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Characters and Speech Acts in Drama

A Case Study of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*

Master's Thesis

Vaasa 2017

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A Case Study of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane***Degree:** Master of Arts**Date:** 2017**Supervisor:** Daniel Rellstab

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Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee näytelmässä olevia henkilöihahmoja, heidän välisiä puheaktejaan ja heidän välistä hierarkiaa. Tutkielmassa keskitytään yhteen näytelmään, jonka nimi on Vuoriston *Kaunotar* (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*). Tutkimus keskittyy näytelmätekstiin, ei näytelmäesitykseen. Tutkimuksen kohteena on näytelmän kaksi päähenkilöä, Mag (äiti) ja Maureen (tytär).

Tutkielman teoreettisina viitekehyksinä toimivat Culpeperin (2001) kehittämä karakterisaatiomalli sekä Searlen (1969) kehittämä puheaktien luokittelu. Tutkimusmateriaali puheaktien osalta rajattiin koskemaan vain käskyjä, koska niitä oli suhteellisesti sopiva määrä ja niiden määritelmät olivat selkeät. Käskyjen avulla pystyttiin tutkimaan henkilöihahmojen välistä hierarkiaa sekä keskittymään siihen, mitä tietoa hahmoista voi saada tutkimalla heidän puheaktejaan. Lisäksi tutkittiin, miten Searlen kehittämien puheaktien onnistuneisuusehdot täyttyivät heidän puheakteissaan.

Tutkimus antoi yllättävän lopputuloksen. Tytär oli selvästi ylempänä hierarkiassa kuin äitinsä. Hierarkia näkyi siinä, että tytär antoi paljon enemmän käskyjä äidilleen kuin päinvastoin. Äiti myös noudatti käskyjä useammin kuin tytär. Analysoitujen käskyjen lukumäärä oli pieni, joten niiden perusteella ei voitu tehdä mitään merkittäviä johtopäätöksiä siitä, millaisia hahmoja äiti ja tytär olivat. Ainoastaan käskyissä esiintyvien tiettyjen ja useasti toistuvien sanojen perusteella voitiin sanoa, että hahmot olivat melko suoraviivaisia. Käskyjen onnistuneisuusehdot täyttyivät vain kahdessa tapauksessa. Tässä kohtaa piti myös ymmärtää tutkimuksen kohde eli näytelmä. Ristiriitoja täynnä oleva teos on paljon mielenkiintoisempi kuin sovinnainen näytelmä.

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**KEYWORDS:** speech act theory, characters, authority, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

If you are an eager theatre-goer, what makes you go there again and again? Is it the theme, the nature of the play or the skilful actors or do you just go there for the entertainment? Maybe the answer could be all of these. My answers to the questions are the entertainment and the actors. I look for different types of experience. I enjoy being moved by various feelings whether they are sadness or hatred. When an actor plays the role plausibly, it evokes emotions in my mind. Quite many times I have been carried away by the events on the stage and it is down to the actors representing characters there.

What makes drama such an interesting genre among other genres? It is the nature of it. It is written to be performed in front of the live audience, as Short (1996: 174) states. In the past, according to Esslin (1987: 13), live theatre was the only means of a dramatic performance and was addressed to a limited audience. Thomas (2009) notes, however, that in the Elizabethan era, people, both rich and poor, went to the open-air venues to be entertained. Today the audience of drama can enjoy it, apart from theatrical performances, through different media, such as television and cinema. Whereas the limited audience could watch the performances in the past, today everyone can watch them regardless the time and place. However, the difference between live theatre performances and plays seen, e.g., on television lies in the fact that live theatrical performance is never *exactly* the same, no matter how many times you go and see the same play whereas the play seen on television may always be the same production. In addition, the atmosphere which exists at a theatre cannot be conveyed by any media to the spectators at home.

Esslin (1987: 129) points out that “drama builds its representation of reality in a non-linear, non-systematic manner”. The audience has to be conscious of picking up the basic elements of the exposition and the successive linking of events and integrating them into a whole picture. By supporting Esslin, Toner & Whittome (2003: 209) state that the spectators tend to accept the status quo at the beginning of the play. When the play begins, the audience interprets the situation and tries to form an entity out of it. In

order for the audience to do that, the stage is quite often empty for a while, only the set is on display. Further, if the actors are already on the stage, nothing may happen for a short while.

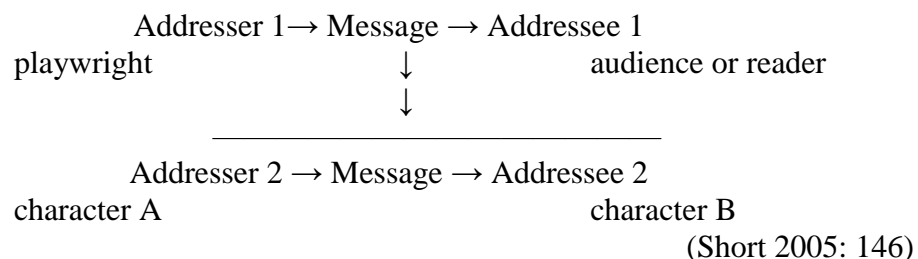
From the audience point of view, the information about characters is gained by seeing and hearing them. The discourses, or conversations, which take place between the characters on the stage, are important. Short (1996: 168 ff.) defines drama as the conversational genre. This refers to its nature as to present conversations on the stage. He points out that the discourse structure of drama is doubled. This means that the comprehensive level of the conversation occurs between the playwright and the audience. The second level takes place between the characters on the stage. Character talk allows the spectators to listen to what they say. The doubled structure increases the dramatic irony, for instance, in the case where the playwright and the audience know something more than the characters on stage. The knowledge causes tension among the audience since they wonder what will happen when the characters discover the matter in question. The illustration below depicts the structure.

The basic form of communicative event according to Short (2005: 146):

Addresser 1 → Message → Addressee 1

In the basic form of the communicative event the two participants exchange roles. One person addresses and gives information to another.

In dramatic texts, there is the doubled structure, where one level is embedded in another:



When a character speaks to another character, this discourse is part of what the playwright ‘tells’ to the audience. There can be many layers of embedded conversations in any play. For instance, a character tells to another the words of a third character. According to Short (2005: 145 ff.), it is important to notice the general embedded nature of drama since features which, for example, mark any social relation at character level, become messages about the character at the discourse level, which are related to the author and the reader or the audience.

Short (1996: 171 ff.) points out that not all plays follow the prototypical discourse level mentioned above. For instance, plays with narratives have usually a three-level discourse structure, such as playwright-audience, narrator-narratees and character-character. He also emphasizes that depending on the play, there are different ‘discourse architectures’ that are essential for the audience in order to get information about the characters. The following example from the stage directions in the play *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (the abbreviation BQL about the play is used throughout the thesis) illustrates the doubled discourse between the audience and the playwright.

- (1) *As Ray’s footsteps fade, Mag gets up, reads the message on the table, goes to the kitchen window and glances out, then finds a box of matches, comes back to the table, strikes a match, lights the message, goes to the range with it burning and drop it inside. Sound of footsteps approaching the front door. Mag shuffles back to her rocking chair and sits in it just as Maureen enters.* (BQL 1996:12)

In this example the playwright lets the audience know more than one of the characters (Maureen). After some unimportant turns concerning the weather, television programmes and missed calls, the scene continues:

- (2) **Maureen** [...] And nobody visited us, either? Ah no.  
**Mag** Ah no, Maureen. Who would be visiting us?  
**Maureen** Nobody, I suppose. Ah no.  
 [...]  
**Mag** (*nervously*) Em, apart from wee Ray Dooley who passed.  
**Maureen** (*knowing*) Oh, did Ray Dooley pass, now?  
**Mag** He passed, aye, and said hello as he was passing. (BQL 1996: 12–13)



At this point, the audience begins to assume that Maureen already knows about Ray's visit, otherwise she would not ask questions about visitors. Maureen knows that Ray Dooley visited them, because she encountered him briefly in the garden. So she knows very well that Ray has been there but she wants to find out if Mag says anything about Ray to her. Mag is forced to say something about Ray since Maureen is so persistent. Mag realizes that Maureen knows about Ray's visit, nevertheless, she is unwilling to say something about the message Ray left there to be handed to Maureen. Although the present thesis focuses on play-text and not on the performance on the stage, it is relevant to present the doubled structure by using the playwright-audience connection as an example.

