

Illocutionary Acts in the Instagram Captions of Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* Promotions

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the use of illocutionary acts in the Taylor Swift's Eras Tour Instagram captions. It aims to examine the types and patterns of illocutionary acts used in the captions. The writer is interested in understanding the intention behind Swift's words in the Instagram captions. In analyzing the data, the writer applied Yule's classification of illocutionary acts (1996) and employed a qualitative approach. A total of 24 Instagram captions related to the Eras Tour were selected and analyzed. The findings reveal that representative, commissive, and expressive acts were used in the captions. These illocutionary acts allowed Swift to express gratitude, state facts, and make promises. In addition, the writer identified five patterns of illocutionary acts in the captions. The study concludes that Swift uses Instagram captions not only to inform and announce her tour but also to express her feelings and promise to meet her fans.

Keywords: Eras Tour, Illocutionary Act, Instagram Captions, Utterances

INTRODUCTION

Communicative competence is not just about knowing grammar or vocabulary, but it also includes knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say it appropriately depending on the situation (Kaburise, 2011). It means being able to connect language use with the goals and context of communication, making appropriate choices based on what's happening in a conversation (Stalker, 1989, as cited in Kaburise, 2011). In the same way, Levinson (1983) points out that communication is not only about exchanging words but also involves understanding the speaker's intent, the context, and the interpretation of messages by others.

In the digital era, social media platforms play a significant role in shaping communication strategies. Sash and Company (2024) say that social media has become a crucial marketing and communication tool, offering interactive and narrative possibilities by combining visual and textual contents. Among these platforms, the writer uses Instagram because it can engage many users through images, captions, and comments. The language used in many celebrities' Instagram captions can reveal important aspects of their identities, public personas, and relationships with their followers. Studying these captions through a linguistic lens allows researchers to better understand how celebrities communicate and construct meaning in the digital space.

Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, a record-breaking global concert, broke Ticketmaster's single-day sales record with over 2.4 million tickets sold during pre-sales (Bendlin, 2023), contributed an estimated \$5 billion to the U.S. economy (Pendleton et al., 2023), and won multiple industry awards (Caulfield, 2023). These achievements are the main reasons the writer chose to analyze Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. In this study, the writer uses Taylor Swift's Instagram, especially her Instagram captions. Taylor Swift, an international singer with over 282 million Instagram followers, uses her captions to announce her Eras Tour.

The writer uses illocutionary acts to analyze the captions. According to Yule (1996), there are five types of illocutionary acts. The first type is representatives which are speech acts that state what the speaker believes to be true. When utilizing representatives, the speaker adapts words to match the world (of belief). The second type is declarations which are speech acts that affect the world through words. The third type is commissives which are speech acts used by speakers to commit to future activities. The fourth type is expressives which are speech acts that express the speaker's feelings. The last type is directives which are speech acts intended to persuade others to do something. The purposes of this study are to find out the types and patterns of illocutionary acts used in the captions.

METHOD

For this study, the writer used a qualitative approach. The data was collected from the Instagram captions posted by Taylor Swift to promote the Eras Tour. The writer selected a total of 24 captions from Taylor Swift's official Instagram account. The writer took screenshots and copied all the utterances from each caption. Then, the writer rechecked each caption to confirm its relevance to the Eras Tour and excluded the unrelated contents. The selection criteria included Instagram posts with approximately 7 million likes. Captions that contained account mentions not part of the sentence or utterance were excluded. Additionally, captions consisting of only one-word utterances were also excluded from the data. The captions were numbered chronologically based on the date they were posted. Finally, the writer analysed the utterances based on the classification of illocutionary acts proposed by Yule (1996).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the two findings: the types of illocutionary acts identified and the most frequent patterns of illocutionary acts used by Taylor Swift to promote the Eras Tour.

Illocutionary Acts Used in Taylor Swift's Eras Tour Promotion

From five types of Illocutionary acts, the writer found that Taylor Swift used three types of illocutionary acts namely expressive, representative, and commissive. Declarations and directives were not found in any of the captions because she was not making official statements or telling her fans to do something specific.

Expressive Illocutionary Acts in the Eras Tour Promotion

These are two examples of expressive acts used in the captions.

