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MIND YOUR LANGUAGE—EVERY WORD HAS A CONSEQUENCE SPEECH ACT THEORY IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR AND KING RICHARD III, WITH A FOCUS ON CURSES AND INSULTS

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Introduction: Everything we say bears with it certain meanings and brings forth reactions and emotions, which is exactly the fundamental purpose of a language. While communicating, our utterances often take the shape of an apology, a promise, an order, a request, an appeal, a warning, an invitation, a refusal, or a compliment, and all the while we remain completely unaware that these are the true speech acts that keep communication strong. The first to write about them was John L. Austin, an Oxford philosopher, in his "How to Do Things with Words" (1962), which paved the way for a new branch in pragmatics—the speech act theory. He makes a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, while the American philosopher John Searle develops a classification comprising five illocutionary types: assertives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives.

Aim: This paper aims to, based on both approaches, analyze speech acts in Shakespeare's plays in hopes of better understanding the meanings and actions of their characters.

Materials and Methods: The corpus includes "King Richard III" and "King Lear" by William Shakespeare. The analysis was conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively, with a total of 40 examples collected and categorized, and the results are also presented graphically for clearer insight.

Results: The analysis showed that directives and expressives dominate most of the dialogues, while commissives appear more frequently in key emotional scenes. Assertives play an important role in shaping the narrative flow, whereas declarations occur less often, mainly in pivotal moments.

Conclusion: The obtained results confirm that every word has a consequence and that the way it is spoken alters its impact. The perception of literary characters depends not only on the plot but also on our interpretation of the dialogue, which relies significantly on speech act theory.

Keywords: speech act theory; literary dialogue; J. L. Austin; John Searle; pragmatics; illocutionary act

INTRODUCTION

"Words do not live in dictionaries, they live in the mind."
(Woolf, 1937, p. 182)

Language is the thread that binds us, connects us, and acts as our safety belt, our compass, and a powerful force for our feelings, attitudes, and art. Bearing in mind how crucial language is for the entire human race, and how fundamental it is for every second of our lives—from buying gum at the market, scribbling the text of your favorite song in the corner of the page, all the way to writing poetry, reading, and forming a critical opinion—we understand that language is a much more complex and richer tool than we are ready to admit. And we, who sail without stopping on that river of words, thoughts, sentences, and

feelings, give letters and paragraphs meaning, purpose, a message, and direction through which they will reach society.

One of those who sailed that river much faster than the others was John L. Austin, an Oxford philosopher of language, who discovered a completely new perspective on language and its impact on the lives of speakers and listeners, writers, and readers. He was the first in his field who was brave enough to oppose the then-prevailing understandings of the philosophy of language, solely focused on the descriptive function of spoken words. While on one riverbank were his colleagues who disagreed with him, on the opposite bank was Austin, who did not give up on his opinion that such a perception of language ignores the fact that language performs actions and exists not only to state facts. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the success of his work, which was published posthumously under the title *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), in which he presents the **speech act theory**. Austin argues that when people speak (locutionary act), they not only do that, but also perform a certain action (illocutionary act) and have an effect on the listener (perlocutionary act). For example, when a professor declares, "I failed you in this exam", or when a policeman says, "I'm warning you, put down your weapon or I will use force", an utterance occurs that changes reality. In the same paper, Austin advocates that promises, apologies, warnings, and all other statements can only be judged by whether they are effective or not, thus extending the philosophy of language into the domain of pragmatics, proving that statements are extremely dependent on context, feelings, different social norms, and the very intention of the speaker. The oceans are deep, but apparently not deep enough to separate John R. Searle and Austin on this idea. John R. Searle, a professor at Berkeley and a former student of Oxford, decided to systematize and clarify Austin's theory. Although he agreed with Austin that language is not just a vessel blindly conveying information, he believed that the concept of illocutionary acts should be more precise. In his book *Speech Acts*, he distinguishes five illocutionary types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Searle, 1969). Understanding the contributions of these two professors towards better grasping the complexity and breadth of the meanings behind our expressions is reflected in the goal of our research, which is based on showing how much and in what way speech acts affect our perception and interpretation of literary characters and their actions. The aforementioned goal will be attained by analyzing speech acts found in dialogues of two notable plays by William Shakespeare, "King Lear" and "King Richard III", covering both Austin's and Searle's approaches with a focus on curses, insults, and bad language.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research includes two Shakespearean plays, *King Lear* and *King Richard III*, which are rich in curses, insults, and various forms of offensive language, and therefore serve as the foundation of our study. The central goal of the research is to determine which types of speech acts are most frequently present in these plays and to examine how the verbal expression of characters influences the audience's perception of them. The analysis is guided by the hypothesis that bad language in Shakespeare's plays operates not merely as verbal aggression but as a strategic tool for asserting dominance and shaping social hierarchies on stage. The research apparatus consists of a corpus compiled from selected acts and scenes of the two plays, chosen for their reflection of the certain type of language analyzed (curse, insult, banishment) and for their consequent importance in character development (precisely, *King Richard III*: Act 1, Scene 2; Act 1, Scene 3; Act 4, Scene 4; and Act 5, Scene 3 and *King Lear*: Act 1, Scene 1; Act 1, Scene 4; Act 2, Scene 2; Act 2, Scene 3; Act 2, Scene 4; Act 3, Scene 2; and Act 3, Scene 7). In other words, the