Mick Short (1996: 168) identifies drama as a literary genre which represents naturally existing *conversations*. He agrees that these conversations are not exactly the same as the natural ones, since conversations in plays are designed to be overheard by an audience, which is not the case in most of the naturally occurring conversations. In contemporary drama some of the playwrights have made great efforts in order to create the impact on the real life conversations with repetitions, unfinished sentences and interruptions.

As mentioned above, the existing conversations in a play are not exactly the same as free or naturally occurring ones. Short (1996: 174) points out that theatre audiences may travel relatively long way in order to participate in an act of spoken communication in which they actually cannot participate. Further, they know that the performers on the stage render words that are written by a playwright, and the artificial world does not obtain after the performance is over.

Dramatic dialogues are not like everyday conversations when feedback is taken into account. Short (1996: 178) continues, that in real life, when A talks to B, B gives regular indications that B listens actively, these being, for example, head nods, different bodily movements and facial expressions or various response noises. This does not mean that in dramatic dialogues any feedback is not given. Feedback is given, but

usually quite seldom. When there is a performance on the stage and one character speaks, the other characters usually stand still and let the audience focus on the speaker and the message. It would be disturbing if the other characters nodded and made different facial expressions, let alone commented and made noises in the middle of the speaker's line.

The above paragraphs may suggest to the reader that there are no similarities between real conversations and dramatic dialogues. That is not the case. According to Short (1996: 179), people do take turns in real conversations and do not talk at the same time. There are turn takings in dramatic dialogues as well. This gives a 'realistic feel' to the dialogues, thus, the rule of not to speak at the same time is followed. If this is not observed, the overlapping would cause hearing difficulties for the audience and the enjoyment of the play would be ruined.

Regarding the study of the conversations, Richardson (2010: 14ff.) suggests that language studies where conversations are the object of the study, naturally occurring unmediated talk prevail over other kinds due to their nature of authenticity. At the same time, stylistics is involved in the language of literary texts, including plays. For instance, McIntyre (2006), Culpeper (2001) and Herman (1995) have studied plays. Valerie Lowe (1998: 128), for example, points out that similar kinds of analyses can be conducted on play-text conversations as naturally occurring conversations because of their similarities. Lowe (ibid. 128) notes that there is an advantage in play-text conversations: readers get access to information which is denied in real life conversations, for instance, readers can judge more precisely if the character is truthful or dishonest when interacting with other characters. This is not possible in real life conversations.

According to Culpeper (2001: 123), research concerning dialogues in drama is numerous. For instance, many stylisticians have applied speech act theory to play-texts in order to show how playwrights have utilized speech acts for dramatic effect. For example, Hurst (1987) has studied characters and their speech acts in a novel called *A Family and a Fortune* by Ivy Compton-Burnett. Hurst quantified the types of speech

acts and drew conclusions for characters. In her study, the focus was on two characters, Dudley and Edgar. Hurst noticed that Dudley used directives (questions, commands and requests) and she came to the conclusion that Dudley liked to tell people to tell him to do something. Additionally, Lowe (1998) has studied speech acts in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, where the focus was on the speech acts of the black slave Tituba.

For the present study, the play called *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* serves as the primary material. During the years, I have seen quite a number of Irish plays at theatres. They have been not only amusing but also touching. That is one reason why I chose an Irish play *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996) by Martin McDonagh for my object of the study. His play introduces *Mag* and *Maureen Folan*, a mother and a daughter. This is a black comedy but if the spectators expect it to be amusing, they will be disappointed. Instead, it is very tragic. Maureen feels trapped with her mother and this leads her to act desperately. At the same time, it is appealing in the sense that the relationship and the tension between mother and daughter vary almost in every scene.

Since its publication in 1996, it has been performed all over the world and reviewed multiple times with glowing words (see, for instance, *The New Yorker* (2006), *The Telegraph* (2010), *The Independent* (2011) and *The Irish Times* (2016) for reviews). The play has also been performed at least in Helsinki, Tampere, Kuopio and Vaasa in Finland during the years. Since the play has been very popular, it has also interested many researchers. For instance, Alfonso (2009) has studied violence and Irishness, Piazza (2012) has identified conflict discourse, Vargas & Vargas (2013) have examined the dynamics of power between the characters, and Yelmiş (2014) has contributed to representations of violence and mother myth.

Out of these studies, Piazza (2012) and Vargas & Vargas (2013) are close to my topic of study. My first aim is to study speech acts of two main characters, called Maureen and Mag. I will exclusively focus on directives and their felicity conditions. My second aim is to study characters through these speech acts in order to find out what I can infer from them. My third aim is to study hierarchy between the main characters from the speaker's point of view. Hence, my research questions are:

1. Are the felicity conditions fulfilled in directives?
2. What can I infer from the characters through their speech acts?
3. How is hierarchy like between the characters?

It is Jonathan Culpeper's (2002 [2001]) model of characterisation that is the theoretical framework applied in the study. Culpeper introduces his mixed model for analysing characters in a play. The mixed model is the combination of two polarized approaches, which are called humanising and de-humanising approaches. Culpeper's model can be illustrated in general that the spectators of a play use their prior knowledge stored in their long-term memory in order to understand characters on the stage. They also infer things about characters by looking at their appearance.

In addition, the theoretical framework concerning the analysis of speech acts is largely based on Searle's (1976 [1969]) contribution to the matter. He identifies five different classes of speech acts; they are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. Putri also (2013: 1) discusses and identifies speech acts. People need to express something. It can be done by acting or just by uttering. Utterances that people produce do not only consist of grammar and words but of performed action as well. People can use language, for example, to give orders and warnings. These actions executed via utterances are called speech acts. Accordingly, Fotion (2000: 4ff) points out that it is difficult to understand language by just looking at the language itself. Any commands, promises and declarations of war make then no sense. Speech acts are embedded in the context. Fotion (ibid. 4) continues that a speech act is more than just words; they cannot be understood without considering the social and physical context.

For example, Searle and his teacher Austin both see that speech acts cannot be comprehended without considering intentions. When people communicate, they do it intentionally.

The purpose of the present thesis is to study speech acts, characters and the hierarchy in a play-text. The play has altogether nine scenes out of which four scenes (One, Two,

Four and Seven) are chosen under study. Scenes Three, Five, Six, Eight and Nine are omitted from the material. The reason is that in those scenes, one or the other of the women is not on the stage. The purpose is to look at the women's interaction, not at the interaction with other characters. To shed light on the omitted scenes, Scene Three includes Pato and Maureen discussing their past and presence during a night at Folan House, Scene Five depicts Pato writing the letter to Maureen, Scene Six presents Mag and Ray talking, Scene Eight portrays Maureen's monologue and Scene Nine includes Maureen and Ray discussing the future.

After omitting the scenes, the occurrences of speech of Mag and Maureen are counted. As the object of the study is a play, and the women are the main characters, the number of utterances is quite substantial. The first division is roughly made on structural level, that is, all the declaratives (statements), interrogatives (questions) and imperatives (commands and requests) are marked (Putri 2013: 3). Due to the high number of declaratives, and their nature, they are omitted from the analysis. Question sentence types are also quite substantial but they do not give noteworthy extra or background information which is needed for the study. That is the reason for omitting them from the analysis. On the structural level, imperatives remain under study. They serve best for the purpose of the study. The imperatives are further divided into orders and threats.

When analysing the imperatives in the material, I noticed that orders outnumbered threats quite substantially. At this point, the definitions of orders and threats were considered. The decision was made that also threats were left out in the analysis part. Although it would be interesting to analyse threats, they were omitted from the material since they were so few.

Before continuing to Chapter 2, an outline of the thesis is given. This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 focuses on characters. Chapter 3 is concerned with speech acts and speech act theory. Chapter 4 presents the analysis on the material and the thesis

closes with some conclusions based on the analysis in Chapter 5.

