strength*. These components serve as criteria to evaluate whether an illocutionary act is successful or accepted, thus providing a logical and philosophical foundation for analyzing illocutionary force.

This study applies the theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1976, 1979) because they provide the most fundamental and widely recognized foundations in the study of illocutionary acts. Austin is considered the pioneer who first established that utterances are not merely statements but actions, introducing the distinction between *locutionary*, *illocutionary*, and *perlocutionary* acts as the conceptual basis for understanding speech. Searle then advanced Austin's ideas by creating a systematic classification of illocutionary acts into five categories *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives*, and *declarations* which has become the standard reference in pragmatic research due to its clarity and practicality. While other scholars such as Bach and Harnish (1979) and Vanderveken (1990) provide more detailed or formal frameworks, their models are often too complex and less commonly applied in practical analyses of real-life communication. By relying on Austin for the philosophical foundation and Searle for the practical typology, this research benefits from a balanced and comprehensive approach that is both theoretically strong and effective for analyzing data such as Formula One radio conversations.

According to speech act theory, a subfield of pragmatics, people reveal their actions through their words. When words are said and an action is performed simultaneously, it is called a speech act (Hidayat, 2016). It is crucial for people to know which speech to use while communicating verbally. There are three distinct kinds of speech actions, as described by Austin (1962): *elocution*, *illocution*, and *perlocution*. The data for this analysis is gathered through watching the race, reading the transcript, and listening to the conversation. The conversations that contain illocutionary acts are selected based on this research, which is based on the speaking model theory by Hymes (1974) and the speech act theory by Searle (1979). *Assertives* (4), *directives* (3), *declaratives* (0), *commissives* (2), and *expressives* (2) were the five categories into which the data were filed. By using the frameworks of pragmatics and speech act theory to analyze Lewis Hamilton's radio interviews, we may better understand the nuanced dynamics of communication in elite athletic competition.

The purposes of assertiveness found from the utterances is to state and complain, directives is to ask and order, commissive is to vow, and expressive is to criticize. When he is angry or worried about losing a strategic advantage, his comments might signify more than what they really say. As Davis and Harris (2020) point out, the team radio in Formula One serves as more than simply a means of transmitting technical information, it is also a platform for emotional expression, bargaining, and power dynamics. By identifying the intended meaning (the illocutionary act), speech act theory allows us to analyze these types of speeches. Moreover, while speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976) has been widely applied in communication studies, it has not yet been used to analyze Lewis Hamilton's recent move to Ferrari in 2025, a new context with unique team dynamics. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by examining the types and purposes of illocutionary acts in Hamilton's radio conversations with the Ferrari team during the 2025 Miami Grand Prix. This approach sheds light on the

complex power relations between the driver and the team, allowing us to understand how Hamilton navigates his position and subtly challenges choices.

We can also connect language and racing strategy through pragmatic analysis; in Hamilton's instance, communication is a weapon for influencing choices on par with on-track performance. Brown and Leech (2018) review the literature on the topic of how drivers' expressive and commissive radio communication reveals their psychological condition while they are under strain. In a similar vein, Perez (2021) investigates the use of emoticons on team radios and finds that acts of expression frequently occur in conjunction with occurrences that influence the course of the race, such as accidents, mistakes during pit stops, or contentious choices. As Goodwin (2018) points out, Formula One speech is highly purposeful and performed, going beyond just being utilitarian. Based on the explanation and elaboration above, this research try to find out:

1. The types of illocutionary act
2. The purposes of illocutionary acts used by Lewis Hamilton and the Ferrari team in the race radio

Comprehending these acts improves understanding of the communication techniques. This approach is essential for language and literature students to understand illocutionary acts and their consequences, and it helps the general public have a better knowledge of ordinary communication.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method grounded on speech act theory to examine data retrieved from Lewis Hamilton and his team's radio conversations. The pragmatic subfield known as "Speech Act Theory" (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976) investigates the dual roles of speech in both information transmission and action performance. After J.L. Austin first introduced the idea in his 1962 landmark book *How to Do Things with Words*, John Searle expanded on it in 1976 by classifying speech actions as either declaratives, directions, expressives, or commissives. This is especially true in fast-paced, high-stakes contexts like Formula One, when a word's function goes beyond its literal meaning.