utterances were selected through a process of close reading guided by pragmatic analysis, focusing on expressions that perform an illocutionary act of insult, curse, or other offensive language. This research utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. In the qualitative component, Austin's and Searle's speech act theories are applied by first classifying the utterances according to Austin's framework of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and then according to Searle's five illocutionary categories (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives). The quantitative component relies on content analysis as defined by Krippendorff (2018), which involves the systematic coding and categorization of linguistic units to quantify the presence and distribution of offensive expressions. Each utterance is coded according to its speech act type, contributing to the statistical identification of the most frequent forms and their correlation with characters' personas. The results will be presented in both chart and table form (Graph No. 1, Graph No. 2, Table 1). Each utterance will be coded through three steps: identifying the insult or curse, classifying it according to Searle's framework, and indicating the speaker, the addressee, and the play, act, and scene in question, as well as the function of the utterance. Examples from *King Lear* are marked with **L** in the table, while examples from *King Richard III* are marked with **R**. The instrumentation of the research involved the manual compilation and analysis of the corpus above. Out of 40 utterances, 10 from *King Richard III* were subjected to detailed qualitative analysis, while the remaining examples were analyzed primarily according to their speech act type and pragmatic function (Table 1). All utterances were collected and coded manually, and the quantitative data, including frequency counts, were organized and processed using Google Sheets, which served as the primary tool for data management and calculation. In examining the theory of speech acts in these Shakespearean plays, it is important to recognize that impoliteness or the use of bad language in general has been largely overlooked throughout history; however, it plays a major role in communicative dynamics. Bousfield (2008) especially emphasizes that impoliteness is actually the "bad twin" of politeness, which is, surprisingly, an incredible carrier of performative potential in the interaction between characters. With this, he confirms that insults and curses in these plays do much more than express emotions; they actively shape the relationships between the characters and thus make these plays suitable for study through the lens of speech act theory. This kind of language is not only an emotional outpouring but also a voice and a means through which marginalized characters (such as women or characters of other races and social classes) express vengeance or resistance (Bitz, 2013). For this reason, our paper deals exclusively with this type of language, because through the theory of speech acts applied to such utterances, we demonstrate how they affect our understanding of the characters and their impact on the further development of the plays. Speech act theory is the darling child of pragmatics, which Mey (2001) defines as "the study of humans communicatively using language in the context of society," investigating insults and curses as pragmatic acts within a specific dramatic context rather than as mere isolated text. A slightly more detailed definition is offered by Yule (2020), who says that pragmatics is the science of how language is used in a certain context, focusing not only on the literal meaning of words but also on the implied meaning and their effect on the listener. In the field of pragmatics, one of the most influential and interesting approaches to understanding how a speaker uses language to perform specific actions is speech act theory. Austin (1962) was among the first to deal with this concept, while his successor, Searle (1969), further expanded and explained the theory. This theory explores how statements can actually serve as promises, insults, declarations, and commands—carriers of our emotions through the prism of language—and not only as channels through which we transmit information. Words contain much more than syllables, letters, suffixes, or prefixes.

Austin (1962) was the first to take a step in this field and made a distinction between

three types of speech acts:

- **locutionary** (the act of saying something)

e.g., *It is so cold outside*.

This act is simply producing a statement with its literal meaning, "the temperature outside is really low".

- **illocutionary** (the intention of a speaker in saying something)

Using the same example, *"It is so cold outside"*, we can identify different performative forces, such as a suggestion (it is cold outside and maybe we should go inside), a request (give me your jacket because I am cold, and a complaint (about the temperature).

- **perlocutionary** (the effect on the listener)

Here, the intention is not in focus, but the actual impact that the utterances have on the listener. Continuing with *"It is so cold outside"*, a listener gives the jacket, goes inside, or ignores the complaint.

Searle (1964) expanded, selected, and divided illocutionary acts into five categories:

- **assertives**

e.g., *Belgrade is the capital of Serbia.*

When someone uses an assertive speech act, they are expressing that they believe something to be true. Its functions are stating, describing, reporting, and claiming.

- **directives**

e.g., *Close the door!*

The speaker uses directives when they want the hearer to do something. Its functions are requesting, ordering, commanding, and advising.

- **commissives**

e.g., *I will buy you the book tomorrow.*

This act commits the speaker to the future course of action. Its functions are promising, vowing, threatening, and offering.

- **expressives**

e.g., *I hate you for your snoring.*

By using this act, the speaker is expressing their psychological state or attitude. Its functions are apologizing, congratulating, cursing, and lamenting.

- **declarations**

e.g., *I pronounce you husband and wife.*

This act simply makes something true, or in other words, it just changes the external situation by being uttered. Its functions are declaring, baptizing, firing, and sentencing.

Although Austin felt that dramatic performances lacked sincerity, Macías-Borrego (2021) noted that this view was challenged by the scholar Fish (1976), who argued that felicity conditions remain extremely useful for literary analysis. They believe that in the play *King Richard III*, analyzing the characters, their intentions, and cultural norms through the lens of speech act theory actually deepens interpretive insight. This is particularly important because it shows that although Austin did not anticipate this application of his theory, it is nevertheless extremely suitable for this type of analysis of curses, insults, and bad language, as it contains significant explanatory power. Vienne-Guerrin (2022) emphasizes the extraordinary power of curses and maledictions to inflict mental pain, cause the loss of social status, evoke emotions, and more. She recognizes that such forms of communication rely on a whole network of social codes and specific situations in which they are uttered. This is exactly what supports Searle's approach—that words are not just words but also performative acts. In the analysis, it is important to emphasize that it includes both individual words ("villain") and entire phrases ("degenerate bastard") that directly contain a curse, insult, or offensive expression, as well as phrases that pragmatically carry such meaning indirectly ("the dog is dead!").

Example (*King Richard III*, Act 1, Scene 2):
"O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!"

Locutionary act: a statement expressing surprise that even the devil can tell the truth.
Illocutionary act: a sarcastic statement or an insult directed at Richard, intended to mock his honesty and offend him by calling him a devil.
Perlocutionary act: the effect of this statement by Lady Anne is to insult and humiliate Richard, as he has tried to manipulate her on several occasions. According to Searle, this statement is both assertive and expressive—assertive because Lady Anne ironically asserts that Richard is telling the truth, and expressive because she conveys her dissatisfaction, anger, rage, and hatred toward him.