## 2 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS IN PLAYS

This chapter introduces the concept of *character*. Further, it presents a characterisation model by Jonathan Culpeper which is partly employed in the present study. *Characterisation* means the act of creating and describing characters. It comprehends both description of a character's traits and personality. The way in which characters act, think and speak enhances their characterisation. *Character* means people in narrative drama. Lethbridge and Mildorf (2003b: 49) state that a character is designed by an author to fulfil a specific function in a specific context. The characters are not real persons but representations of people.

Why study drama characters then? Lethbridge et al. (2003a: 113) point out that drama directly stages scenes with different dialogues and actions. Characters have an essential role in this particular genre and, hence, deserve attention. Furthermore, characters at theatres differ from those presented in prose. At theatre, an actor or an actress may interpret the playwright's description and dialogue in their own way in order to add new layers and depth to a character whereas in prose characters are given space for slow development in the course of the novel.

Analyses of characters have been conducted very often. Early literary critics have analysed characters in poems and prose, regarding, for example, the richness of Shakespearean plays in the Elizabethan era. Short (2005: 137) points out that in the mid 20th century, dramatic criticism was a text-based study, where plays were treated like poems, and, for instance, metaphors and elements of imagery were analysed. The play-text was not treated as a whole, critics took out, for instance, long soliloquies from the play and analysed them as poems.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 59) portrays character as "a network of character-traits". This network is created by depicting character-indicators in the course of narrative. The indicators are happenings through which the image of character's personality is constructed by the reader. Rimmon-Kenan concentrates on the characters in prose where characters develop gradually in the course of the events.

Culpeper (2002: 252) notes that literary critics have long debated the ontological status of characters. He states that there are two fairly different approaches to the status. Firstly, a humanising approach presented by A.C. Bradley (1965) and secondly, a de-humanising approach by L.C. Knights (1946).

Bradley (1965) and only a small number of scholars who share the view of the humanising approach, assume that characters in plays or other literary texts are imitations or representations of real people. Humanising characters can be enjoyable in films and plays by picturing them as if they are real people. The view is, however, very naïve, it proposes that the performer on the stage is a real person, not a character who they *pretend* to be.

An example of humanising a character can be taken from the television. The American television series *The Bold and The Beautiful* was aired in Finland some twenty-five years ago for the first time. One of the actors, Ron Moss, whose character was Ridge Forrester, visited Finland shortly after the series had been launched here. The headlines of the yellow press screamed that Ridge Forrester is here. Presumably, the journalists did remember to write his real name in articles, but to his fans he was still Ridge, not Ron. This humanising process concerning television characters, of course, is due to the fact that the spectators of the television show see the characters on a regular basis, which promotes the process. This is not the case in plays, regarding the regularity. Spectators usually see the performance only once and strong ties between characters and spectators are not necessarily created. Culpeper (2002: 253) notes, however, that “part of [people’s] enjoyment of plays and films lies in imagining characters as if they were real people”.

The de-humanising approach by L.C. Knights (1946) is the opposite of Bradley’s. As stated in this approach, characters only exist in textual existence. People should not revive them by applying psychological theories. Chatman says that “characters are products of the plots, that their status is “functional”, that they are participants [...] rather than personages, that it is erroneous to consider them as real beings” (quoted in Culpeper 2002: 255). The characters do not seem to have any meaning outside the text.



According to this approach, it is more concentrated on what characters do than what characters are.

While these approaches seem to be so far from each other and not necessarily suitable for analysing characters in dramatic texts accurately, Culpeper (2002 [2001]) introduces a mixed approach which contains the elements of above mentioned models. Culpeper's model is of important value for the present study as the model is developed for the process of analysing characters in plays.

### 2.1 A mixed approach by Jonathan Culpeper

As Culpeper did not find Bradley and Knights' models suitable for analysing characters, he created his own cognitive model of characterisation. He calls it a mixed approach. Elisabetta Cecconi (2007: 25) calls it a combinatory approach, as she discusses Culpeper's model in her book. In her analysis, she applies this combinatory model to analyse characters in *Ulysses*.

Indeed, Culpeper's model is a combination of those two extremes. He proposes that characters result from our interpretations of texts (2002: 255). The spectators of a play and readers of a novel create characters in their minds. Toolan (quoted in Culpeper 2002: 256) points out very precisely that no matter what researchers say, people will continue understanding characters as individuals by using information outside the text and by using their own knowledge of characters in real life.

To that end, Culpeper's aim is to identify how a representation of character might be formed in the mind during the process of reading. He proposes processes which are called top-down and bottom-up. In a top-down process prior knowledge is essential in forming an impression of a character. In a bottom-up process characterisation cues are taken into account in the actual text. Culpeper suggests that the reader's impression of the character is a mixture of these two processes. (Culpeper 2001: 28)

Let us now consider the top-down process in detail. It is organized as follows: *control system*, *prior knowledge*, *situation model*, *surface structure* and *textbase*. According to Culpeper (2001: 36), the *control system* is a set of systems which regulate audience's level to create its own picture of the play. It is an umbrella term under which all the other four processes are coordinated dependently.

Culpeper (2002: 262–263) points out that *prior knowledge* involves generic information which is stored in long-term memory. When a character performs an act, spectators can give it a meaning from their memory. Alternatively, the spectators can use a schema theory which is suggested by several scholars, for example, by Eysenck and Keane (quoted in Culpeper 2002: 262): “The term schema is used to refer [...] to knowledge about the world, events, people and actions”. Based on the schema, Toolan (1988) provides an interesting view to characterisation. There is an ‘iceberg’ phenomenon concerning it, meaning that the words are the noticeable part of character and underneath there is the unnoticeable, yet inferable part.

Culpeper (2002: 264) points out that this can be applied to the play-texts as how they are first introduced by using stage directions. The stage directions are designed to quickly show to the reader what kind of character is about to appear. The following is an example from my material concerning the stage directions for characters and their positions on the stage at the beginning of the play:

- (3) **Mag Folan**, a stoutish woman in her early seventies with short, tightly permed hair and a mouth that gapes slightly, is sitting in the rocking-chair, staring off into space. Her left hand is somewhat more shrivelled and red than her right. The front door opens and her daughter **Maureen**, a plain, slim woman of about forty, enters carrying shopping and goes through to the kitchen. (BQL 1996: 1)

The stage directions have been created by the playwright for the actors and directors of the play. In this particular play *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the stage directions are quite precise. They give information about the set and the characters' outer appearance. The audience sees the representation of those directions on the stage. The audience creates, by using its prior knowledge or schema, an interpretation of the subjects on the stage.

*The situation model* is tightly attached to prior knowledge. In the model, there are two possible sources of information in use: prior knowledge and textual information. In this case, prior knowledge takes priority in forming the impressions of people rather than trying to add individual pieces of information (Culpeper 2002: 265). If, for instance, the play is a realist drama as *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the audience will more likely create the characters through its prior knowledge about real people. (Culpeper 2001: 36)

*The surface structure* “includes the particular formal linguistic choices attributed to characters, and provides the basis for syntactic and semantic analyses which result in the text-base” (Culpeper 2002: 269). In other words, this structure explains how a character says his/her utterances.

*The textbase* process quite simply implies what a character says. Culpeper (2002: 267) refers here, however, more to the writers of prose rather than to the playwrights. He suggests that readers can be drawn to pay attention to the textbase level by presenting incoherent, ambiguous or unusual information about a character. This prevents the reader from drawing any easy conclusions on the character. As an example, Culpeper uses an extract, which is presented originally by Zwaan (1996: 247-8: cited in Culpeper 2002: 267). It is as follows: The narrator unexpectedly mentions that a certain character is left-handed. First, this seems to be quite insignificant but later quite important, as the reader finds out. This is characteristic especially in prose. However, the process may also be applied to plays. Consider the part of the above example (4): *Her left hand is somewhat more shrivelled and red than her right*. At first, this feature may seem insignificant, and is probably registered and interpreted as the somewhat normal representation of a hand of an elderly person by the reader of the text. Only later it is understood that this particular feature is the sign of a long-term physical abuse acted by the daughter.

