

AN ANALYSIS OF ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN *THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN* MOVIE: ITS RELEVANCE TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

A THESIS

Submitted to Fulfill One of the Requirements for the Bachelor of Education
Degree in English Language Education



By :

DIAH AYU PUSPA NINGRUM

SN. 20522079

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
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K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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2026**

SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN DAN PENGGUNAAN BANTUAN KECERDASAN ARTIFISIAL

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Judul : An Analysis Assertive Speech Acts in the Professor and
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kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Pekalongan, 19 Juni 2026
Pembimbing

Ahmad Burhanuddin
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APROVAL SHEET



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MOTTO

*"The strongest people are not those who never struggle, but those who
never stop moving forward despite their struggles."*



ABSTRACT

Ningrum, Puspa, Ayu, Diah. (2026). Assertive Speech Acts in The Professor and the Madman Movie and Their Relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT). Undergraduate Thesis, English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Advisor: Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Assertive Speech Acts, English Language Teaching (ELT), The Professor and the Madman.

Language is an essential means of communication that enables people to express ideas, beliefs, opinions, and information. In pragmatics, assertive speech acts are utterances used by speakers to convey information or state propositions they believe to be true. This study aims to identify the types of assertive speech acts found in *The Professor and the Madman* and examine their relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT). This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data consisted of utterances containing assertive speech acts spoken by the characters in the movie. The data were collected through observation and note taking techniques and analyzed using Searle's (1979) speech act theory. The findings revealed 24 utterances categorized as assertive speech acts, consisting of five types: stating (6 occurrences), informing (5), describing (5), explaining (6), and concluding (2). The most dominant types were stating and explaining. These speech acts were used to express facts, provide information, describe situations, explain ideas, and draw conclusions. Furthermore, the findings indicate that *The Professor and the Madman* has strong relevance to English Language Teaching because it presents authentic language use in real communicative contexts. The movie can be used as an authentic learning resource to develop students' pragmatic competence, communicative competence, speaking skills, and critical thinking skills.

ABSTRAK

Ningrum, Puspa, Ayu, Diah. (2026). Tindak Tutur Asertif dalam Film The Professor and the Madman serta Relevansinya terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT). Skripsi. Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Pembimbing: Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A.

Kata Kunci: Pragmatik, Tindak Tutur, Tindak Tutur Asertif, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT), *The Professor and the Madman*.

Bahasa merupakan sarana komunikasi yang sangat penting bagi manusia untuk menyampaikan gagasan, keyakinan, pendapat, dan informasi. Dalam kajian pragmatik, tindak tutur asertif adalah tuturan yang digunakan penutur untuk menyampaikan informasi atau menyatakan proposisi yang diyakini kebenarannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis tindak tutur asertif yang terdapat dalam film *The Professor and the Madman* serta mengkaji relevansinya terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (*English Language Teaching/ELT*). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data penelitian berupa tuturan yang mengandung tindak tutur asertif yang diucapkan oleh para tokoh dalam film. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik observasi dan pencatatan (*note taking*), kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teori tindak tutur yang dikemukakan oleh Searle (1979). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 24 tuturan yang termasuk ke dalam tindak tutur asertif, yang terdiri atas lima jenis, yaitu stating (6 tuturan), informing (5 tuturan), describing (5 tuturan), explaining (6 tuturan), dan concluding (2 tuturan). Jenis tindak tutur yang paling dominan adalah stating dan explaining. Tindak tutur tersebut digunakan untuk menyatakan fakta, memberikan informasi, mendeskripsikan suatu keadaan, menjelaskan suatu gagasan, serta menarik suatu kesimpulan. Selain itu, hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa film *The Professor and the Madman* memiliki relevansi yang kuat terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT) karena menyajikan penggunaan bahasa yang autentik dalam konteks komunikasi nyata. Film ini dapat dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber belajar autentik untuk mengembangkan kompetensi pragmatik, kompetensi komunikatif, keterampilan berbicara, serta kemampuan berpikir kritis peserta didik.

PREFACE

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah SWT for His blessings, mercy, and guidance, which have enabled the writer to complete this thesis entitled “An Analysis of Assertive Speech Acts in The Professor and the Madman Movie and Its Relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT)”. Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad SAW, his family, his companions, and all of his followers until the end of time.

This thesis is submitted as one of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in English Education. The writer realizes that the completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support, guidance, assistance, and encouragement from many individuals. Therefore, the writer would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

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The writer realizes that this thesis is far from perfect. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly appreciated for the improvement of this work. Finally, the writer hopes that this thesis will provide benefits and valuable contributions to readers, researchers, English teachers, and students, particularly in the field of pragmatics and English Language Teaching (ELT).