Example 1

(11) "TE AMO!"

In example 1, Taylor Swift used this caption in the context of her Eras Tour concert in Mexico City. Since Spanish is the official language of Mexico, she used it to express her love for her Mexican fans in their native language. This Spanish phrase translates to "*I love you!*" in English. By using their fans' language, Taylor Swift touched her fans' heart with the phrase that made her fans feel appreciated and wanted to make them feel included in her tour. Not only touching her fans' heart, she also strengthened her connection with her Mexican fans by creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere during her performances and showing them that she valued her fans from all backgrounds.

Example 2

(7) "I'm screaming"

In example 2, Taylor Swift used this caption when announcing the addition of 14 new shows to The Eras Tour and she expressed her feelings about touring internationally with Paramore. The phrase "I'm screaming" is a popular slang word expression commonly used to convey overwhelming excitement, joy, or disbelief. This word shows excitement and it is an expressive act because Taylor Swift expressed her feeling of excitement and surprise when she added 14 new shows to the Eras Tour. By using this phrase, Taylor Swift showed her feelings of joy and surprise about the additional tour with Paramore.

Representative Illocutionary Acts in the Eras Tour Promotion

These are two examples of representative acts used in the captions.

Example 3

(1) In my Eras era

In example 3, Taylor Swift used this caption "In my Eras era" on the day her tour started in Glendale. It is a representative act that shows the fact she was in her Eras tour. By saying that, she informed her fans by letting them know that Taylor Swift's Eras Tour had begun. It is a way of saying, "This is happening now," which told the fans so they would feel like they were part of the Taylor Swift's journey. This information update makes her fans feel included and ready to enjoy what is coming next.

Example 4

(13) We've officially wrapped up the 2023 Eras Tour and we got to end the year with 6 shows in Rio and São Paulo, with the most magical crowds.

In example 4, Taylor Swift used this caption to share that 2023 parts of her Eras Tour had come to an end with six shows in Rio and São Paulo. It is a representative act because she concluded her final Eras Tour shows 2023 in Rio and São Paulo. By saying this, she let her fans know that she appreciated everyone in Brazil who came to see her perform and celebrate the successful end of this chapter together in those cities.

Commissive Illocutionary Acts in the Eras Tour Promotion

These are two examples of commissive acts used in the captions.

Example 5

(2) See you in Vegas.

In example 5, Taylor Swift used the caption "See you in Vegas" after performing night 2 in Glendale and she promised her fans that she would meet them in her upcoming performance in Las Vegas during the Eras Tour. "See you" word indicates a commissive act because it commits Taylor Swift's promise to meet her fans in Vegas. The verb "see you" implies a promise of presence. By saying this, Taylor Swift strengthened her connection with her fans by promising a future meeting to make her fans feel valued and looked forward to.

Example 6

(22) Up next: Dublin!

In example 6, Taylor Swift used the caption “Up next: Dublin!” after her shows in Wembley Stadium. It is a commissive act because she committed to perform in Dublin. By sharing this, she committed and let her fans know what to expect for her upcoming concert in Dublin. Through this kind of promise, Taylor Swift gave them something to look forward to during the Eras Tour.

Patterns of Illocutionary Acts Are Used in Taylor Swift's Eras Tour Instagram Captions

From the captions, there were patterns of illocutionary acts that could be identified. Each pattern will be discussed by giving an example.

Representative and Expressive

There are 5 captions using the combination of representative and expressive acts. The following is one of the examples:

Example 7

(6) Last night **we all danced together in the rain for THE ENTIRE 3.5 HOUR SHOW** in foxy Foxborough MA!! **We’ve had rain shows at Gillette Stadium before** but this was a full on deluge that never let up, *I just want to thank that iconic crowd!! Love you so much* you have no idea.

In this example 7, Taylor Swift wrote this caption after her show in Gillette Stadium Foxborough. This caption “we all danced together in the rain for THE ENTIRE 3.5 HOUR SHOW” and “We’ve had rain shows at Gillette Stadium before” show how Taylor Swift stated the fact that she and her fans danced together for the entire 3.5-hour show in her tour, had rain shows at Gillette Stadium and described how she felt about her show. She started by telling her fans about the fact that it rained during the whole concert. Next, she added “I just want to thank that iconic crowd!! and love you so much” phrases that show her personal feelings like saying thank you and love to her fans.