A key component of speech act theory, from a purely first-person perspective, is the realization that humans engage in a myriad of remarkably diverse behaviors when conversing with one another (Kemmerling, 2002). There are three simultaneous activities that can occur when making a comment, according to Austin (2009). One of these is the illocutionary act. The act of speaking itself is all that is outlined here. Illocutionary action, on the other hand, occurs when one acts upon one's words. A perlocutionary act is tied to the conclusion of a statement. The effect on the audience is communicated. Because of the dual role of technical and performance discourse in Formula One radio communication, this paradigm is well suited to the sport. There are three main types of illocutionary behaviors that messages may take on: expressing emotion, influencing strategy, and asserting control (Goodwin, 2018; Davis & Harris, 2020).

Steps in applying Searle's (1976) theory to data analysis include: (1) watching the race; (2) taking notes on the conversation with a focus on Lewis Hamilton and the Ferrari team; and (4) making a list of the illocutionary acts performed by Lewis Hamilton and the Ferrari team. The data is compiled from official Formula One media releases (F1.com and F1TV) and includes audio recordings and publicly available team radio transcripts from the 2025 Miami GP, which include Lewis Hamilton's radio conversation with the Ferrari team. The media crew representing Formula One transcribes all audio data. Time stamps and speaker IDs (such as "race engineer" or "driver") are part of the package.

3. Result and Discussion

Eleven words were identified in the radio exchange between Lewis Hamilton and the Ferrari team during the Miami Grand Prix 2025. The illocutionary acts will be examined and classified by types of illocutionary act, number of utterances, purposes, and frequency.

Table 1: The Types and the Purposes of the Illocutionary Act of Lewis Hamilton

No	Type of Illocutionary Act	Number of Utterances	Purposes	Frequency
1	Assertives	2	Stating Complaining	1 1
2	Directives	3	Asking Ordering	2 1
3	Commissives	0	Vowing	0
4	Expressives	2	Criticizing	2
TOTAL		7		7

Despite being a seven-time world champion, Lewis Hamilton was forced to trade places with colleague Charles Leclerc in the 2025 Miami Grand Prix due to team strategy. Ferrari preferred Leclerc to win the race. Based on this table, the most frequent types of illocutionary acts used by Hamilton are directives in asking and expressives in criticizing which both showed up twice.

Table 2: The Types and the Purposes of the Illocutionary Act of Ferrari Team

No	Type of Illocutionary Act	Number of Utterances	Purposes	Frequency
1	Assertives	2	Stating Complaining	2 0
2	Directives	0	Asking Ordering	0 0
3	Commissives	2	Vowing	2
4	Expressives	0	Criticizing	0
TOTAL		4		4

Based on this table, the most frequent types of illocutionary acts used by the Ferrari team are assertives in stating and commissives in vowing that again, both showed up twice.

Types of Illocutionary act used and the purposes

a. Assertive

Stating

Utterance 1:

Hamilton: "I'm just burning up tires behind him."

This is an aggressive statement since it is both a criticism and a complaint, an act of expression that tells the team that his race is not doing well in the present ranking. His criticism of the strategy's ineffectiveness is an indirect challenge to it. A critical evaluation serves as the illocutionary act here, compelling the group to rethink their strategy without outright requesting a change in leadership. The word "just" ("I'm just burning up tires...") can convey a resentful attitude or a sense of helpless frustration; it implies that the current situation devalues his efforts and makes the race needlessly challenging. It is an expression of a negative emotional state connected to a technical issue.

Utterance 2:

Team: "We want to keep the DRS to Charles, go ahead like this."

The speaker is making an emphatic statement. The acronym "DRS" refers to Formula One's Drag Reduction System. According to ESPN, it is a device that lets drivers deploy a flap on their car's back wing, which decreases aerodynamic drag and increases peak speed. According to Red Bull, this makes passing easier and

encourages closer racing. "Go forward like this" is a command from the squad to Hamilton, meaning to maintain position, not attack, and not retreat. It is instructing him to drive in a way that benefits the team rather than himself. This suggests that Leclerc's position is more important to them than Hamilton's.

Utterance 3:

Team: "Sainz is 1.4 behind."

The squad is making an assertive statement by letting Hamilton know that Carlos Sainz, another Formula One driver and a former Ferrari driver that he replaced the driver spot, is 1.4 seconds behind him. "Sainz is approaching close, be careful," is what the team meant when they said that, giving instruction to warn Hamilton to stay focus and kept Sainz behind his position and prevent Sainz to takeover him.

Complaining

Utterance 4:

Hamilton: "In China, I go out of the way when you're on a different road."

