

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Naturally, a person performs speech acts through their utterances. This phenomenon can be analyzed in the field of Pragmatics. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are used to state facts or information in detail, to convey a portrayal through words, and to perform specific actions. Later, in 1996, Yule further explored the speech acts theory. According to Yule (1996), speech acts are highly determined by the context, which includes the relationship between the speaker and the listener, the situation, and the culture.

The same utterance can have different meanings in speech acts within various contexts. From this point of view, this study examines expressive acts produced by the main character of *Wednesday* Burton (2022) Series. The series went viral on social media, especially on TikTok. According to a movie website, namely IMDb, around 400.000 people reviewed the series, and the overall rating was 8 out of 10.

The main character of the *Wednesday* (2022) series is Wednesday Addams, a teenage girl known for her dark personality. Unlike typical students at her age, Wednesday Addams often challenges authority and refuses to conform to social expectations. Her defiant attitude is evident in several of her actions throughout the series. For example, she gets expelled from

her previous school after releasing piranhas into the school pool to take revenge on bullies. She also consistently disobeys rules at Nevermore Academy, sneaks out to investigate mysterious events, and often prefers to work alone instead of following instructions from adults or school authorities. These behaviors highlight Wednesday Addams' resistance to control and her strong sense of independence, making her a truly unconventional protagonist.

## 1.2 Research Problems

Despite a growing body of research focusing on the character Wednesday Addams in the *Wednesday* (2022) series, most existing studies have explored her from psychological or rhetorical perspectives. Amelia et al. (2024) examined her antisocial traits using a psychological lens, identifying behaviors associated with Antisocial Personality Disorder. Puteri & Kristiana (2023) analyzed the use of irony in her dialogues, revealing verbal irony as the most dominant type. Meanwhile, Syuhra et al. (2024) concentrated on politeness strategies to uncover how Wednesday Addams manages face-threatening acts. While these studies provide valuable insights into her personality and communication style, none have investigated the use of expressive speech acts concerning character traits. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how expressive Wednesday Addams uses acts to reflect her character traits. Responding to several key research questions is essential to ensure clarity in the discussion presented in this study. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the types of expressive acts used by the character Wednesday Addams in *Wednesday* (2022)?

2. How do Wednesday Addams's expressive speech act reveal her dominant character traits?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

1. To identify and analyze the types of expressive speech acts used by the character Wednesday Addams based on Searle & Vanderveken (1985) framework of speech acts.
2. To examine how expressive speech acts used by Wednesday Addams in the series *Wednesday* (2022) reveal her dominant character traits, by applying the framework of character and characterization as proposed by Abrams & Harpham (2012).

### **1.4 Previous Studies**

In conducting this research, several prior studies have been reviewed, each offering valuable insights into characterization and the analysis of speech acts. Amelia *et al.* (2024) in their research on *Wednesday Addams Antisocial Personality Disorder in the Wednesday Netflix Series*, revealed that Wednesday demonstrated various characteristics associated with Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), such as a lack of remorse, aggressive behavior, and a disregard for social norms.

Still focusing on the same character and series, a study by Puteri and Kristina (2023) titled "*An Analysis of Irony Used in Wednesday Addams Series*" identified three types of ironic language: verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony. The study revealed that verbal irony appeared as the most dominant.

This type of irony is primarily used to emphasize statements, explain ideas, express opinions, satirize, and portray character traits.

Another study by Syuhra *et al.* (2024), *Politeness Strategies in Wednesday Addams' Utterances: Maintaining Self-Image and Others' Amidst Rejection*, found that Wednesday frequently employed bald-on-record strategies, characterized by direct and unmitigated speech. In contrast, off-record strategies were used less often. This study also highlights the importance of politeness, not only in maintaining interpersonal relationships but also in achieving long-term objectives, as illustrated through the interactions on Wednesday in the series.

Other research analyzing speech acts in different movies includes *An Analysis of Speech Act Classification Used by the Characters in 'Onward' Movie* by Sakti (2022). The study found that the characters used representative speech acts to express statements they believed to be true or false. Directive speech acts were employed to get others to do something through commands, suggestions, and requests. Commissive speech acts reflected the characters' commitment to performing future actions. Meanwhile, expressive acts in the movie were used to convey emotions such as pain, pleasure, and sadness.