Pekalongan, June 2026

The Researcher

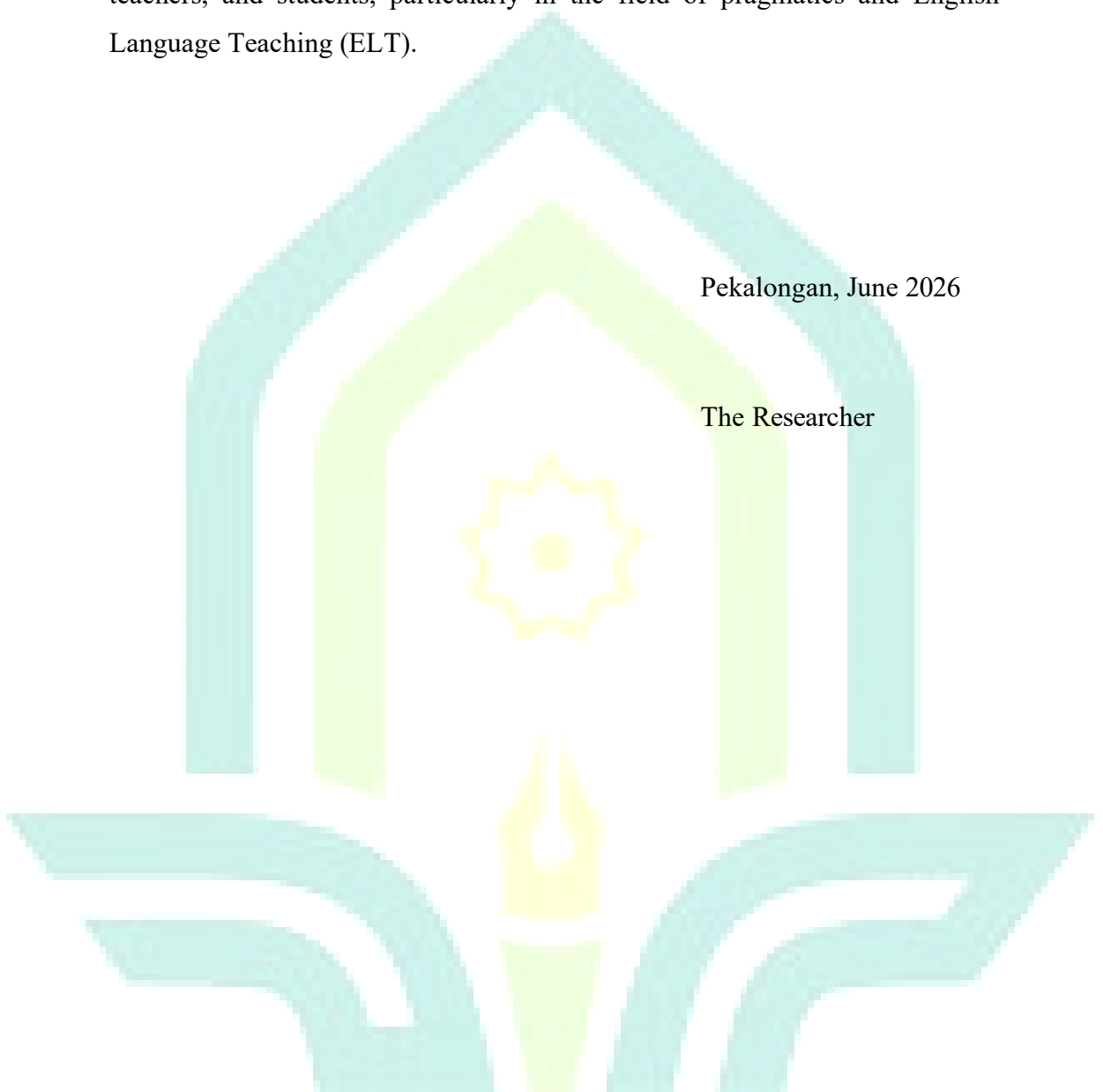