RESULTS

This study analyzes the wealth of speech acts in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *King Richard III*, focusing specifically on banishments, curses, insults, self-banishments, and bad language in general. The extracted data showcases various types of performative language—from formal declarations that affect social and familial ties, to curses invoking cosmic forces, and insults so brutal in their nature that no one could take them lightly. What follows are the utterances divided into two sections: those from *King Richard III* and those from *King Lear*. Each section includes utterances that best fit the criteria of banishment, curse, insult, or bad language in general, along with their brief speech act classifications.

"King Lear"

Banishments:
Act 1, Scene 1
Lear and Cordelia, when he tells her, "*Here I disclaim all my paternal care, Propinquity*

and property of blood, And as a stranger to my heart and me Hold thee, from this, for ever."

- If one should ask for a proper example of a banishment, these lines should constitute the answer. Lear's words bring about the tragic shattering of both the noble family and the political state of his kingdom.

Again, it is Lear that's making banishments known when conversing with Kent, *"Hear me on thy allegiance, hear me!...Five days we do allot thee for provision To shield thee from diseases of the world, And on the sixth day to turn thy hated back Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following, Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions, The moment is thy death.*"

- Lines above fall under the category of a direct performative banishment with clear-cut conditions.

Act 2, Scene 3

As for the not-so-explicit banishments, a prime one to be taken into account would be the following lines by Edgar, *"Edgar I nothing am."* Shortly put, self-banishment, or a perlocutionary consequence of Edmund's manipulations and false speech acts.

"King Richard III"

Banishments:

Act 1, Scene 2

When it comes to obvious banishments in this play, the example in which Lady Anne addresses the Duke of Gloster with the words, *"Out of my sight! thou dost infect my eyes,"* represents both an excellent example of directives and expressives, and a clear image of hatred that will only reach its full climax later.

Act 4, Scene 4

"There let him sink, and be the seas on him! White-liver'd runagate, what doth he there?" These words from King Richard represent an example of borderline banishments, or those that contain within themselves a wish or a curse of exclusion, but which are not a command.

"King Lear"

Insults:

Act 1, Scene 4

Lear's words to Cordelia are the first insults to be noted here, *"Detested kite! thou liest."*

No child should be the subject of such an expressive insult and a directive "thou liest" in one.

Act 2, Scene 2

The next lines to be the right fit for insults in "King Lear" come from Kent, in his long tirade against Oswald, *"A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, thee-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stoking knave…"*

- Scornful insults, as such, are expressive speech acts.

Kent's utterance, an expressive insult, is also present in *"You whoreson zed! you unnecessary letter!"* Again, disdain and disrespect are expressed linguistically.

Act 2, Scene 4

Lear's lines opened the list of insults, and so they will close it. Lear said the following to his daughter Goneril, *"Thou art a boil, A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle, In my corrupted blood."* These lines are expressive insults where Lear presents disrespect for his daughter.

"King Richard III"

Insults:

Act 1, Scene 2

"And thou unfit for any place but hell." Short, but a snappy expressive with the intent of a verbal expulsion from mankind. It can also be read as an assertive since Lady Anne states and makes a claim about her interlocutor. This statement would scar almost any addressee.

Act 1, Scene 3

Words like "*Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!"* carry a lot of both pragmatic and emotional weight. They are a "pure" example of insult, although their intention to demean Richard's physical appearance and ancestry is not pure in the least.

Act 1, Scene 3

In the same section, we come across an insult "*Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!",* that, through an expressive type of speech act, expresses absolute disgust towards Richard and his "dubious" origin with the aim of damaging his honor and marking him as a nasty offspring of his line.

Act 1, Scene 3

The previous example is followed by the brutal insult "*Thou rag of honor!"* which, through the expressive speech act, mocks Richard and his right to authority and respect from the others. This is one of many examples of how pragmatics and language in general do not exist apart from intentions and feelings expressed through language.

"King Lear"

Curses:

Act 1, Scene 4

Lines of Act 1 also find their place under expressives, specifically curses. The first example, once again, comes from Lear, *"Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear! Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend To make this creature fruitful! Into her womb convey sterility; Dry up in her the organs of increase; And from her derogate body never spring A babe to honour her!"*

Act 2, Scene 4

Lear's curse wearing the clothes of a prayer to the higher, mightier beings, *"You see me*

here, you gods, a poor old man, As full of grief as age; wretched in both; if it be you that stir these daughters' hearts Against their father, fool me not so much To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger, And let not women's weapons, water-drops, Stain my man's cheeks!"

- Lines above can be framed as half lament, half directive.

Act 3, Scene 2

As in the example above, Lear calls upon the forces of the supernatural, *"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! … Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once, That makes ungrateful man!"*

- Here lies a directive to the storm, pleading to erase human reproduction.

Act 3, Scene 7

Gloster comes around and procures the next, *"All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund? Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature, To quit this horrid act."*

- Not solely a curse in itself, but also a wish for vengeance on one of the sisters, Regan, and Cornwall.

"King Richard III"

Curses:

Act 1, Scene 2

"If ever he have wife, let her he made A miserable by the death of him As I am made by my poor lord and thee!" are the words of Lady Anne, which in speech act terms resemble an expressive (strong emotion; grief) combined with a curse to the higher powers, hence a directive.

- Her words are an example of many to come, where curses reflect pain and a wish for revenge.

Act 1, Scene 2

"O God, which this blood madest, revenge his death! O earth, which this blood drink'st revenge his death!"

- Here, Lady Anne makes a directive prayer, pleading to God and the earth for retaliation. Speech act classification would put the lines under directive and expressive, since she expresses anguish and is struck by intense grief.

Act 1, Scene 2

"Either heaven with lightning strike the murderer dead, Or earth, gape open wide and eat him quick…" Lady Anne mentions heavenly and earthly forces to take action and punish him by using a directive (curse) and expressive (furious and sorrowful).