Surface structure and textbase process serve best for the purpose of the present study since the focus is on the dialogue of the characters in the play-text not on the spoken dialogue performed on the stage.

## 2.2 Hierarchy and power

It is, indeed, very challenging to define the concept of hierarchy, the attribute which is also under study in the present thesis. I will try to do that with the help of the concept of power. Weber (1998: 114 ff.) defines power to be an ability to control the behaviour of people. In the positive sense, power can be given to some marginalised groups (women in a patriarchal society) in order to gain actual power to their lives. In the negative sense, it can be used to oppress and disempower people. Weber also makes a distinction between institutionally or socially legitimated power and discursively structured power. For defining it, he uses West and Zimmerman's (quoted in Weber 1998: 114) notion of participant identities. They are as follows:

1. master identity: valid in all occasions of discourse, consists of permanent identities, like sex, age and social class (as Mag for being older than Maureen)
2. situated identity: social setting, less permanent identities, like a worker - a CEO (as Maureen and her alleged superior at work)
3. discourse identity: shifts regularly between the participants, they are created by verbal activities, for instance, by expressing an order. It can threaten the participant's face and put the speaker in a powerful position. The success of an order depends on whether it is accepted, ignored or rejected.

Master and situated identities give people both social and institutional power. Social power is unstable, it has to be renegotiated. This is done through the discourse identity. Sometimes socially powerless participant can gain discursive power over socially powerful participant. This will be expected in the material under study.

Broadly speaking, hierarchy is usually used for corporational or organisational purposes. A set of hierarchy can be seen as a term for defining the rank in workplaces, i.e., who is superior to whom. The individuals can find themselves above, at the same level or below the other individuals. In the present study, by hierarchy it is meant that the speaker who does the speech act of ordering, has some authority or power over the hearer, and thus, is above the hearer. The notion of authority is interchangeable used for

hierarchy, since it is commonly used in defining directive speech acts. In this study, authority is scrutinised in order to find out which of the women is above, below or at the same level to the other. Furthermore, West and Zimmerman's discourse identity is employed in the analysis of hierarchy. (quoted in Weber 1998: 114)

### 3 SPEECH ACTS AND SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF DRAMA

What follows now is Chapter 3 which presents the speech act theory. First, a general picture of speech acts is given. Second, different types of distinguishing speech acts are introduced, such as direct and indirect speech acts, Austin's and Searle's considerable contributions on the matter, and finally, the speech act of ordering is discussed.

A very generic definition of speech acts may be the following: People use language in order to conduct particular acts. These are widely known as speech acts. In general, people can ask, promise, order or threat to eat lunch. These can also be said to be communicative acts, since language is not necessarily needed. A person can point at the lunch and imitate the act of eating. This shallow definition will serve as a preliminary explanation for the speech acts.

It was actually J. L. Austin (1962) who said first that language may be used both for describing and for doing things. The speech act theory is based on two landmark works by John L. Austin (1962) and John R. Searle (1969). There are also other scholars who have contributed to the theory; their theories are, to some extent, based on that of Austin's. What follows now is a short review of studies on speech acts by Bach and Harnish (1979) and Pfister (1988).

Bach and Harnish (quoted in Korta et al. 2015) have contributed to speech acts by creating their own taxonomy. It is based on the frameworks of Austin, Searle and Grice. They have partially the same categories for speech acts as Austin and Searle, and they have adapted Grice's model of inferential understanding of the speaker's intention. To illustrate this, consider the following short example from the material:

- (4)     **Ray**     Well, will you let me in or am I going to talk to the door?  
           **Mag**     She's feeding the chickens. (BQL1996: 7)

What is said can be seen with the literal content of the utterance. What is not said is implied in the non-literal content. In other words, it is conveyed that Mag is not going to

open the door although it is not actually said. Mag intends Ray to find out by saying the reason why she will not open the door. (Korta et al. 2015)

Considering Bach and Harnish's (quoted in Korta et al. 2015) taxonomy of speech acts, their category of directives interests the writer of the present study. Directives are classified in the same way as they are in Searle's model. Directives are defined in the following way: they express an attitude about a future action committed by a hearer. The intention is that a speaker's utterance is the reason for the hearer's action. Bach and Harnish offer some verbs which belong to this class: advising, begging, ordering, requesting and warning. By and large, the definition is quite the same as in Searle's (1976: 11) theory.

Pfister (1988: 5) looks at speech acts in a different way than Bach and Harnish. He only concentrates on the characters in plays. He points out that performances of play-texts are reduced to monologues or dialogues which are uttered by dramatic figures. (Pfister uses both terms *figure* and *character* to illustrate fictional personae in plays). The characters present themselves directly in their roles as speakers; their dialogues create the verbal foundation used in play-texts. The dialogues are the very essential way of presentation. They are spoken action and, therefore, "the performative aspect described by speech-act theory is always present in dramatic dialogue" (Pfister 1988: 6). Pfister suggests further that "as a speech-act, the dramatic speech constitutes its own particular speech situation". (ibid. 6)

Eli Rozik (1998: 74) develops Pfister's model further, Rozik proposes that "a theatre performance is an overall speech act unit". The whole performance combines a description of an imaginary world and indicators of intended effects on the audience. In other words, a performance on the stage is a sign of action in interaction between the playwright and the audience.

Broadly speaking, speech acts have been categorized in many different ways. What follows is a discussion of three various classifications of them in the following subsections. They are direct and indirect speech acts, Austin's model and finally

Searle's model.

### 3.1 Direct and indirect speech acts

Yule (1996: 54 ff.) provides a clear definition for direct and indirect speech acts. A simple structural distinction between three general types of speech acts can be done by three basic sentence types, these are illustrated below.

**Table 1.** Examples of direct speech acts

utterance	structure	communicative function
I did take my Complan.	declarative	statement
What are you watching?	interrogative	question
Look at me!	imperative	command/request

An utterance is seen as a direct speech act when there is an obvious relationship between the structure and the communicative function of the utterance. All the examples in Table 1 are direct speech acts since they clearly demonstrate the intended meaning which the speaker has when making the utterance.

In indirect speech acts there is no clear relationship between the form and function of the utterance. In other words, the form does not correspond to function, as can be seen in the following Table 2.

**Table 2.** Examples of indirect speech acts

utterance	structure	communicative function
Will we have the radio on for ourselves?	interrogative	request
Please.	declarative	request



In these examples the speaker does not clearly state the intended meaning behind the utterance. It is the hearer who has to analyse it in order to understand its meaning. As Yule (1993: 55) points out, one of the most frequent types of indirect speech acts in English is the type of interrogatives. They not only require an answer but also an action. Example (5) is from the material. By uttering ‘Will we have the radio on for ourselves?’ Mag (the speaker) wants Maureen (the hearer) to actually do the act of switching on the radio.

- |     |                                   |  |               |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|---------------|
| (5) | <b>Maureen</b> ( <i>smiling</i> ) | An interfering ol' biddy is all you are.<br>Do you want a shortbread finger? |               |
|     | <b>Mag</b>                        | I <i>do</i> want a shortbread finger.  |               |
|     | <b>Maureen</b>                    | <b>Please.</b>   |               |
|     | <b>Mag</b>                        | Please.  | (BQL1996: 45) |

This example shows how a single word can function as an indirect speech act in the form of request for the speaker. Maureen does not simply give the cookie to Mag although she expresses a strong wish to have one. Maureen forces Mag to plead for it by uttering *Please* which Mag does by repeating the word. Martinez (2013: 103) points out that the adverb *please* is usually treated as a directivity mitigator, according to Dik (quoted in Martinez 2013: 103). It means that it is a linguistic device which is used to convert orders into requests. The use of *please* usually increases hearer's optionality towards the require action uttered by the speaker. In example 4, as the only word is the adverb, it functions as a reminder for the hearer (Mag) that she has no other choice than act accordingly in order to get the biscuit.