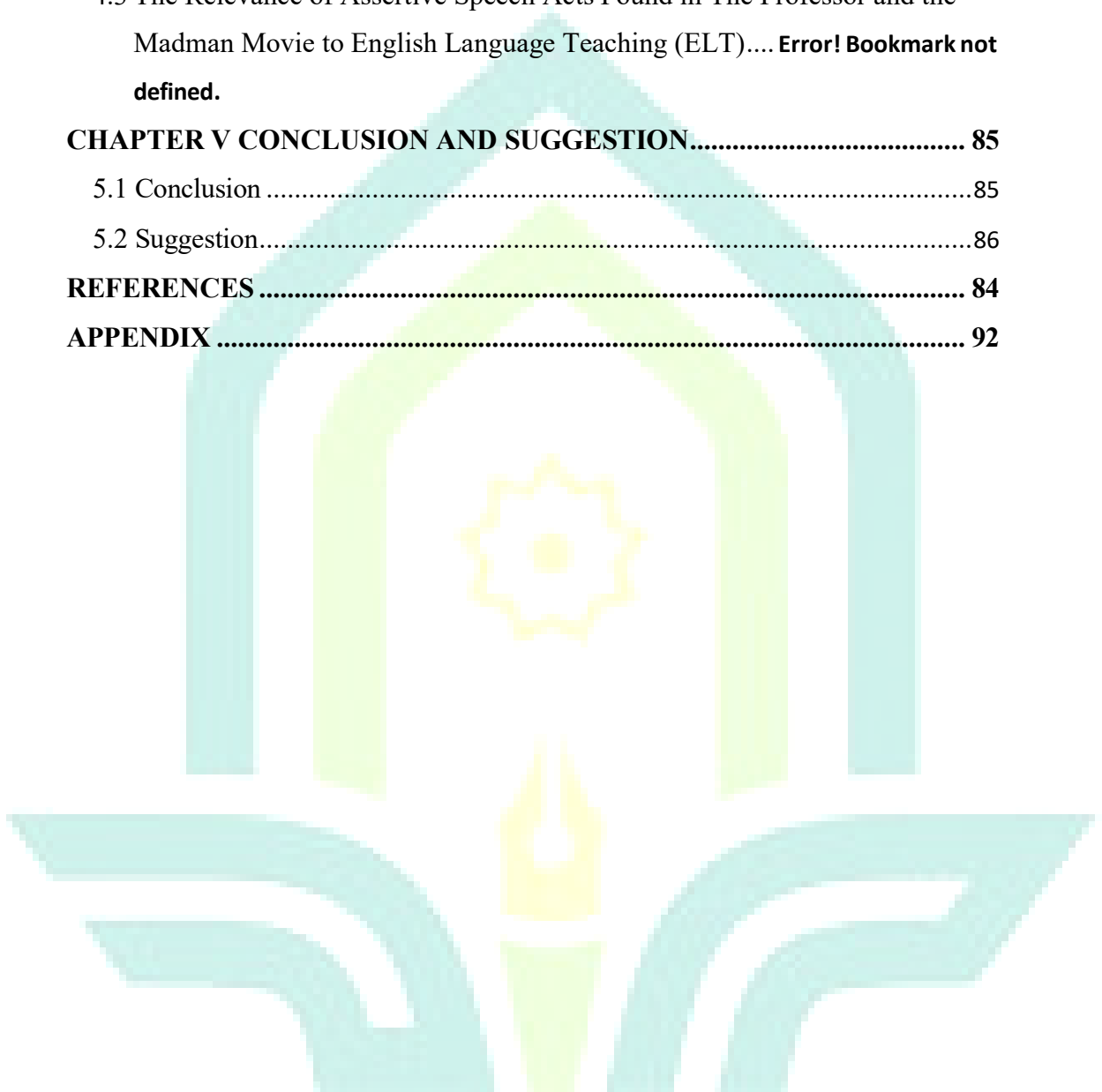