DISCUSSION

Focusing on Austin's framework and Searle's classification of speech acts, this paper examined banishments, curses, and insults in Shakespeare's "King Richard III" and "King Lear". As mentioned before, speech acts shape the world and its human connections, especially emotions and social roles in these plays. The analysis shows that, in "King Richard III", bad language serves as a tool of power, vengeance, and moral judgement. Speech acts

found in this play function primarily as expressives, heaps of rage, ridicule, and ambition, and directives/declarations, which play a key part in the fates of the characters. The curses and insults are not there just to fill out the lines; they actively break the addressee's spirit and the social state of the play. Whereas in "King Lear", Lear's banishments act as formal declarations, and his curses are pulled between personal insults and cosmic invocations. The vile insults noted above show outrage and madness, Edgar's self-banishment proves language can cause an identity breakdown, and Lear's prayers to the mightier beings show how desperate the character is to appeal to them. It is thus worth noting that speech acts are paramount when establishing the scale of authority, resistance, and vulnerability of a character, all of which will be dealt with in the discussion below.

"King Lear", Act 1, Scene 1
"Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever."

Locutionary act: Lear makes a formal renunciation of Cordelia as his daughter.

Illocutionary act: Lear's utterance performs the act of disowning Cordelia. By "disclaiming", Lear changes her social and familial status.

Perlocutionary act: Such a statement brings forth the tragic chain of events to the noble family; Cordelia loses her inheritance and protection, and the court is left in shock.

According to Searle's classification, these lines reflect a declaration; Lear has the authority to decide the future of Cordelia's status, and every word he says is respected and acted on, and an expressive; the statement shows anger, dismay, and abandonment.

"King Lear", Act 1, Scene 1
"Hear me on thy allegiance, hear me!...
Five days we do allot thee for provision
To shield thee from diseases of the world,
And on the sixth day to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death."

Locutionary act: While speaking, Lear notifies Kent that he is left with 5 days to get ready and leave the kingdom; if he doesn't obey, death awaits.

Illocutionary act: Lear banishes Kent through a declaration, directs him to go away within a set period of time, and commits to execute him if he disobeys.

Perlocutionary act: Lear forces Kent to be silent and follow orders. Additionally, he is left without his role in the kingdom and is exiled from it. As with the example above, this one reaffirms the strength and authority of Lear's commands.

This passage, like the incoming examples, is an instance of a speech act's ability to take on multiple illocutionary types at once. Under Searle, these lines are a declaration, he declares Kent loses his status, a directive since Lear commands him to turn his back and leave the kingdom, and a commissive, threatening Kent and committing to go with his execution, if it comes to it.

"King Lear", Act 1, Scene 4

"Detested kite! thou liest."

Locutionary act: When speaking to Goneril, Lear calls her a scavenger bird ("detested kite") and accuses her of lying.

Illocutionary act: With such an insult, Lear shows contempt, rage, and rejection. He also asserts that Goneril's words are false, i.e., accuses her.

Perlocutionary act: Lear's statement causes yet another broken family tie and wounds his daughter. He shames her, and the conflict just grows bigger.

This insult fits into Searle's expressive (emotional condemnation) and assertive (making a claim about the truthfulness of someone's words).

"King Lear", Act 2, Scene 2
"A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, thee-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stoking knave…"

Locutionary act: Kent wants to make it known what he thinks of Oswald. In his long tirade, he describes him as unworthy, dishonest, and heinous, among other things.

Illocutionary act: Kent uses the opportunity and his words to let out his anger, and states the exaggerated, apparent qualities.

Perlocutionary act: Oswald is left humiliated in front of the spectators, and the conflict unfolds.

This insult is an example of Searle's expressive, a pure, lengthy insult, and assertive, by which Kent makes certain claims about his addressee, e.g., "rascal", "shallow", "beggarly".

"King Lear", Act 2, Scene 3
"Edgar I nothing am."

Locutionary act: Edgar states that he is nothing after losing his original identity.

Illocutionary act: Edgar disowns his formal identity and starts putting on the clothes of his new one, while appearing alienated and desperate.

Perlocutionary act: By shedding his old uniform, Poor Tom came about and showed his strategic thinking.

In just 4 words, Edgar managed to do the following, according to Searle: he managed to make a declaration and redefine himself as a beggar, and a claim about his newfound identity, i.e., an assertive, and an expressive; expressing loss and grief.

"King Lear", Act 2, Scene 4
"You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both;
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks!"

Locutionary act: Lear makes a plea to the gods and simultaneously describes himself and the state he is in, desperate and a poor soul. He goes on to beg the higher powers to help him live through the rough period, to bless him with "noble anger".

Illocutionary act: Lear begins with a directive to ask for the Gods' help. He expresses despair and humiliation, and a wish to regain his power.

Perlocutionary act: The audience grows a kind of sympathy for him, due to his poor

state and the loss of his royal might.

Searle's classification would paint these lines as directive, expressive, and assertive. Directive because Lear is putting his prayers in God's hands, expressive since he lets nothing but shame, pain, gloom, and misery out in the world, and finally, assertive, since he asserts his suffering.

"King Lear", Act 2, Scene 4
"Thou art a boil, A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle, In my corrupted blood."

Locutionary act: Lear describes his daughter Regan as a nuisance, a sick and twisted part of him.

Illocutionary act: This is an utterance overflowing with anguish and hatred, a hurtful insult reflecting Lear's disappointment and disbelief.

Perlocutionary act: A statement as such can only hurt and wreck the addressee's emotional state. This served as a reminder to the audience of Lear's inner breakdown.

By Searle's classification, the present speech acts are expressive; he commits an emotional attack on Regan as a consequence of his own weakening of character.

"King Lear", Act 3, Scene 2
"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! … Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once, That makes ungrateful man!"

Locutionary act: Lear once again turns to natural forces out of human reach. By use of imperative, he commands them to give their all to ravage and tear down what's left.

Illocutionary act: He is ordering and acting out of despair and pure anguish, and loss of trust by his fellow mankind. Indirectly, he wishes revenge on ungrateful men.

Perlocutionary act: His lines set the nail on his emotional turmoil, and the audience is aware of the dramatic effect of Lear's plea.