Searle (1979) also developed the notion of indirect speech acts by stating:

In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. To be more specific, the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts includes a theory of speech acts [and] certain general principles of cooperative conversation [...] (1979: 31 ff.).

Following Searle's definition, Mag and Maureen have the mutually shared background since they live together. Maureen does not want to give a biscuit to Mag straight away but instead, manipulates Mag to beg for it. The begging is carried out by repeating 'please' after Maureen. This is the satisfactory utterance for Maureen to give the biscuit to Mag. In the normal course of any communication, the complete intention of discourse cannot be determined only by lexical or semantic analysis, but depends on the context, as it is in example (5).

The following subsections introduce the theories of Austin and Searle. They are considered to be the fathers of the speech act theory.

### 3.2 Austin's theory

Austin was fascinated by the way in which words can be used to *do* different things. If the speakers suggest, promise or argue an intention, it does not depend only on the literary meaning of the words but also on the intention of what to do with it, and also on the social setting where this activity occurs. Let us consider the following example: "I will pick you up at ten". Here, what the speaker might intend to do and be taken to do is a promise that the speaker picks the hearer up at ten. "The ability to promise and to intend to promise" is based on the existing social norms about what this promise is what composes of promising. He foregrounds the social norms in "doing things with words, with [...] respect to the class of speech acts which are known as illocutionary acts". (Korta et al. 2015)

His book *How to do Things with Words* (1962) consists of his lectures given fifty years ago. Korta et al. (2015; see also Herman 1995: 165) note that Austin's first attempt of classifying speech acts was two-fold. A year before, in 1961, he introduced a distinction between what he called 'constatives' and 'performatives'. The former form simply states if the utterance is true or false. The latter states the performative act as doing something in saying, as in "I promise". The distinction turns out to be difficult because of the overlapping of the verbs in both categories. As a result of that, he gives up

developing this model and suggests a new model with three levels. In the model, a speech act consists of a locutionary, perlocutionary or illocutionary act. Locutionary act means the act of saying, i.e. what is said. Perlocutionary act refers to the act done by the saying, i.e., what is achieved. The last in the list, illocutionary act deserves more attention while it was the level Austin develops further. It is the act done in saying, i.e. what wants to be achieved. (Herman 1995: 167 ff.)

In order to perform a speech act successfully, certain background conditions have to be fulfilled. As Herman (1995: 166) notes, Austin describes them felicity conditions. The description of these conditions is adapted from Levinson (quoted in Herman 1995: 166). In short, the conditions are as follows, (1) there must a conventional procedure having a conventional effect, and circumstances and persons need to be appropriate. (2) The procedure must be done in a right way and completely. (3) The persons must have required thoughts and intentions, and if the resulting conduct is clearly identified, the relevant parties must do so. To illustrate the felicity conditions, let us consider the next sentence. ‘I (hereby) sentence you to death’. Only an authorized person can do this, that is, obviously, the judge. If someone else tries to verdict a person, the act would not be successful, it would be ‘infelicitous’.

Austin (quoted in Searle 1976: 7)) classifies illocutionary acts into five types: *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives* and *expositives*. By *verdictives* one delivers a finding by using verbs such as describe and characterize. *Exercitives* mean that one gives a decision in favour or against a certain course of activity by using verbs such as order and command. In *commissives*, one commits a certain activity, using, e.g., verbs as promise and pledge. *Behabitives* mean that one expresses feeling by using verbs like apologise and thank. Lastly, *expositives* clarify reasons and arguments by using verbs such as answer, report and identify.

### 3.3 Searle’s theory

According to Oishi (2006: 4ff.), what Searle mainly criticizes in Austin’s theory is that his five types of speech acts are not classifications of illocutionary acts but of English

illocutionary verbs. Some of the verbs can fall into two or more categories, as the verb ‘describe’ which falls into verdictives and expositives. Moreover, Searle (1976: 8) mentions that the overall taxonomy is weak. Only in commissives Austin uses the illocutionary point as a basis of his classification. The other types are vaguely or hardly at all determined.

Despite the criticism towards Austin’s work, John R. Searle develops Austin’s theory further. He gives substance to Austin’s idea of a general theory by moving beyond the cataloguing phase and, additionally, by contributing a theoretical framework in which the three proportions of utterance, action and meaning included in speech acts can be seen as united together. Searle develops the idea from the performance of the illocutionary act to the expression of the illocutionary intention.

Searle (1969: 54 ff.), like Austin, also discusses felicity conditions. According to him, the speaker is able to perform the act successfully if certain felicity conditions are present. Every type of illocutionary act has a set of conditions which are necessary in order to be able to perform the act successfully. Searle calls them semantic rules. In Table 1 two types of illocutionary acts (promise and request) and their felicity conditions are presented. Pr refers to promise, S to the speaker, H to the hearer and A stands for the act.

**Table 3.** The semantic rules/felicity conditions

	Commissive / Promise	Directive / Request
propositional content condition	Pr is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence T, the utterance of which predicates some future act A of the speaker S	Future act A of H
preparatory condition	Pr is to be uttered only if the hearer H would prefer S’s doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H would prefer S’s doing A to his not doing A.	H is able to do A S believes H is able to do A It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the

	Pr is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events	normal course of events of his own accord S must be in position of authority over H
sincerity condition	Pr is to be uttered only if S intends to do A	S wants H to do A
essential condition	The utterance of Pr counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do A	counts as an attempt to get H to do A in virtue of the authority of S over H

(Searle 1969: 63-67)

The act of promise and its conditions are presented here to show the differences with the act of request. Every act, whether it is a question, thank and advice, has different conditions. Characteristic for the act of promise is that all the action is to be performed by the speaker; only in preparatory condition the hearer wants the speaker to do the action. Similarly, in the act of request the speaker wants the hearer to perform the action and only in the preparatory condition the hearer's ability to perform the action is in the centre.

At this point, it is, however, notable that Searle (1969: 78–79) discusses the speech acts as being the real world talk. The speech acts represent the actual events and objects of the real world, but Searle points out that one can refer to Sherlock Holmes as a fictional character because he exists in fiction. Searle makes a distinction between the normal real world talk and the parasitic forms of discourse as in fiction and play acting. In the normal real world talk one cannot refer to Sherlock Holmes, because he does not exist. He cannot be invited to the dinner. But, “in a play-acting, let's-pretend mode of discourse”, one can say: “Sherlock Holmes wears a deerstalker hat”. By stating that, one actually refers to a fictional character and what is said here is true. On the other hand, one is not able to invite him to dinner by uttering: “I invited Sherlock Holmes for dinner to my house”, as ‘my house’ refers to the real world talk. (Searle 1969: 78–79)

Despite the matter that Searle sees the speech acts to be used for identification of real world talk, I adapt his definitions regarding the felicity conditions and the act of request and use them in my study of the play-text. Searle (1969: 66) states that orders have the additional preparatory condition that S must be in the position of authority over H. This additional condition affects the essential one, because the utterance counts as an attempt to get H to do A based on the authority of S over H. These conditions for the act of requesting with additional conditions for ordering can be better shown by using an example (6) from the material (BQL 1996: 30). The women discuss quite fiercely about the matter concerning the mental house where Maureen has been.

- (6)
1. propositional content condition: S predicates a future A of H  
Maureen says to Mag: Shut up, now!
  2. preparatory condition: H is able to do A / S believes H is able to do A /  
S has authority over H  
Maureen believes Mag is able to shut up /  
Mag is able to shut up/  
Maureen has authority over Mag
  3. sincerity condition: S wants H to do A  
Maureen wants Mag to shut up.
  4. essential condition: counts as an attempt to get H to do A based on  
the authority of S over H  
Maureen wants Mag to shut up based on Maureen's authority over  
Mag.

The examples above show how I can employ the felicity conditions in my analysis. It only becomes visible whether one has authority over the other and if the other actually complies with the order and executes it. I will take that into account in my analysis.