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Language is not only a system of grammar and vocabulary but also a means through which people perform actions, express ideas, and construct meaning in communication. The way people understand language depends not only on the literal meaning of words but also on the context, speaker intention, and social situation in which communication occurs. This perspective is studied in pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that examines how meaning is produced and interpreted in particular contexts. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics focuses on the relationship between linguistic expressions and their users, emphasizing how speakers convey meaning and how listeners interpret messages beyond their literal forms.

One important area of pragmatics is Speech Act Theory, which explains how people use language to perform actions. Austin (1962) introduced the concept of speech acts by proposing three levels of meaning in an utterance: locutionary act, which refers to the production of an utterance; illocutionary act, which concerns the speaker's intended meaning; and perlocutionary act, which refers to the effect of an utterance on the listener. This theory was further developed by Searle (1979), who classified illocutionary acts into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

Among these categories, assertive speech acts are important because they represent how speakers express information, beliefs, opinions, and interpretations about the world. Assertive acts involve the speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition. They are commonly used in communication to state information, describe situations, explain ideas, and present conclusions. Levinson (1983) emphasizes that assertive acts contribute to effective communication by allowing speakers to organize information, develop arguments, and establish shared understanding.

In the Indonesian EFL context, understanding assertive speech acts is important because learners need pragmatic competence to communicate appropriately in English. Students are expected not only to produce grammatically correct sentences but also to understand how language functions in different situations. However, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) state that pragmatic competence often develops more slowly than grammatical competence among language learners. As a result, learners may produce linguistically accurate expressions but fail to use them appropriately according to context. This issue is relevant in Indonesia, where English instruction has often focused more on grammatical knowledge and written skills than on contextual language use.

One way to develop learners' pragmatic competence is through exposure to authentic language materials. Films provide valuable resources because they present language use in meaningful contexts accompanied by situational factors such as tone, facial expressions, and interactions between

characters. Sherman (2003) argues that films provide learners with authentic examples of communication, while Ismaili (2013) highlights their contribution to improving language comprehension, speaking ability, and pragmatic awareness.

One film that contains rich pragmatic data is *The Professor and the Madman* (2019). The movie presents academic and intellectual conversations between characters, particularly Professor James Murray and Dr. William Minor, involving discussions about language, dictionary compilation, historical references, and meaning interpretation. These conversations contain various assertive speech acts, including stating, informing, describing, explaining, and concluding, making the film suitable for analyzing how speakers use language to exchange knowledge and construct understanding.

Although previous studies have examined assertive speech acts in various films, most research has focused on different genres and has rarely explored academically oriented films such as *The Professor and the Madman*. Furthermore, limited studies have connected the analysis of assertive speech acts in films with English Language Teaching, particularly in relation to developing learners' pragmatic competence. Therefore, this study aims to analyze assertive speech acts found in *The Professor and the Madman* and examine their relevance to English Language Teaching.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background that has been explained, this study is designed to answer the following question:

1. What types of assertive speech acts are found in The Professor and the Madman movie?
2. How are the assertive speech acts in The Professor and the Madman movie relevant to English Language Teaching (ELT)?

1.3 Limitation of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the data source is limited to a single film, The Professor and the Madman (2019), which means that the findings may not represent assertive speech acts in other film genres or real-life interactions. Second, this study focuses only on assertive speech acts based on Searle's (1979) classification and does not analyze other types of illocutionary acts, such as directives, commissives, expressives, or declaratives. Third, this research is qualitative and descriptive in nature; therefore, it does not measure the effectiveness of using film-based assertive speech acts in real English classroom practice. Lastly, the pedagogical relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT) is discussed theoretically rather than through classroom implementation or experimental testing.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The aims of the study are :

1. To identify and analyze the types of assertive speech acts performed by the characters in The Professor and the Madman movie.

2. To explore the relevance of the findings on assertive speech acts to English Language Teaching (ELT)

1.5 Operational Definitions

The researcher provides several definitions related to the research to avoid misunderstandings regarding the various terms in this research.

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to a branch of linguistics that studies how speakers and listeners create and interpret meaning based on context. It examines how contextual factors such as the relationship between speakers, the situation, and shared knowledge influence the interpretation of utterances (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). In this research, pragmatics is understood as the study of how characters in *The Professor and the Madman* use language to convey meanings, express intentions, and communicate ideas within particular situations. The analysis focuses not only on the literal meaning of utterances but also on their functions in communication.

2. Speech Acts

Speech acts refer to actions performed through the use of language. In communication, speakers do not only produce sentences but also perform certain actions, such as stating information, expressing feelings, making commitments, or declaring something (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979). In this research, speech acts are analyzed

based on Searle's (1979) classification of illocutionary acts, with a specific focus on assertive speech acts.

3. Assertive Speech Acts

Assertive speech acts refer to utterances in which speakers express propositions, beliefs, knowledge, or interpretations that they consider to represent reality. These acts show the speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed statement (Searle, 1979; Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). In this research, assertive speech acts are analyzed based on their functions in the dialogues of *The Professor and the Madman*. The categories used in this study are stating, informing, describing, explaining, and concluding. Stating

4. *The Professor and the Madman* Movie

The Professor and the Madman is a historical drama movie released in 2019 that depicts the collaboration between Professor James Murray and Dr. William Minor during the compilation of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In this research, the movie is used as the primary data source because its dialogues contain various examples of assertive speech acts, particularly in academic and intellectual conversations related to language, history, and knowledge.