Speech acts, as classified by Searle, would go as follows: directive; Lear directs natural forces to take action, expressive; Lear is going through serious mental hardship and expresses it, while indirectly commits to take vengeance on mankind with the help of nature, i.e., commissive.

"King Lear", Act 3, Scene 7
"All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund? Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature, To quit this horrid act."

Locutionary act: Gloucester is sorrowful after his blinding and calls for his son Edmund to take revenge on those who have wronged him.

Illocutionary act: Gloucester pleads, better said, commands his son to take what is needed in order to quit the injustice. His words reflect sadness, distress, yearning for a hint of hope, and retaliation.

Perlocutionary act: Hearing his father, Edmund gains emotional support and motivation to help him, and the audience acknowledges the cruel doings of Regan and Cornwall.

Under Searle's classification, Gloucester spoke in directive, expressive, and commissive; first, he has made it clear he asked Edmund to take part in revenge; second, he shows signs of agony and horror mixed with fury.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 2
"And thou unfit for any place but hell."

Locutionary act: Here, it is said that Richard truly does not belong anywhere else but in hell because he is responsible for many deaths and does not deserve to be in heaven with King Henry, whose life he took.

Illocutionary act: By doing so, the speaker indirectly characterizes Richard as the devil himself who belongs in hell; also, the speaker's intention is to degrade Richard and symbolically banish him to hell, expressing the strength of Richard's malice.

Perlocutionary act: This humiliates Richard and tries to weaken his authority in front of others; also, this statement further confirms his position as a socially unacceptable, hated, evil, and cursed ruler. It may provoke anger, defensiveness, or reinforce his role as villain to the audience.

According to Searle's classification, Lady Anne used expressives and directives. She expresses her hatred, disgust, and moral condemnation towards Richard as well as her wish that Richard ends up in hell (it is assumed that she also wants his death) because, in her opinion, he belongs there because of all the horrors he has committed.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 2
"Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life!"

Locutionary act: The speaker curses Richard and wants the dark night to cover Richard's day (day—a symbol of happiness, peace, life) and for death to dominate Richard's life.

Illocutionary act: This curse is used by the speaker as a skillful tool with the intention of invoking and wishing absolute suffering and destruction upon Richard. Also, it is clear that the speaker hopes for Richard's downfall.

Perlocutionary act: Here, the effect could be separated into the one expected from such a statement, which is fear, humiliation, and infliction of emotional injury, and the one that actually happened, the unexpected one, which is that such statements actually fed Richard's self-centeredness and had the exact opposite effect.

However, if we ask Searle, he would surely say that through the directives and expressives used, the speaker here is actually begging the holy forces and fate itself to punish Richard, by which the speaker simultaneously expresses their own despair, powerlessness, and hatred in the situation in which they find themselves.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 3
"Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's loss;
And see another, as I see thee now,
Deck'd in thy rights, as thou art stall'd in mine!"

Locutionary act: Contrary to the previous example, here Queen Margaret wishes Richard an extremely long life, but filled with suffering, a life long enough to mourn the lives of his children and wait to see someone else enjoy the fruits of power and authority.

Illocutionary act: Through this curse, Queen Margaret actively invokes suffering and predicts an absolute reversal of Richard's fortunes. At the moment, as she is telling him that, he is extremely powerful, and his power is growing every hour, while she is going through absolute hell, and she wants the same for him, to suffer as she is now suffering and mourning her dead children.

Perlocutionary act: The effect of this curse is not only reflected in Richard's tragic future, but also in the portrayal of Queen Margaret as a prophetic figure who actually foreshadows Richard's end with the curse.

Through this example, Searle's expressive and the directive that Queen Margaret skillfully uses (to call on the weavers of fate to tie the threads of Richard's life as Richard has tied hers) also express the amount of her grief and resentment, which she turns into the

most dangerous weapon.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 3
"No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,
Unless it be whilst some tormenting dream."

Locutionary act: This statement claims that Richard should not be able to sleep, and if he does sleep, he should be haunted and tormented by nightmares.

Illocutionary act: The clear intention of this curse is to express the speaker's wish and hope that Richard will absolutely never find peace, not even in sleep itself. The power of this curse truly lies in Queen Margaret's hatred and her summoning of the supernatural for help.

Perlocutionary act: In this case, the effect is mostly of a psychological type. Richard is crazy, evil, repulsive, and ambitious enough without this; in this case, it could be said that fulfilling the curse would lead to either intensifying his aforementioned traits or total insanity and death.

According to Searle's theory, this is a good example of directives and expressives; a directive because it represents a prayer or wailing and calling on the heavenly forces to take away every ounce of Richard's peace, while as an expressive it perfectly depicts the extent to which Queen Margaret's hatred goes, making us question whether she and Richard differ in hatred at all.

"King Richard III", Act 4, Scene 4
"Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,
That I may live to say, The dog is dead!"

Locutionary act: In this example, Queen Margaret begs God to take Richard's life so she can finally live in peace, knowing that he is no longer in this world, as she states she will be celebrating and that she can say, "the dog is dead!"

Illocutionary act: This is a very specific example because it combines both a curse and a prayer to God: she prays for his death. Therefore, the power of this example is two-sided: petitionary force and cursing force. It is the queen's intention that God hear her prayer and take the life of a being who takes the lives of others.

Perlocutionary act: The effect is not persuasion but rather the strengthening of Richard's symbolic status as a damned, accused tyrant.

According to Searle's point of view, here we also have a display of expressives and directives, since this curse is also a prayer to God that he would take Richard's life into his own hands, which shows the extent to which the queen's hatred goes, and how much happiness his death would bring her. Margaret's duplicity is present, i.e., her willingness to pray heartily to God but to ask him for death and forgiveness for another being.

"King Richard III", Act 4, Scene 4
"Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end;
Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend."

Locutionary act: The speaker here expresses that Richard's end will be as bloody as his whole life, and his death will be as shameful as his life. Blood will be his bed and shame his eternal companion.

