

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS  
OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN RYAN FLECK'S *HALF NELSON***

**A THESIS**

**Presented as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Attainment of  
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## A. Introduction

Today, drugs have become a serious problem in the entire world. Although people know that they are dangerous for their health, in fact, the number of drug users in the world always increases. According to World Drug Report 2010 launched by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), there are approximately 208 million people internationally consume illegal drugs and 2,4 million people aged 12 or older are from the United States (UNODC, 2010). In Indonesia, based on the report of National Agency of Narcotics or *BNN (Badan Narkotika Nasional)*, the drug users reach about 3,6 million by the end of 2010 (Bhawono, 2010).

Knowing the fact why many people finally become drug addicts, others should not underestimate them, at least, and further, should help them quit from the drugs. One way to understand them is through their language. As a human, a drug addict communicates with each other to express what he thinks, wants, or feels. However, a drug addiction will influence not only his behavior, but also his utterances. Drugs contain chemicals that causes changes in one's brain that interfere with his/her ability to think clearly, exercise good judgment, control his/her behavior that cause bizarre, erratic, sometimes violent behavior, disorientation, apathy, confused exhaustion, irritability, mood disturbances, etc. In addition, the context also influences the way he speaks.

Hence, analyzing language through pragmatics will be comprehensive in this case. This discipline studies the meaning of words in context, analyzing the parts of meaning that can be explained by knowledge of the physical and social world, and the socio-psychological factors influencing communication, as well as the knowledge of the time and place in which the words are uttered or written. People will use a different language in a different situation. There are some factors influencing how people use language. They cover with whom, where, when, and under what circumstances they are talking. Therefore, the context cannot be separated in understanding the meaning of an utterance.

Further, an action can be performed via utterances. It is called speech act. People can perform an act by using an utterance. For example, a teacher in a

school says “*Submit your works now, please*”. This utterance has driven her/his students to come to her/him and do what s/he wants.

This situation can be seen in a movie. A movie or film is a story recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or at cinema (Hornby, 1995: 434). Even though it is the result of human creation, it is the reflection of the perception of the society. One of the movies portraying the current society is Ryan Fleck’s *Half Nelson*. The main character of this movie, Dan Dunne, is a drug addict who has two different lives, as a teacher and a common person. He has to be able to control his/her language to speak to people in different situation, outside and inside the school. In other words, the condition and the context of situation influence the use of language.

Related to the language and context, there are still many language phenomena concerning speech acts, particularly speech acts of someone who has two different lives. This triggered the researcher to conduct a research on speech acts of the main character in Ryan Fleck’s *Half Nelson*.

This reasearch aims at to identify and describe the types of speech acts in terms of the locutionary acts, the illocutionary acts, and the perlocutionary acts delivered by the main character in Ryan Fleck’s *Half Nelson* outside and inside the school, and to describe the way the main character copes with the life outside and inside the school.

## **B. Literature Review and Research Method**

The literatures in this research are pragmatics, speech acts, context, drug addiction, movie, and Ryan Fleck’s *Half Nelson*. Pragmatics is the study of language use, that is, the study of the relation between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding (Levinson, 1983: 5). Austin defines speech acts as acts performed in saying something (Austin, 1962). Yule (1996: 21) mentions that context means the physical and psychological environment in which a word is used. Addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use (NIDA/National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2010: 5). Movie is a representation of a real life. According to

Hornby (1995: 434), a film is a story recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or at the cinema. *Half Nelson* is a 2006 American drama film directed by Fleck and written by Anna Boden that tells about the life of a history teacher who has drug addiction, named Dan Dunne.

Further, this research employed descriptive qualitative method. The object of this research was the main character's utterances in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* movie. The data were in the form of scenes taken from the movie. The primary source of the data was Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* movie. The data source was the script of Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* retrieved from internet website. Since the type of this research is qualitative, the researcher him/herself as the key instrument. Meanwhile, the secondary instrument was the data sheet.

Related to the technique of data collection, the technique of *simak dan catat* (listen and write) was used. The procedure of collecting the data takes the following steps: watching the movie, finding the transcript from <http://www.mysubtitles.com/subtitles/download/Half-Nelson/all/638698#>, watching the movie again to check the accuracy of the transcript as well as the context of the utterances, selecting the data are in accordance with the objectives of this study, refitting the collected data, recording the data into the data sheets.

In analyzing the data, some steps were taken. They are identifying the speech acts employed by the main character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson*, classifying the speech acts according to theories proposed by Austin and Searle and also classifying them according to the settings (outside and inside the school), applying the trustworthiness of the data by asking friends and lecturers to check the data to support the analysis of the data, describing and interpreting the data in order to answer the formulation of the problem, drawing conclusion.

### C. Findings

#### 1. The Types of the Speech Acts of the Main Character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* outside the School

No	Speech Act	Frequency
1.	Locutionary Act	167
	Declarative	114
	Interrogative	39
	Imperative	14
2.	Illocutionary Act	167
	Assertive	60
	Directive	57
	Expressive	42
	Commissive	8
3.	Perlocutionary Act	167
	Get <i>h</i> to know	60
	Get <i>h</i> to do something	57
	To express feeling	42
	Get <i>h</i> to expect something	8

#### 2. The Types of the Speech Acts of the Main Character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* inside the School

No	Speech Act	Frequency
1.	Locutionary Act	151
	Declarative	90
	Interrogative	42
	Imperative	19
2.	Illocutionary Act	151
	Directive	60
	Assertive	47
	Expressive	39
	Commissive	4
	Declaration	1
3.	Perlocutionary Act	151

No	Speech Act	Frequency
	Get <i>h</i> to do something	60
	Get <i>h</i> to know	48
	To express feeling	31
	To praise	8
	Get <i>h</i> to expect something	4

#### D. Conclusion

First, related to the types of speech act, in terms of locutionary acts, there are three kinds of form, i.e. *declarative*, *interrogative*, and *imperative*. *Declarative* is the most dominant form used outside and inside the school. It is used in almost all functions of illocutionary act types. Regarding with the illocutionary acts, the main character, Dan, employs four types of act outside the school, i.e. *assertive*, *directive*, *expressive*, and *commissive*. *Assertive* holds the highest frequency. In the daily life, he feels that the condition around him is not in line with his opinion. Therefore, he uses his utterances to assert what he believes to be the case. *Declaration* is not performed by him outside the school since he is as a common person, who has no institutional position. On the other hand, inside the school, *directive*, *assertive*, *expressive*, *commissive*, and *declaration* are found. *Directive* is in the highest frequency because he is a teacher and a basketball coach who performs questioning, requesting, commanding, encouraging, suggesting, etc. Concerning the perlocutionary acts, there are four types of act found outside the school, i.e. *get h to know*, *get h to do something*, *to express feeling*, and *get h to expect something*. The most-dominant act is *get h to know*. He often expresses what he believes to others, so that they recognize it. Further, there are five kinds of perlocutionary act found inside the school, i.e. *to get h to do something*, *get h to know*, *express feeling*, *praise*, and *get h to expect something*. As a teacher, he employs the acts aimed *to get h to do something* most, such as questioning, requesting, commanding, etc. Second, he cannot completely split between both lives, outside and inside the school because of the effects of cocaine on his brain. However, he can be honest to tell what he thinks and feels about his life to people he likes or considers them as his ‘friends’ everywhere.

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