1.6 Significance of the Research

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the theoretical development of pragmatics, especially in understanding assertive speech acts within authentic media discourse. The findings enrich Searle's (1979) framework by providing examples of how assertive acts operate in academic and context-rich film dialogue. The study also expands the literature on speech act analysis in films, offering additional perspectives for researchers in linguistic pragmatics.

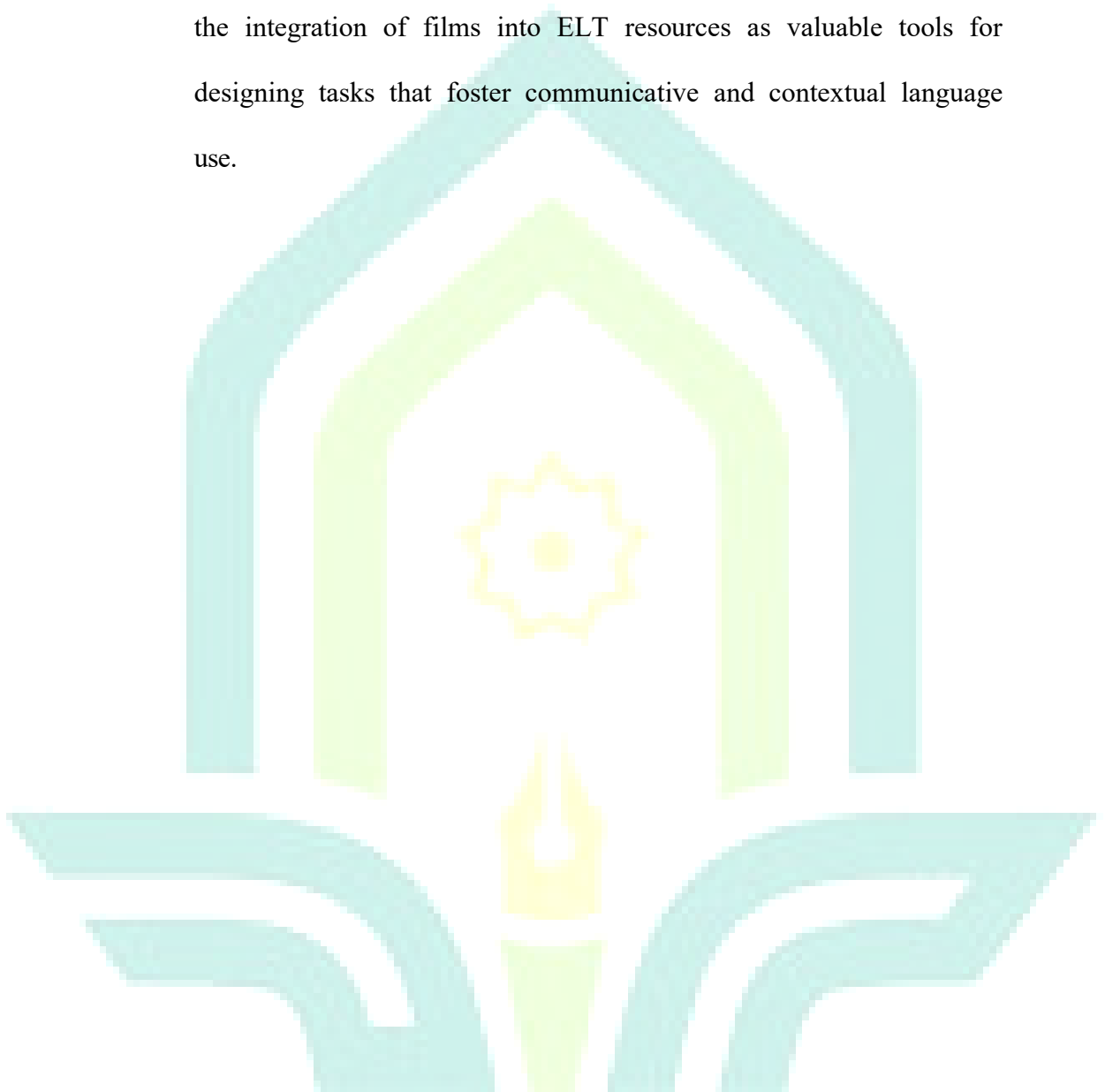
2. Empirical Significance

This study provides empirical data on the use of assertive speech acts in *The Professor and the Madman*, a film with intellectually dense discourse rarely examined in previous research. The analysis offers real examples of how speakers use assertive functions such as stating, informing, describing, explaining, and concluding in authentic interactions. The results can serve as a reference for future researchers conducting studies on pragmatics, discourse analysis, or film-based language research.