Illocutionary act: This is a curse that has a prophetic intent. The speaker here does not engage in mere description; it essentially performs the act of declaring Richard cursed and foresees a shameful and terrible end with it.

Perlocutionary act: The absolute effect of this statement is to completely humiliate Richard, instill dread or moral opprobrium in the audience, and to suggest in a very skillful way what Richard's end will really be.

In this example, assertives and expressives found their place through the speaker's claim about the very character of Richard and his fate, "Bloody thou art... bloody will be thy end", by which the speaker conveys the moral condemnation of Richard's actions (they are bloody and shameful) as well as the peace that his tragic end would bring.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 2
"Either heaven with lightning strike the
murderer dead,
Or earth, gape open wide and eat him quick."

Locutionary act: The speaker calls upon the heavens and the earth to take vengeance on the addressee.

Illocutionary act: This is a curse and an invocation in the sense that the speaker wishes for a tough fate, and implores the heavens and the earth to take revenge.

Perlocutionary act: As with other present curses, these lines intend to scare the interlocutor and make them fear what's to come. The audience is met with a troubled speaker, and they get to see how miserable and enraged Lady Anne is.

This curse works as a request to the Gods/earth; directive, and because it lets the readers know of the speaker's emotional state, it's an expressive.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 3
"*Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!*"

Locutionary act: The speaker makes a statement about the birth of the addressee, saying Richard is a hated offspring.

Illocutionary act: This utterance combines condemnation and an insult. The addressee's character and identity are attacked, and it expands to their whole existence.

Perlocutionary act: The speaker intends to emotionally wound Richard, and the audience doesn't feel bad for him; they get the impression of him as truly corrupt and evil.

By Searle's classification, this line belongs to expressives and assertives; the speaker expresses rage and disgust, while also stating, or claiming, that Richard is deeply loathed from birth.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 2
"Out of my sight! thou dost infect my eyes."

Locutionary act: The speaker urges the addressee to go away and then makes an assertion that the addressee bothers their vision. An imperative is combined with repulsion.

Illocutionary act: This utterance is both a dismissal and an insult. The speaker actively banishes the interlocutor and makes bad remarks about their character.

Perlocutionary act: The speaker's intent is to shame and humiliate the addressee, and the audience can feel the tension rising, as well as the superiority of the speaker.

In Searle's terms, the imperative functions as a directive, instructing the addressee to leave, and an expressive, bringing forth emotions like disgust and anger.

"King Richard III", Act 1, Scene 3
"If heaven have any grievous plague in store
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee"

Locutionary act: The speaker asks the heavens to send down the worst plagues possible to his addressee. Queen Margaret wishes for a divine punishment.

Illocutionary act: Her utterance is a curse by which she expresses anger and a plea to the higher beings to take action against the addressee. An emotional outburst is not the only thing she experiences; this is a performative act of cursing.

Perlocutionary act: The addressee is meant to be frightened and emotionally hurt, and the readers get to know the amount of anguish she is filled with.

The chosen lines of this research paper, by Searle's classification, fit as expressive and directive; emotions dominate, especially pain, and Queen Margaret directs the heavens to punish her addressee.

Through the presentation of the analysis process of these examples, we clearly see that speech acts are not just mere linguistic decorations. They are also means of transformation. In Lear, language becomes a channel of broken authority and powerlessness, while in Richard, language is a means of manipulation and damnation. Austin's and Searle's theories show that utterances carry at their core an illocutionary force capable of building and tearing down worlds. Through this, we see that words not only describe power but often create it.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that speech acts in *King Lear* are powerful tools for character development and audience perception, rather than mere narrative devices. Based on the quantitative results, it is clear that expressive speech acts dominate the play; of all identified examples, they account for 36.4%. These are then followed by assertives and directives (18.2% each), and declaratives and commissives (13.6% each). Thus, the results reflect the emotional intensity of Shakespeare's tragedy.

Noting that expressives predominate, it is without a doubt that the characters' language is mainly oriented toward the articulation of inner emotions, such as anger, grief, and despair, and consequently reveals their psychological states and interpersonal tensions. For example, King Lear's banishments and verbal outbursts showcase royal authority, emotional instability, and wounded pride. He relies on expressive and declarative acts and simultaneously makes the audience perceive him as an authoritarian yet emotionally volatile ruler, whose misuse of power leads to his downfall. Kent's words, characterized by direct and expressive speech acts, paint him as a loyal, defiant figure of moral integrity. He strategically uses language as an act of service rather than rebellion.

In *King Lear*, the utterances intertwine illocutionary force and rhetorical effect, blending form and function in ways that transcend the literal meaning of words. The stylistic texture of this play emerges from an interplay between pragmatic intent and expressive style; language is both an instrument of power and a mirror of vulnerability.

In King Richard III, the fall of Richard is not only physical but also linguistic. This play turns out to be a battlefield, where language becomes a weapon of power, social position, and fight. Richard's downfall is best shown through the speech acts themselves because he doesn't just die by the sword. His death begins slowly from the first insults and curses addressed to him. Rival families, divine and demonic forces, and individual ambitions are all mediated through discourse (through prayers versus curses, persuasion versus verbal aggression, praising versus insulting).

From the beginning, Richard's linguistic identity was constructed by other people. From birth, he is marked as one who is illegitimate, unnatural, and monstrous. Just such

a pejorative and dehumanizing discourse creates a pragmatic framework in which Richard, even as a child, realizes that words are actually weapons. This is where we come to the question: Is Richard's verbal violence his reaction to being exposed to such language, or is he still expressing his true self through this kind of discourse? Even when Richard is silent, his character is being shaped by others. The curses of Queen Margaret and Lady Anne serve not only as expressive speech acts but also as performative attempts to restore moral and emotional balance. Their utterances reveal the pragmatic function of lamentation, resistance, and condemnation in a context of patriarchal oppression and political conflict. Through expressive language, they negotiate power, assert identity, and challenge the authority that Richard embodies. The dialogic structure of this play, which is mostly shown through expressives and directives, perfectly represents how linguistic behaviors directly affect interpersonal relations and the outcome of the event. In this way, Shakespeare shows that discourse not only reflects but also shapes our reality. Thus, King Richard III exemplifies how linguistic choices can construct, sustain, and ultimately dismantle power.