Similarly, in *The Speech Act of Cartoon Movie: SpongeBob Squarepants' The Movie* by Sari (2020), it was found that directive speech acts were the most frequently used in *SpongeBob Squarepants' The Movie*, with 118 utterances, which represent 44.46% of the total 266 identified speech acts. *Speech Acts Used by the Main Character in "Encanto" Disney Movie* that was conducted by Priyandini *et al.* (2023), found that the most frequently used type of illocutionary act by the main

character is the representative act, with 75 utterances identified in their dialogue based on the analysis.

Another study titled “*An Analysis of the Expressive Speech Acts in ‘The Willoughbys’ Movie,*” by Aritonang and Ambalegin (2023), using the theory of Searle and Vanderveken, revealed that the movie contains a total of 67 expressive speech acts, classified into 11 types. The most frequent expressive act identified was complaining, with 12 utterances, followed by greeting (6), apologizing (4), complimenting (6), protesting (10), lamenting (9), thanking (3), boasting (3), praising (5), condoling (4), and deploring (5). Notably, no expressive speech acts of congratulating were found, which the Aritonang and Ambalegin attributed to the movie’s focus on the characters’ journey and adventure rather than celebratory scenes.

Another study by Pietersz and Sutami (2023), titled “*Expressive Illocutionary Speech Acts in a Chinese Children’s Novel,*” found that one sentence may carry two, three, or even four distinct meanings. The act of praising was identified as the most frequent expressive function. Interestingly, when a character expresses admiration, they often also show agreement or make an offer, indicating multiple speech functions within a single utterance. The frequent use of praise in the novel highlights Pietersz and Sutami’s intention to set a moral example for young readers and encourage them to show respect through layered expressions.

In *Expressive Speech Acts Found in Love at First Swipe Web Series*, Ricca and Ambalegin (2022) discovered 15 utterances of expressive speech acts in the series. Meanwhile, Shelviana and Mulatsih (2022), in their study *Expressive and*

*Directive Speech Acts in Peter Parker's Conversation in the Movie Spider-Man 3*, examine both expressive and directive acts using Searle's speech act theory. They identified seven types of expressive acts: apologizing, blaming, congratulating, greeting, thanking, introducing, and praising. Among these, greeting was the most dominant expressive act used by Peter Parker, with 13 utterances.

None of the previous studies focused on expressive acts to reveal the main character's character traits. Therefore, this study primarily focuses on analyzing the use of expressive acts uttered by Wednesday Addams in the *Wednesday* (2022) series, particularly those that reflect her character traits. This study also highlights that the use of expressive acts on the main character is to convey frustration, dislike, sarcasm, or criticism, which in turn reveals key aspects of the character's traits such as defiance, bluntness, and sarcasm, particularly in interactions with adults.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is to reveal the expressive acts of Wednesday Addams according to the expressive act in speech acts theory by (Searle, 1969). To limit the scope of the findings and discussions, this research focuses on episodes 1 to 2. The selection of two episodes was considered sufficient, as they represent key moments in Wednesday Addams' character development and include various expressive speech acts that highlight her character traits.

### **1.6 Writing Organization**

The organization of this research is structured into four chapters, as described below.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research, formulates the research problems, outlines the study, reviews previous studies, and discusses the scope and limitations of the research, as well as the study organization.

## CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and methodological approach employed in the study. It includes the theory of expressive acts based on Searle (1969) and Searle & Vanderveken (1985), and the concept of character as proposed in the Abrams & Harpham (2012). Furthermore, this chapter discusses the research method, including the type of research, data sources, population and sample, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the study's findings by showcasing the expressive speech acts used by Wednesday Addams in the series. Data tables support the analysis and are further discussed in the context of character traits reflected through her utterances.

## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the types of expressive speech acts used by Wednesday Addams, based on Searle and Vanderveken's theory, and explaining how these acts reflect her character traits, in line with the definition of character and characterization from Abrams and Harpham.