Let us now move on to Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Searle (1976: 10ff.) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories, which are *representatives*, *commissives*, *expressives*, *declarations* and *directives*. *Representatives*, as Searle (1976: 10ff) puts it, commit the speaker to the truth. The category includes utterances that emphasize speaker's opinion and tell what the speaker knows or believes. He also adds that the simplest test of this category is: "can you literally characterize it [...] as true or false?" A

short sentence as ‘It’s raining’ can serve as an example of the category.

Searle (1976: 11ff.) continues with *commissives* which are illocutionary acts whose purpose is to commit the speaker to do something in the future. “I will do my homework properly tomorrow” will serve as an example to the category. The fourth category is *expressives*. These express the speaker’s attitudes and emotions towards a proposition. What is interesting in expressives is that they require a specific grammatical form. The verbs do not take that-clauses but require the gerund. Let us see the following examples: It is grammatically impossible to say in English ‘I apologise that I stepped on your toe.’ Instead, the sentence ‘I apologise for stepping on your toe.’ is grammatically correct.

*Declarations* are speech acts where one brings a state of affair into existence by simply declaring it, in other words, “saying makes it so”, as Searle (1976: 13ff.) proposes. The sentence ‘You are fired’ changes the hearer’s world in an immediate way, and again, the saying makes it so. Another example of this category is ‘I name this ship *The Oasis of the Seas*’. In a wider sense, one may add the words ‘successfully perform’ in the sentence, as for instance, ‘I successfully perform the act of naming the ship’, and then the ship is named. The declaration has now been successfully performed.

The particular focus of the present study is on the last category of Searle’s model, the *directives* (Searle 1976: 11). The speaker attempts the hearer to do something. They can be characterized as verbs, in different degrees or strengths – from modest to fierce – as in invite, suggest or insist. In any case, the propositional content is that the hearer does something in the future. The sentence “I order you to testify tomorrow” is an example of this category. Orders and threats belong to this category. As Searle points out (1976: 4), there could be some “differences in expressed psychological states”. This means that “the man who threatens *a*, expresses an intention to do *a*. When “a man who orders H to do A, expresses a desire (want, wish) that H do A” (ibid.). The psychological state which is said in the “performance of the illocutionary act is the sincerity condition of the act”.

Searle's classification of speech acts is adapted in the present study because it best suits for the purposes of the analysis. In particular, the present study focuses on directives. One type of directives is studied, that is, orders. Their sentence type is an imperative, as seen in the following examples from the material: Maureen says to her mother: 'Ah, forget your Complian.'(p. 3) or a slightly more threatening: 'Out of me fecking way, now...' (p. 49). The latter speech act has an adverb of immediateness. i.e., *now*. As del Campo Martinez (2013: 103) puts it, this adverb increases the imposition by the hearer since s/he has to carry out the required action and to do it in a certain period of time.

In the following subsection the speech act of Ordering is introduced more closely as it serves best for the purpose of the analysis.

### 3.4 The speech act of ordering

According to Wierzbicka (quoted in del Campo Martinez 2013: 95), orders are strong instructions. There is a speaker's intention to make people act in the way the speaker wants them to act. The act of ordering assumes both the speaker's desire that an action is carried out and the hearer's obligation to perform the action. In other words, the speaker utters an order and wants the hearer to do something, and furthermore, expects the hearer to do it. The hearer must comprehend what s/he is required to do and perform the required response.

Perez's study (quoted in del Campo Martinez 2013: 95) shows that the sentence type of an imperative is the most typical means for the expressions of orders. Perez has described prototypical orders as holding the following elements:

- the speaker presents a future action that has to be performed
- the hearer is the expected performer of the action
- the speaker has the authority over the hearer by social convention
- the degree of hearer's optionality is very low
- the degree of speaker's will is high
- the degree of hearer's will is low



Further, del Campo Martinez (2013: 99) presents a set of common elements which can be introduced as the generic structure of orders:

- A has authority over B
- A wants B to do something
- A makes B aware of his desire
- B is aware he is under an obligation to act as expressed by A's desire
- B is expected to act as commanded

Let us consider the elements stated above. Del Campo Martinez (2013: 96) also follows Verschueren (1985) by stating that in ordering, the speaker has authority over the hearer. There can be aspects of power and each aspect may display a various degree of strength (quoted in del Campo Martinez 2013: 96). The power can be physical, as it is in the material as Maureen violates her mother (1996: 47) or institutional (an officer in the army). It may even be argued that speaker's authority accounts for being one of the basic features of orders.

Besides the authority, the other characteristic of the order is the hearer's obligation to act as required by the speaker. This is also intensified by the speaker's power over the hearer. The hearer does not have an option to decide whether to satisfy the speaker's wish or not. There is no other choice than to act as required. It is also stated that the higher the speaker's authority is the lower is the hearer's optionality. Orders usually do not appeal to hearer's goodwill but rather to his/her obligation. (del Campo Martinez 2013: 98; see also Perez 2001 and Wierzbicka 1987)

As illustrated before in Table 3. (on page 27), Searle's felicity conditions of requests follow the generic structure of orders. Therefore, his felicity conditions can be applied to the analysis of orders.

Del Campo Martinez (2013: 101 ff.) points out that orders usually equate with the use of the imperative sentence type. Orders present an action for realization which goes with the purpose of directive acts. The similarity of the sentence type with the semantics of

the directives makes imperative a perfect tool for their expression. Since this study concentrates on directives and in particular on imperative sentence type, it can be described as X IMP. This means that the order is a bare imperative sentence type. Telling the hearer to perform an action represents an effective way of giving an order.

#### 4 ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS IN *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*

At this point of the study, before the analysis, it is appropriate to introduce shortly the object of the study and also the playwright of the play. The tools for the analysis are also reported shortly.

##### 4.1 The play and the playwright

Martin McDonagh was born in London in 1970. His parents were of Irish origin. He is a playwright, screenwriter and film director. He is also said to be one of the most renowned English-language dramatists of his generation. He has written 5 screenplays and 8 plays. Nearly all of his plays have been situated in Ireland. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is his first play. It belongs to the Leenane trilogy: other plays are *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*. They are all set in Connemara in County Galway which is on the west coast of Ireland. It is described as being a rocky, windy district. His father often acclaimed the county since he was born there. As a matter of fact, McDonagh himself has never lived there but he has spent many of his childhood summers there with his family. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is his first play. After finishing it, he described the process “like it was a conversation I heard in my head [...] the echoes of speech of his Connemara relatives” [...]. (The Encyclopedia of World Biography 2015)

The plot of the play is as follows: *Mag Folan* is 70 years old woman who has a daughter called *Maureen*. She is 40 years old and she is her mother’s only caretaker. Maureen has sisters but they are married and live elsewhere. The mother and the daughter live in a remote cottage up in the hill and get visitors rarely. One day, however, a neighbour called *Ray* comes and invites both women to a farewell party to his American uncle. Mag is unwilling to go and tries to manipulate Maureen not to go, but Maureen is persistent. When Maureen gets back from the party, she brings *Pato* with her to their

house. Pato is Ray's brother, and an old friend who lives in England now. The following morning Mag startles because she finds out that Pato has been the overnight guest at the house. Pato gets soon confused as Mag and Maureen behave affectedly towards each other and he decides to leave the house.

Later on, Pato leaves for England and writes to Maureen. The letter is not, however, addressed directly to her, but to his brother Ray who is supposed to deliver it to Maureen. Ray takes the letter and goes to the Folan house, but Maureen is not at home. He waits for her, but Maureen does not come home. He decides to leave the letter to Mag, who is preoccupied with the letter. When Ray leaves the house, Mag opens the letter, reads it and throws it to the range sheet by sheet. It is only later that Maureen finds out that she has had a letter from Pato but has never received it.

Mag has to tell her the contents of the letter and Maureen rushes to the farewell party which is organized for Pato's leaving for America. Maureen comes back from the party and tells Mag that they have decided to live together in America as soon as possible. Maureen hasn't actually seen Pato, this is just her imagination. Since Mag is a burden to her, she decides to kill Mag, which she does in a horrible way. After the funeral, Ray comes to see Maureen. He has some bad news about Pato. After hearing the news, Maureen realizes that her future with Pato is destroyed. She sees no other future ahead of her than to continue living in the house alone.