For the audience, these linguistic patterns guide emotional and moral interpretation by revealing who commands, who resists, and who should be trusted, and whose moral compass is broken. The study concludes that Shakespeare's use of offensive and affective language is not just romantic ornamentation, but a deliberate linguopragmatic mechanism for constructing character identity and guiding audience response.

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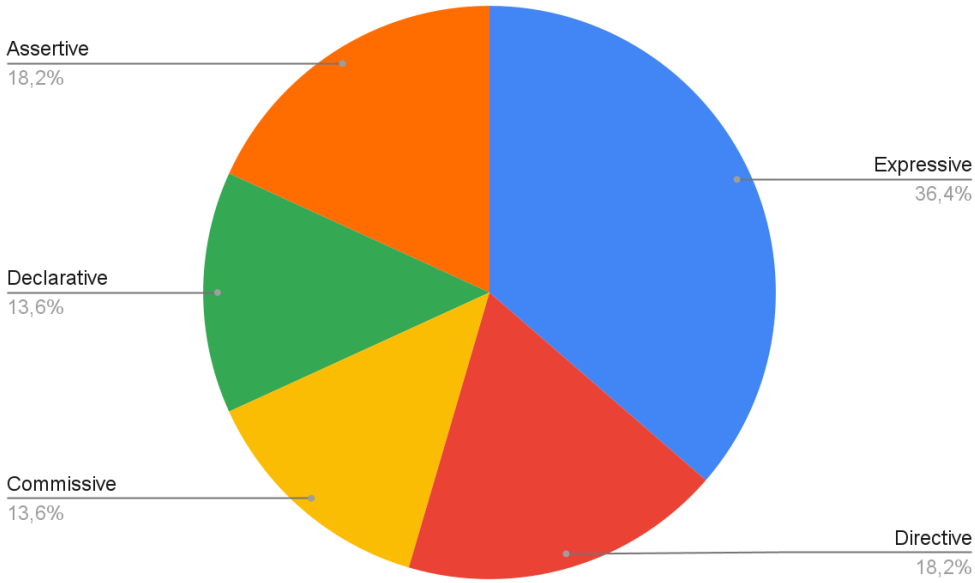
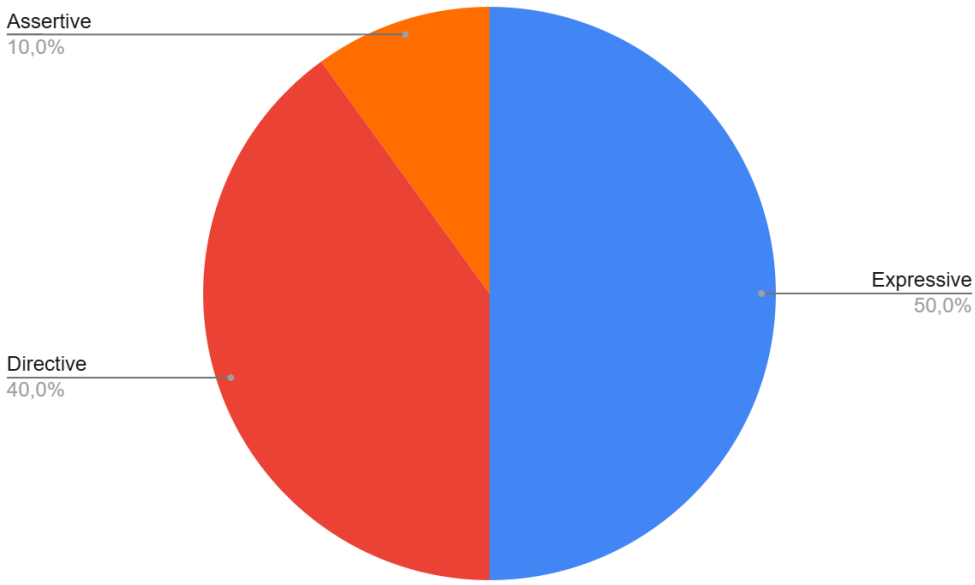


Graph No.1 Speech acts present in Shakespeare's King Lear



Graph No.2 Speech acts present in King Richard III

Table 1, Speech acts in “King Richard III” and “King Lear”

Play, Act, Scene	Insult, Curse, Banishment	Speaker	Addressee	Speech act type	Function
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	Cursed be the hand that made these fatal holes! / Cursed be the heart that had the heart to do it! / Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, Expressive	Curse, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	If ever he have child, abortive be it / Prodigious, and untimely brought to light, / Whose ugly and unnatural aspect / May fright the hopeful mother at the view; / And that be heir to his unhappiness!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, Expressive	Curse, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	If ever he have wife, let her he made / A miserable by the death of him / As I am made by my poor lord and thee!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, emotional retaliation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	O God, which this blood madest, revenge his death! / O earth, which this blood drink'st revenge his death!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, invocation for vengeance
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	Either heaven with lightning strike the murderer dead, / Or earth, gape open wide and eat him quick,	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, imprecation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, sarcastic rebuke
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, moral condemnation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	And thou unfit for any place but hell.	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, moral rebuke
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal punishment
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	His better doth not breathe upon the earth.	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Curse, moral denunciation

R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	Out of my sight! thou dost infect my eyes.	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Insult, verbal rejection
R, ACT 1, SCENE 2	Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead!	Lady Anne	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave the world, Thou cacodemon! there thy kingdom is.	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, moral condemnation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's loss; / And see another, as I see thee now, / Deck'd in thy rights, as thou art stall'd in mine!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal punishment
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Have done thy charm, thou hateful wither'd hag!	Duke of Gloster	Queen Margaret	Directive, expressive	Insult, verbal rejection
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	If heaven have any grievous plague in store / Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal punishment
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace! / The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul! / Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou livest, / And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Curse, verbal condemnation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, / Unless it be whilst some tormenting dream / Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal punishment
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Expressive, assertive	Insult, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity/ The slave of nature and the son of hell!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, verbal denunciation
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Thou slander of thy mother's heavy womb!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Expressive, assertive	Insult, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, verbal attack
R, ACT 1, SCENE 3	Thou rag of honour!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Expressive, assertive	Insult, verbal attack

