

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Language is the main element in human life that not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a means of expression, social interaction, and cultural reflection. Through language, humans can convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others. Not only grammatical structure and vocabulary are important in communication, but also the context of language use that affects the meaning of language.¹

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that studies how language is used in everyday situations. In pragmatics, the meaning of an utterance can be inferred from its words as well as from the identity of the speaker, listener, context, and purpose. In other words, pragmatics is more concerned with the meaning implied or hidden in the context than the meaning explicitly stated in writing or speech.²

One of the main theories in pragmatics is the speech act theory introduced by J.L. Austin in his 1962 book “How to Do Things with Words”. Austin argues that speaking is not only stating something, but also performing

¹ Nasution, F., & Tambunan, E. E. (2022). Language and Communication. *International Journal Of Community Service*. <https://doi.org/10.55299/ijcs.v1i1.86>

² Kortmann, B. (2020). *Pragmatics: The study of meaning in context*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-05678-8_7

an action, which he categorizes into three types: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts³.

John Searle then developed the theory of speech acts in his book "*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*" in 1969, by classifying illocutionary acts into five main types: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. This theory suggests that expressions such as begging, promising, or expressing feelings are not only forms of communication, but also meaningful social actions.⁴

This framework of speech acts is not limited to spoken conversations alone, but can also be applied to other forms of language use including the lyrics of songs. Songs combine words with music as a means of communication, and often communicate intense emotions, especially those related to love. Since contain speech acts as well as implied meanings, vocalists can pragmatically examine the feelings and intentions they portray through their lyrics. This type of analysis shows how music lyrics can foster social and emotional bonds with listeners.

Ed Sheeran's popularity is not solely due to his interesting lyrics, but also because his lyrics are full of pragmatics. Phrases like "I will be loving you till we're 70" imply a long-term commitment, not just a simple declaration of love. Through a pragmatic approach, this implied meaning can be analyzed as a form of action in speech. According to Tene and Lotulung's research in 2021,

³ Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Harvard university press.

⁴ Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge university press.

Sheeran's writings convey meanings that are not only literal but also emotional and functional in the context of communication.⁵

Supporting this view, Handayani and Ely's (2020) study shows that pragmatic analysis is also relevant in television talk shows. Their research on irony and jokes in *Rumpi* reveals how even casual entertainment speech often carries implied meaning with social impact. This indicates that indirect expressions in media—including song lyrics—can be rich sites of pragmatic meaning.⁶

Masniati (2024) conducted a qualitative study at IAIN Ambon, revealing that students significantly improved their English skills through active engagement with social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. The study highlights how informal digital media can serve as effective tools for both language input and output, improving learners' vocabulary, fluency, and motivation.⁷

Building on this, Ed Sheeran's songs have been widely praised for their literary and semantic qualities, pragmatic analysis of his lyrics is lacking. This research is important because Sheeran's writings highlight not only literal meanings but also emotional and communicative properties such as

⁵ Tene, R. L., & Lotulung, D. R. (2021). *Kata Kerja Bantu dalam Album Divide dan No.6 Collaborations oleh Ed Sheeran*. **Jurnal Elektronik Fakultas Sastra**, Universitas Sam Ratulangi

⁶ Handayani, N., & Ely, D. Q. M. (2020). Tindak Tutur Ironi Dan Kelakar Dalam Acara Rumpi Di Transtv: Tinjauan Pragmatik [Action of Ironi and Jokes in Rumpi Program in Transtv: A Pragmatic Review]. *TOTOBUANG*, 8(2), 311-325

⁷ Masniati, A. (2024). *Peran media sosial dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris kalangan mahasiswa: Studi kualitatif pada IAIN Ambon*. *EMPIRIS: Jurnal Sains, Teknologi dan Kesehatan*, 1(3), 129–136.

expressions of promise, hope, and affection. This research provides information about speech acts in song lyrics, providing a pragmatic perspective in music discourse analysis. In addition, the results of this study can be used in authentic text-based language learning because Sheeran's songs provide a context for language use in interpersonal interactions.⁸

In addition to their thematic richness and pragmatic relevance, the selection of Ed Sheeran's songs as a research object is also supported by empirical considerations related to their global reception and audience reach.

The selection of *perfect*, *Thinking Out Loud*, and *Photograph* as the object of this research is further justified by the global popularity of these songs, as reflected in their exceptionally high numbers of listener and streams on digital music platforms. Statistical data from Spotify show that *perfect* has achieved more than 3,7 billion streams, *photograph* has exceeded 3,2 billion streams, and *Thinking Out Loud* has nearly reached 3 billion streams, positioning them among the most frequently streamed songs by international audience⁹. These song have also consistently appeared on lists of the most popular and most streamed tracks across various countries, indicating their wide acceptance and ability to transcend cultural and geoghrapical boundaries. Such a level of popularity demonstrates that hte lyrics are not only widely rocognized but also reach a broad and diverse global audience, making them representative and relevant data sources for pragmatic analysis in examining

⁸ Tene, R. L., & Lotulung, D. R. (2021). *Kata Kerja Bantu dalam Album Divide dan No.6 Collaborations oleh Ed Sheeran*. **Jurnal Elektronik Fakultas Sastra**, Universitas Sam Ratulangi.