#### 4.2 The aims of the research and tools for the analysis

It is relevant to look back at my aims of the research and recapitulate the tools needed for the analysis. The aim is to study characters in a play-text with the help of Culpeper's model of characterisations and Searle's classification of speech acts. The focus is on directives, in particular orders.

Furthermore, the interest lies in the hierarchy of the two women which is studied by exploring the speech acts they use; the analysis of speech acts is used to determine whether a character is above or at the same level as the other character.

The specific speech act which is studied is the orders, the sentence type of which is the imperative. There are certain presuppositions in order to be able to study them: A has authority over B, A wants B to do something, A makes B aware of A's desire, B is obliged to act according to A's desire and do the act as commanded by A. (del Campo Martinez 2013: 99)

The material consists of four scenes where both women are present and interact only with each other. The scenes are 1, 2, 4 and 7. Table 4. Illustrates the number of speech occurrences of both women.

**Table 4.** Speech act occurrences in the material

character	speech acts	percentage %
Mag	260	46,4
Maureen	300	53,6
totally	560	100,0

To demonstrate how the speech act occurrences have been collected, see the example below:

- (7) **Maureen** I'll do you some Compln. (1)  
**Mag** Have I not had me Compln already, Maureen? (2) I have. (3)  
**Maureen** Sure, another one won't hurt (4) (BQL1996: 14)

In this example there are four speech act occurrences. They are numbered and the numbers are in brackets. Table 4 shows a small difference in speech acts of Maureen and Mag. Maureen outnumbers Mag, but the difference is not very substantial, regarding the total number of occurrences.

Speech acts which are classified as directives are the focus on the present thesis. They are further categorized as orders. At the same time it is observed how the hierarchy between the interlocutors is seen. Hierarchy in the study is considered from the speaker's point of view. This analysis is done by studying the semantic meaning of the speech acts. As has been claimed by Fotion (2000:4ff.), a speech act is more than just words, it cannot be understood without considering the social and physical context. In the present study the social context means the culture and relationships of Mag and Maureen. The physical context means the surroundings where everything happens, that is, their home. The following sections present the results of the analysis on speech acts, in particular directives and the subcategory of orders.

#### 4.3 The speech acts of ordering

In this section the focus is on the orders. Their function is to demand action from the hearer in the future. In other words, the speaker orders the hearer to carry out an action and the hearer is obliged to act accordingly. As pointed out before, orders are typical representations of direct speech acts. Characters, Mag and Maureen, are studied in order to gain information on them. At the same time, hierarchy (or authority) and felicity conditions are studied.

**Table 5.** Orders in the material

character	orders	percentage %
Mag	5	29,5
Maureen	12	70,5
totally	17	100,0

All the **bold** writing within the examples is done by the writer of the thesis for clarifying purposes, portraying the speech act of order. Also the extracts which are depicted in this Chapter are a little longer in order to be able to get information about

the characters. Here Searle's (1979: 31 ff.) definition is followed where he points out that one has to consider not only the semantic and lexical issues but also context in order to be able to determine the full intention of discourse.

The speech acts of ordering are presented here according to their degree of strength, starting from the weakest ones stretching to the strongest ones. Searle's account of felicity conditions are followed in the analysis. Since there are four different conditions to be employed, abbreviations are used as follows:

1. propositional content condition equals the abbreviation PCC
2. preparatory condition equals the abbreviation PC
3. sincerity condition equals the abbreviation SC
4. essential condition equals the abbreviation EC

Let us now consider the examples from the material. Example (8) portrays the scene after Maureen has come home from work.

- (8)     **Mag**                 I did make me Complian.  
           **Maureen**         So you *can* get it yourself so.  
           **Mag**                 I can. (*Pause.*) Although lumpy it was, Maureen.  
           **Maureen**         Well, can I help lumpy?  
           **Mag**                 No.  
           **Maureen**         **Write to the Complian people so, if it's lumpy.**  
           **Mag**                 You do make me Complian nice and smooth.     (BQL 1996: 1)

Regarding the strength of orders, this is extremely weak. Nevertheless, this is still regarded as an order since it meets the definitions of the imperative sentence type. This may also be considered as an ironic utterance. This is a good example of hierarchy in the sense that both women are at the same level. Maureen moderately orders Mag to write to the company about Complian for being so lumpy. In terms of felicity conditions:

PCC: Maureen orders Mag to write to the Complian people

PC: Mag is able to write them / Maureen believes that Mag is able to write them/

Maureen has authority over Mag

SC: Maureen wants Mag to write them

ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to write to the Complan people  
based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

The speech act is infelicitous, because PC is not met. Maureen has no authority over Mag hence Mag does not comply with the order.

Let us then analyze the following example:

- (9)     **Maureen**     **Ah, forget your Complan.** I'm expected to  
do everything else, I suppose that one on top of it won't hurt.  
Just a...just a blessed fecking skivvy is all I'm thought of!  
          **Mag**             You are appreciated, Maureen.                     (BQL 1996: 3)

Let us look at the conditions:

PCC: Maureen orders Mag to forget Complan

PC: Mag is able to forget it / Maureen believes that Mag is able to forget it /

Maureen has authority over Mag

SC: Maureen wants Mag to forget it

ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to forget Complan

based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

The speech act is infelicitous because Maureen obviously has no authority over Mag. She is not able to make her to forget. The main attention in Maureen's utterance is not drawn to the order but to her anger of not being appreciated. To that end, the order is undervalued here. Example (9) shows, therefore, the frustration on Maureen's side. She also uses a quite informal lexicon. This may give the impression that she is a 'down to earth' person, as Culpeper (2001: 183) suggests. The swearing signals that Maureen is angry. Hierarchically, the women are at the same level. The order and its performance are not the most important issue; they focus on Maureen's frustration because she feels undervalued.



The succeeding example (10) depicts the discussion between Mag and Maureen next morning after Maureen and Pato have spent their night together in the house. Mag is totally surprised and, at the same time, hurt about the situation. She does not believe her eyes when she sees Pato coming to the kitchen. Maureen comes a little later. She does not have anything on her except a bra and a slip.

- |      |                |   |                |
|------|----------------|---|----------------|
| (10) | <b>Mag</b>     | <b>Put some clothes on you, going around the house half-naked![... ]</b>  |                |
|      | <b>Maureen</b> | I do like going around the house half-naked. It does turn me on, it does. |                |
|      | <b>Mag</b>     | I suppose it does, aye.   |                |
|      | <b>Maureen</b> | It does.  | (BQL 1996: 29) |

The felicity conditions for this example are the following:

PCC: Mag orders Maureen to put clothes on

PC: Maureen is able to put clothes on / Mag believes that Maureen is able to put clothes on / Mag has authority over Maureen

SC: Mag wants Maureen to put clothes on

ES: counts as an attempt to get Maureen to put clothes on based on the authority Mag has over Maureen

Mag's order is to be seen as useless undertaking for the reason that she immediately gives up pressing Maureen in the situation. This demonstrates that she has no authority over Maureen. Mag is embarrassed and ashamed when Maureen walks around the kitchen half-naked, especially in front of Pato. Being 70 years old, Mag probably belongs to the generation which used to dress properly in front of other people, even if the others were close family. When Maureen floats around Pato and sits on his lap, it is too much for Mag and she demands decency from Maureen. But Maureen does not want that. She likes to tease Pato and make Mag angry, which is exactly what she does. The lexical repetition which both women employ here can be interpreted as their way of reaching consensus in the matter but may also tell about emotional anxiety.

The following example (11) depicts the latter part of the women's discussion about a strange smell that comes from the kitchen sink.

- (11) **Maureen** And I suppose that potty of wee was just  
a figment of me imagination?  
**Mag** **Forget wee! Forget wee!** D'you want to know  
what Difford Hall is, fella? (BQL 1996:30)

In terms of felicity conditions:

PCC: Mag orders Maureen to forget the wee

PC: Maureen is able to forget it / Mag believes that Maureen is  
able to forget it / Mag has authority over Maureen

SC: Mag wants Maureen to forget the wee

ES: counts as an attempt to get Maureen to forget the wee  
based on the authority Mag has over Maureen

The speech is infelicitous since PC is not met. Mag has no authority over Maureen. Mag is not able to make Maureen forget the wee. Maureen, not Mag, has the authority since she asks calmly if the potty is a product of her imagination. Mag gets angry and makes a quick topic change in order to draw the attention elsewhere.