3. Practical Significance

This study provides practical benefits for teachers, learners, and curriculum developers by offering authentic examples of assertive speech acts that can be used directly in English Language Teaching (ELT). For teachers, the findings serve as a resource to incorporate contextualized and meaningful language input into classroom activities, particularly for teaching pragmatic competence. For

students, exposure to assertive forms such as explaining, informing, and presenting arguments through film dialogue can enhance their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in real-world situations. Additionally, for materials developers, the study supports the integration of films into ELT resources as valuable tools for designing tasks that foster communicative and contextual language use.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion presented in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn from this research entitled “*An Analysis of Assertive Speech Acts in The Professor and the Madman Movie and Their Relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT).*”

The first conclusion concerns the types of assertive speech acts found in the movie *The Professor and the Madman*. The analysis revealed that there are five types of assertive speech acts used by the characters throughout the movie, namely stating, informing, describing, explaining, and concluding. The characters employ these speech acts to express facts, convey information, describe situations, explain ideas, and formulate conclusions. The findings indicate that assertive speech acts play an important role in the communication process, enabling speakers to express their beliefs, knowledge, opinions, and interpretations across contexts. Through these speech acts, the characters are able to exchange information and build understanding during their interactions.

The second conclusion concerns the relevance of assertive speech acts in *The Professor and the Madman* movie to English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings show that the movie provides authentic examples of language use that can be utilized as teaching materials in English classrooms. By analyzing assertive speech acts, students can learn how English speakers

use language to provide information, express opinions, explain ideas, describe situations, and draw conclusions appropriately according to the context. Furthermore, the movie can support the teaching of pragmatics, speaking, and listening skills by exposing students to meaningful communication in real-life situations. The findings also suggest that learning assertive speech acts can help students develop pragmatic competence and communicative competence, enabling them to use language more effectively and appropriately in various communicative contexts. In conclusion, *The Professor and the Madman* movie contains various types of assertive speech acts that reflect meaningful communication among the characters. The analysis of these speech acts not only contributes to the understanding of pragmatic studies but also provides useful insights for English Language Teaching. Therefore, the movie can serve as an effective learning resource to help students improve their understanding of language use, communication strategies, and pragmatic competence in English.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, the researcher provides several suggestions for English teachers, students, and future researchers.

1. For English Teachers

For English teachers, the researcher suggests using movies as alternative learning materials in English classrooms, especially for

teaching pragmatics and communicative competence. Movies provide authentic examples of language use that allow students to observe how expressions function in real communication contexts. Teachers can use scenes from *The Professor and the Madman* as learning materials to introduce speech acts, particularly assertive speech acts. Through movie-based activities, students can analyze how characters express information, describe situations, explain ideas, and present conclusions. These activities can help students understand the relationship between language forms, speaker intentions, and communication contexts.

2. For English Students

For English students, the researcher suggests paying greater attention to the pragmatic aspects of language learning. Learning English is not only about mastering vocabulary and grammatical structures but also about understanding how language is used appropriately in different situations. By learning assertive speech acts, students can improve their ability to express ideas, provide information, describe experiences, and communicate opinions effectively. Students are also encouraged to watch English movies as additional learning resources because movies expose them to authentic expressions, pronunciation, and communication strategies used by native speakers. Moreover, students should actively practice using English in meaningful contexts. Understanding speech acts can help students become more confident communicators because they learn how to express their intentions clearly and appropriately.

3. For Future Researchers

For future researchers, further studies related to speech acts are recommended. This research focuses only on assertive speech acts found in *The Professor and the Madman* movie and their relevance to English Language Teaching. Therefore, future researchers may explore other types of speech acts, such as directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative speech acts. Future studies may also investigate speech acts using different objects, such as novels, television series, classroom interactions, social media communication, or everyday conversations. Researchers may also apply different theoretical approaches or focus on other aspects of pragmatics, such as politeness strategies, implicature, or pragmatic competence. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to explore the implementation of speech act analysis in English classrooms through experimental or classroom action research. Such studies may provide deeper understanding of how pragmatic analysis can directly support language learning processes.

4. Final Remark

Finally, the researcher hopes that this study can provide useful information and contribute to the field of pragmatics and English Language Teaching. This research is expected to become a reference for students, teachers, and future researchers who are interested in analyzing speech acts and their application in language education.



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