R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept / A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death:	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, verbal denunciation
R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes,	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Expressive, assertive	Insult, verbal attack
R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	That foul defacer of God's handiwork, / That excellent grand tyrant of the earth,	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Insult, verbal denunciation
R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray, / That I may live to say, The dog is dead!	Queen Margaret	Duke of Gloster	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal denunciation
R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end; / Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend.	Duchess of York	Duke of Gloster	Assertive, expressive	Curse, verbal denunciation
R, ACT 4, SCENE 4	There let him sink, and be the seas on him! / White-liver'd runagate, what doth he there?	King Richard		Directive, expressive	Insult, verbal attack
R, ACT 5, SCENE 3	Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow!/Think, how thou stab'dst me in my prime of youth	King Henry the Sixth as a ghost	King Richard	Directive, expressive	Curse, verbal denunciation
L, ACT 1, SCENE 1	Here I disclaim all my paternal care,/ Propinquity and property of blood, / And as a stranger to my heart and me/ Hold thee, from this, for ever	King Lear	Cordelia	Declaration	Formal disowning, banishment of daughter
L, ACT 1, SCENE 1	"Hear me on thy allegiance, hear me!...Five days we do allot thee for provision / To shield thee from diseases of the world, / And on the sixth day to turn thy hated back / Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following, / Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions, / The moment is thy death."	King Lear,	Kent	Declaration, directive, commissive	Formal banishment, threat, assertion of royal authority
L, ACT 1, SCENE 4	Detested kite! thou liest.	King Lear	Cordelia	Expressive, assertive, directive	Insult, accusation

L. ACT 1, SCENE 4	Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear! / Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend / To make this creature fruitful! / Into her womb convey sterility; / Dry up in her the organs of increase; / And from her derogate body never spring / A babe to honour her!	King Lear	Nature, gods	Directive, expressive	Curse, command to Nature, expression of rage
L, ACT 2, SCENE 2	A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, thee-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stoking knave…	Kent	Oswald	Expressive, assertive, directive	Insult tirade, emotional attack
L, ACT 2, SCENE 3	Edgar I nothing am	Edgar	Self	Declaration, assertive, expressive	Self-banishment, identity renunciation
L, ACT 2, SCENE 4	You see me here, you gods, a poor old man, As full of grief as age; wretched in both; if it be you that stir these daughters' hearts / Against their father, fool me not so much / To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger, / And let not women's weapons, waterdrops, / Stain my man's cheeks!"	King Lear	Gods	Directive, expressive, assertive	Lament, plea for divine aid
L, ACT 2, SCENE 4	Thou art a boil, / A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle, / In my corrupted blood	King Lear	Goneril	Expressive	Metaphorical curse, insult
L, ACT 3, SCENE 2	"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! … Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once, That makes ungrateful man!"	King Lear	Nature	Directive, expressive, commissive	Curse, directive to natural forces
L, ACT 3, SCENE 7	"All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund? Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature, To quit this horrid act.	Gloster	Edmund	Directive, expressive, commissive	Call for revenge, expression of grief

PAZI ŠTA PRIČAŠ – SVAKA RIJEČ IMA POSLJEDICU – TEORIJA GOVORNIH ČINOVA U ŠEKSPIROVIM DRAMAMA „KRALJ LIR" I „KRALJ RIČARD III", SA FOKUSOM NA KLETVE I UVREDE

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Uvod: Sve što izgovorimo donosi sa sobom određena značenja i izaziva reakcije i emocije – što i jeste osnovna svrha jezika. U komunikaciji naše izjave često poprimaju oblik izvinjenja, obećanja, naredbe, molbe, žalbe, upozorenja, poziva, odbijanja ili čestitke, a da nismo ni svjesni da su upravo ovo govorni činovi bez kojih bi se komunikacija urušila. O njihovom značaju prvi je pisao oksfordski filozof Džon L. Ostin u djelu „How to Do Things with Words" (1962), kojim je otvorio put novoj grani pragmatike – teoriji govornih činova. On razlikuje lokutorni, ilokutorni i prelokutorni čin, dok je američki filozof Džon Serl razvio klasifikaciju sa pet ilokutornih tipova: asertivi, komisivi, direktivi, ekspresivi i deklarativi.

Cilj: Cilj ovog rada je, na osnovu oba pristupa, analizirati govorne činove u dijalozima poznatih Šekspirovih drama radi boljeg razumijevanja značenja i postupaka likova.

Materijal i metode: Korpus obuhvata „Kralja Lira" i „Kralja Ričarda III" Vilijama Šekspira. Analiza je sprovedena kvalitativno i kvantitativno, sa prikupljanjem i kategorizacijom ukupno 40 primjera, a rezultati su prikazani i grafički radi jasnijeg uvida.

Rezultati: Analiza je pokazala da direktivi i ekspresivi dominiraju u većini dijaloga, dok se komisivi češće pojavljuju u ključnim emotivnim scenama. Asertivi imaju važnu ulogu u izgradnji narativnog toka, dok se deklarativi pojavljuju rjeđe, uglavnom u situacijama prekretnice.

Zaključak: Dobijeni rezultati potvrđuju da svaka riječ ima posljedicu i da način na koji je izgovorena mijenja njen odjek. Percepcija književnih likova zavisi ne samo od radnje, već i od naše interpretacije dijaloga, koja se značajno oslanja na teoriju govornih činova.

Ključne riječi: teorija govornih činova, književni dijalog, Džon L. Ostin Džon, serpragmatika, ilokutivni čin.