His statement is believed to be factual, and it falls under the category of forceful speech, he participated with team strategy in China. He has already demonstrated devotion or obedience by doing this. "Now it is your chance to treat me decently," he says subtly, hinting that the team should now give him the benefit of the doubt or support him rather than someone else.

b. Directive

Asking

Utterance 5:

Hamilton: "You want me to just sit here the whole race?"

This statement is categorized as an order. He is not genuinely seeking knowledge; this is just hyperbole. In reality, he is only venting his frustrations and subtly questioning the team's approach. So, he is not really trying to say "Let me pass" or "Change the strategy." What he is really trying to do is convince the team to let him race or make a different option.

Utterance 6:

Hamilton: "You want me to let him past as well?"

In this commanding utterance stated after allowing Leclerc to walk through, Hamilton mocks the team's actions with a rhetorical question that is filled with sarcasm, impatience, and maybe fury when the Ferrari team states, "Sainz is 1.4 behind." His answer means, "Do not push it; letting Leclerc past was terrible enough." It is clear from his timing, tone, and the context that he is not sincerely giving assistance. This could lead to another meaning since Sainz is former Ferrari driver, what Hamilton meant is he already let Leclerc pass do the team wants to let their former driver pass aswell.

Ordering

Utterance 7:

Hamilton: "This setup is terrible, the LEGO cars felt better than this, man! Give me one of those."

Instructional in nature, the following statement describes a promotional event in which drivers, including Hamilton, drove or displayed full-size LEGO F1 vehicles before the race. Hamilton is irritated with the car's setup throughout races, practice, and qualifying. Sarcasically, he likens the actual Formula One car to a genuine

LEGO toy, which he finds insulting. In a roundabout way, he is trying to get the crew to revamp the car's configuration. He does not directly say "Fix it," but his sardonic criticism has the same purpose. He employs sarcasm to underline his emotional unhappiness by adding, "This automobile is so horrible I would rather race in a toy." So, the request "Give me one of those" is not meant literally.

c. Commissive

Vowing

Utterance 8:

Team: "I'll come back to you."

This statement is considered to be commissive. This statement shows that the Ferrari team is more concerned with strategy for Hamilton's teammate, Charles Leclerc, and that he has not been given any explicit instructions or plans. "We do not want to deal with this now," "You are not the priority right now," or "We are unclear what to do" are all examples of implicature that it might convey.

Utterance 9:

Team: "Understood. We swap the car."

Team members are committing to an action in this commissive statement; specifically, they are agreeing to switch drivers. If they say, "We switch the automobile," it means they are going to shift roles or follow a team order.

Expressive

Criticizing

Utterance 10:

Hamilton: "Man, you guys..."

Hamilton is expressing his dissatisfaction, disappointment, or resignation with the team with this passionate phrase. His emotional state whether it be anger, exhaustion, or simply a lack of speech is evident in the incomplete sentence, which implies criticism. In a roundabout way, Hamilton is critiquing the team's decision-making.

Utterance 11:

Hamilton: "Have a tea break while you're at it. Come on."

There is obvious annoyance, sarcasm, and exasperation in this expressive speech. "Hurry up already." He is making fun of the team's tardiness. A more accurate translation would be "You are taking too long, it is intolerable." The precise translation would be "They are definitely not having tea," which is obviously ridiculous.

4. Conclusion

Speech act theory highlights the importance of speaking as a means of communication, with illocutionary acts being expressive speech that convey the speaker's intended meaning. Lewis Hamilton's exchange with the Ferrari crew exemplifies four types of illocutionary behaviors: directive, expressive, assertive, and commissive. These behaviors are represented by eleven concluding acts, three asserting acts, one complaining act, two requesting acts, one ordering act, one vowing act, and two criticizing acts. The assertive type is the most common, indicating Hamilton's use of sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and implicit criticism to demand justice and position himself as a contender. The team's responses, often aggressive or accusatory, demonstrate how Charles Leclerc

prioritizes strategies. By applying speech act theory to Hamilton's 2025 transfer to Ferrari an unstudied pragmatic context, this study also closes a research gap by illuminating how his radio communication negotiates power, emotion, and strategy within a new team dynamic. The theory reveals that inferred and intended meanings of a phrase often carry more weight, revealing the inner illocutionary energy of every discourse. Hamilton demonstrates how athletes use language to manage emotions while maintaining control through sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and implicit criticism. Further research is needed to expand the scope of these findings.

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