Representative, Expressive and Commissive

There are 4 captions using the combination of representative, expressive and commissive acts. The following is one of the examples:

Example 8

(3) WELL. **Last night was a rush.** *Thank you* to everyone in that glorious Glendale night 2 crowd for giving us all you had and more. Counting down the hours til we get to play again. See you in Vegas 😊

In this context, Taylor Swift wrote this caption after her concert in Glendale on day 2. Taylor Swift used three types of illocutionary acts namely representative, expressive, and commissive. “Last night was a rush.” describes the fact of the situation about her last night show (representative), then “Thank you to everyone in that glorious Glendale night 2 crowd for giving us all you had and more,” shows her feelings by saying thank you to her fans in her Glendale Night 2 (expressive), and “Counting down the hours til we get to play again. See you in Vegas” finally ends with commitment to perform again and a promise to meet her fans in Vegas by saying “See you in Vegas” (commissive).

Representative, Expressive, Representative, Expressive and Commissive

There are 2 captions using the combination of representative, expressive, representative, expressive and commissive acts. The following is one of the examples:

Example 9


(12) Andddd **we're back at it! Starting off the South American leg of The Eras Tour in Argentina** = best decision possible. *I can't even express my gratitude* to the Buenos Aires crowds. **I'd never been to Argentina before** and they gave us the most electric, magical memories. *Thanks to the amazing fans* whose show was postponed Friday for coming back Sunday and blowing us away with your passion and excitement. See you next weekend, Rio!!

In this example 9, Taylor Swift wrote this caption after a three day show in Argentina as the beginning of the South American leg of The Eras Tour. "Andddd we're back at it!" indicates a representative act because Taylor Swift stated the fact that the tour had resumed and she was back to her tour in Argentina as the best decision. Taylor expressed her feelings by saying, "I can't even express my gratitude to the Buenos Aires crowds," which shows an expressive act because she said thank you to her fans. "I'd never been to Argentina before," is a representative act because Taylor Swift stated the fact that she had never been to Argentina before. "Thanks to the amazing fans" indicates an expressive act because Taylor Swift said thank you to her fans. Lastly, "See you next weekend" indicates a commissive act because Taylor Swift promised to meet her fans next weekend in Rio.

Expressive and Commissive

There are 2 captions using the combination of expressive and commissive acts. The following is one of the examples:

Example 10

(2) *I miss you* like it was the very first night. Good thing we're about to go onstage and do the whole thing again tonight. See you  Glendale, Erazona ☺

In this context, Taylor Swift wrote this caption after her performance on day 1 in Glendale, Arizona and she wrote this for the upcoming Eras Tour performance on day 2 in Glendale. The clause "I miss you" is an expressive act, as she expressed her feelings that she missed her fans. Next, "Do the whole thing again tonight" and "See you," are commissive acts where she promised to do the day 2 performance and meet her fans again in Glendale.

Representative Only

There are 2 captions using only representative acts. The following is one of the examples:

Example 11

(1) "In **my Eras era**."

In this context, Taylor Swift wrote this caption on the day her concert in Glendale on day 1. The caption "In my Eras era." is a representative illocutionary act. "My Eras era" phrase indicates as representative act because it shows that Taylor swift stated the fact that she was in her Eras tour. There is no expression of feelings, no directive, no declaration, and no promise of future action in this caption.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, rather than simply informing and announcing, the study shows how her captions have many intentions or purposes such as expressing feelings, stating the facts, and

committing or promising to her audience. Interestingly, unlike most singers who often write Instagram captions after their tours that directly say what they mean in a straightforward way, Taylor Swift tends to combine stating facts, expressing her feelings, and making commitments or promises to her fans. This way of writing helps her connect more closely with her fans and shows how much she cares about them. However, since this study was limited, the writer hopes the future research could explore and compare her style with other artists. It would also be interesting to see how different celebrities use illocutionary acts on social media to promote their tour. Even with its limitations, this study hopes to give a better understanding of how artists like Taylor use illocutionary acts in their Instagram and the patterns of the illocutionary acts.

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