⁹ Spotify, "Ed Sheeran – Artist Profile and Streaming Statistic," (accessed 2026)

the forms and functions of love expression within contemporary popular discourse.

In addition to expressing love in emotional and relational terms, the song lyrics that serve as the object of this study also contain moral values that are important to consider in the context of education and character building. Love-themed songs do not merely portray romantic relationships, but also convey positive messages such as loyalty, commitment, respect for one's partner, emotional responsibility, and the ability to manage feelings in a healthy manner. These values can function as a source of learning for listeners, especially adolescents who often use music as a medium for self-identification. Therefore, examining expressions of love in song lyrics is not only significant for understanding the pragmatic meanings underlying the utterances, but also for exploring how the embedded moral values can contribute positively to the development of listeners' attitudes and emotional awareness.

In line with this, love expression in song lyrics often appears through emotional utterances such as declarations, promises, or emotional statements that go beyond poetic language into pragmatic action. Samsudin, Nafisatunnuha & Qur'aini (2023) demonstrate through their analysis of "White Space" by Jeong Dong-Won that *expressive speech acts* convey complex feelings e.g., sadness, regret, hope serving as direct emotional communication.

Based on this, a research with the title "A Pragmatics Analysis of Love Expression in Selected Song by Ed Sheeran" can be conducted.

B. Research Scope

This study focuses on the analysis of love expressions in three selected songs by Ed Sheeran, namely *Perfect*, *Thinking Out Loud*, and *Photograph*. The study is limited to identifying the types of illocutionary speech acts employed in expressing love and examining their emotional and relational meanings. The analysis is conducted using Searle's theory of speech acts. This study does not examine locutionary acts, perlocutionary acts, figurative language, stylistic features, listeners' responses, or the effectiveness of songs in language learning.

C. Research Question

Based on the above background, the author's analysis of this research problem is as follows:

1. What types of illocutionary speech acts expressing love are employed in selected songs by Ed Sheeran?
2. How do those illocutionary speech acts convey emotional meaning and relational meanings within the lyrical context of the songs?

D. Research Purposes

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the authors formulate the following research objectives:

1. To identify the illocutionary speech acts expressing love employed in selected songs by Ed Sheeran
2. To analyze the emotional meaning and relational meaning in the context of song reflected in illocutionary speech acts.

E. Research Benefits

1. Theoretical

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, particularly in the application of Searle's speech act theory. The analysis of love expressions in Ed Sheeran's song lyrics can enrich the understanding of how expressive and commissive speech acts are used in non-dialogic media such as song lyrics. Thus, this study not only broadens the scope of pragmatic research, which generally focuses on everyday conversations or dialogic texts, but also emphasizes the relevance of speech act theory in understanding the function of language in musical works. In addition, the results of this research are expected to serve as a reference for future researchers interested in conducting pragmatic studies on other creative media, such as poetry, films, or modern literary works.

2. Practical

a. Students and English Learners

This research can broaden students' perspectives on how language is functionally used in creative media, particularly songs. By understanding expressive and commissive speech acts in Ed Sheeran's lyrics, students can see that language learning does not only focus on grammatical structures but also on communicative functions and emotional expressions. This may enhance their appreciation of language use in more authentic and relatable contexts.

b. Teachers and Language Instructors

The findings of this study can serve as innovative teaching material in pragmatics and language learning. Using songs as teaching media allows teachers to create a more enjoyable, motivating, and contextual learning atmosphere. Thus, students are able to grasp the functions of language not only theoretically but also through concrete examples taken from popular song lyrics.

c. General Public and Music Enthusiasts

This study can offer a new perspective for music listeners in understanding the meaning behind song lyrics. Through pragmatic analysis, people may realize that lyrics are not merely beautiful words, but also carry communicative intentions such as expressing love, making promises, or showing commitment.

d. Future Researchers

This research may serve as an academic reference and foundation for further studies, whether in pragmatic analysis of other creative media (such as poetry, novels, or films), or in the broader development of speech act theory itself. In this way, the study is expected to encourage further scholarly works that enrich the field of pragmatics.

F. Research term

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of utterances based on their context of use. In this research, pragmatics is used

as an approach to analyze how the meaning of love is conveyed in song lyrics, not only based on the meaning of words, but also the situation, purpose, and relationship between the speaker and the listener.

2. Speech Acts

Speech act is a theory in pragmatics that explains that every utterance is an action. According to Searle (1969), speech acts are divided into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative¹⁰.

3. Love Expressions

Love expressions in the context of this research refer to any form of verbal expression in song lyrics that convey feelings of affection, care, longing, commitment, or other forms of love. These expressions can be conveyed directly or implied through speech acts.

4. Song Lyric

Song lyrics are verbal texts contained in songs. In this study, song lyrics are considered as a form of discourse that contains pragmatic meaning, so it can be analyzed as a form of communication between speakers (singers) and listeners (audiences).

¹⁰ John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 23-24

5. Ed Sheeran

Ed Sheeran is a British singer and songwriter who is widely known for his love-themed works. This research uses some of his songs as data sources to be analyzed pragmatically.