Example (12) portrays Maureen's frustration over Mag since she keeps on discussing unimportant matters and Maureen is tired of listening to it. Lexical items such as 'oul' and 'stupid' are markers that indicate Maureen's contempt towards her mother. She does not employ diplomacy when she interacts with her mother.

- (12) **Maureen** You're oul and you're stupid and you don't  
know what you're talking about.  
**Now shut up and eat your oul porridge.**  
  
Maureen gets back to wash the pan in the sink. Mag glances at  
the porridge, then turns back to her.  
  
**Mag** Me mug of tea you forgot! (BQL 1996: 6)

Felicity conditions of example (12)

PCC: Maureen orders Mag to shut up and eat the porridge

PC: Mag is able to shut up and eat the porridge /

Maureen believes that Mag is able to shut up and eat the porridge /

Maureen has authority over Mag

SC: Maureen wants Mag to shut up and eat the porridge

ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to shut up and eat the porridge

based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

What makes this speech act (example 12) more interesting is the use of the adverb of immediateness (see Martinez 2013: 102). It gives Mag less optionality to do the required action because of the adverb *now*. The action is meant to be carried out within a short period of time. The required action is not carried out since Mag does not act according to Maureen's order. By means of hierarchy, the women are at the same level, since Maureen loses it when Mag refuses to act as ordered. Again, the PC condition is not met.

During the course of the analysis, it has become clear that quite many speech acts concern food. It tells about the poverty of the topics in the house. At the surface level, all the conflicts seem to be about food, but on the semantic level it is something else, it is a means of power. On one hand, Mag uses food for controlling Maureen, by complaining about it and by making Maureen constantly make her porridge and tea. Yet, Mag is capable of doing it herself. On the other hand, Maureen sometimes makes Mag beg for food and in that way she controls Mag by giving her food not based on Mag's needs but on Maureen's desire.

In the following extract Maureen orders Mag to drink the lumpy Complan although she tries to say no and refers to her funny tummy. Maureen is angry as Mag tries to lie that Ray did not have any news to tell while visiting them. Maureen knows the truth since she has seen Ray in the yard. The news is that Ray invites them to his uncle's going away party. Mag tries to keep this piece of news in secret. She does not want Maureen



ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to finish the mug of Complán based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

Maureen has, as the reaction of Mag shows, authority over Mag and Mag has no other choice than to drink the mug of Complán. Applying Martinez (2013: 99) it could be stated that Mag is aware that she is under obligation to act as expressed by Maureen's desire, that is, to finish the mug of Complán. Mag is expected to act as ordered, which Mag does.

Regarding example (14), its felicity conditions are as follows:

PCC: Maureen orders Mag to drink the mug of Complán

PC: Mag is able to drink it /Maureen believes that Mag is able to drink it /

Maureen has authority over Mag

SC: Maureen wants Mag to drink it

ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to drink the mug of Complán based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

Mag refuses to act according to Maureen's order. Maureen has some authority over Mag but when it comes to perform the action, she refuses to do it.

As stated before, Mag clearly expresses her feelings towards the 'gallivanting' with the boys. Mag is narrow-minded and old-fashioned concerning the dating of boys before getting married. Maureen tries to defend herself and her sisters against Mag's overwhelming patronizing opinion. Maureen is still angry and strongly orders Mag to drink Complán which Mag eventually does. She cuts off Maureen's major anger by performing the required action.

As the order of the speech acts in the analysis is arranged from the weakest to the strongest, some overlapping of the happenings cannot be avoided, as occurs in the next example (16). The happenings in this example occur prior to example (10). Pato has stayed overnight in the house. When Pato enters the kitchen in the morning, he

encounters Mag. They have to keep the conversation going, since Maureen is still in bed. A little later she comes to the kitchen and begins to tell intimate things about the night. Mag becomes angry and interrupts Maureen and Pato and says intentionally in order to confuse Pato and to make him feel uncomfortable:

- (16) **Mag** And reminds you of Difford Hall in England, too,  
I'll bet it does...
- Maureen** (*angrily*) **Now you just shut your fecking...**
- Mag** None of your own clothes they let you wear in  
there, either, did they?
- Maureen** **Shut your oul gob, I said...!**
- Mag** Only long oul gowns and buckle-down jackets...  
(BQL 1996: 29)

Let us see the orders in terms of felicity conditions:

PCC: Maureen orders Mag to shut her mouth

PC: Mag is able to shut it /Maureen believes that Mag is able to shut it /

Maureen has authority over Mag

SC: Maureen wants Mag to shut it

ES: counts as an attempt to get Mag to shut her mouth

based on the authority Maureen has over Mag

Although it is Maureen who utters the orders, she has no authority over Mag. Maureen does not necessarily believe that Mag is able to shut her mouth. When Mag sees that Maureen loses her authority, she is no longer under obligation to act as ordered.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was to explore the speech acts and their felicity conditions in the play-text of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. The further aims were to explore what kind of information was inferred about the characters and how the hierarchy between the two main characters evolved during the play.

Altogether seventeen speech acts of ordering were found in the material. Nine of them were included in the analysis. Almost no order is executed which is interesting. On one hand, it was surprising information that the number of the executed orders was so low. On the other hand, if all the orders had been executed, the dramatic effect of the play would have disappeared. In addition, the play-text would have not been fruitful for readers and researchers. As mentioned before, quite many researchers have been interested in, for instance, in violence and Irishness (Alfonso 2009), in conflict discourse (Piazza 2012), in dynamics of power (Vargas& Vargas 2013) and in mother myth (Yelmiş 2014) of the play.

The main characters, Maureen and Mag, portrayed persons who lived in a remote cottage in Ireland. Mag, 70 years old, was dependent on her daughter, as she was not able to move outside the house. The analysis showed that the speech acts did not reveal very much about their characters. This was also due to the decision that only orders were analysed. The number of the orders was so few that it was impossible to draw any special conclusions on the characters.

By and large, the most interesting speech acts of orders in the play happened around food. Readers of the play got the feeling that it was one of the very few subjects the characters could talk about. Food was the centre of attention altogether ten times in the orders. In many occasions, the discussion concerned Complan. Moreover, food is a symbol for power and control. The symbolism is double-sided. For Mag it represents the power because she is able to coerce Maureen for it and she complains about it very often. She often makes Maureen guilty for the food and acts as if she is incapable of making food to herself. For Maureen it represents control and power over Mag because

she buys all the food for the house and usually controls the amount of food which she gives to Mag.

Mag spent her days inside the house, she got rarely visitors and television and radio did not offer much amusement or topics to be discussed with Maureen. Due to the fact that the women spent much time together, Mag thought they were a team. She did not want any intruders. Maureen felt trapped with her mother. That caused a lot of tension between the women and Maureen's anxiety rose very quickly. This could be seen in their speech acts where especially Maureen used rough language towards her mother, for example, *oul, shut your oul gob, shut your fecking..*(p. 29) and *you are stupid and oul, you don't know what you are talking about* (p. 6). Interestingly, Maureen referred to sexual pleasure by saying that *going around half-naked turns me on* (p. 29). All in all, the informal use of language implied that the women were straight-forward and simple.

Regarding the hierarchy, Maureen seemed to have authority over Mag multiple times. The assumption was that as a mother, Mag had the authority, based on her age. In speech acts of ordering the speaker has the authority or is above the other, in terms of the definition. There were no exceptions to that. Out of nine orders, only two of them were uttered by Mag. Based on that, Maureen was hierarchically above Mag.

For the purposes of the future research, it might be interesting to study one main character in a play, and to study what kinds of speech acts the character uses. It would be interesting to see what information could be inferred from the character, when the material would be more substantial than in the present study.



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