

# ***The Man Who Knew Infinity: Main Character's Speech Acts Revealed His Cultural Identity***

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**Abstract.** The purposes of this study are (1) to classify speech acts' types and functions performed by the main character; and (2) to discover how those speech acts' functions reveal the main character's cultural identity. This study is aimed to reveal the speaker's cultural identity through his utterances by recognizing their speech acts functions. The qualitative method is used in this study by applying documentation technique as the data collection and the researcher as the instrument of the study. Data of this study were taken from two selected scenes. The analysis technique was conducted through three steps; data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data are presented in a table and descriptive after the utterances were transcribed. This study's results can be concluded as follows (1) 15 speech act utterances are belong to illocutionary act followed by the largest portion of 7 representative functions, 4 expressive functions, 2 directive functions, and 2 declaration functions and (2) 6 out of 7 cultural identity aspects were revealed through those speech act functions performances; cultural narrative, identity centrality, identity salience, cultural roles and roles enactments, and cultural regard. Regarding the results, it can be implied that within genuine conversations there's a tendency that someone's utterances mostly carrying representative functions.

**Keywords:** Main Character, Cultural Identity

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## INTRODUCTION

Performing speech acts means the speaker is performing an action through his speeches (Kroeger, 2019). Examining speech acts within a movie requires in-depth analysis since what appears in it is designed situations set for entertainment purpose. All kinds of icons and symbols in the movie should be verbally articulated by the researcher (Gambarato, 2010). Speech acts carry a substance of someone intended meaning represented by language he occupied also as stated by Rovira (2008) language has important role in cultural identity development. Movie by title *The Man Who Knew Infinity* depicts two mathematicians from different cultural groups; Srinivasa Ramanujan from India and G.H. Hardy an Englishman. Both have shown several discrepancies within their interface in terms of principles and beliefs. Through his speech acts performances, Ramanujan explicitly reveals his cultural identity.

Yule (2013) divided speech acts into three classes; locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Within illocutionary acts, Searle (1979) classified speech acts functions into five; representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Simpson (2017) asserted seven principal ideas of cultural identity; (1) self-categorization deals with how someone identifies himself explicitly as a member of a certain cultural group (2) cultural narrative refers to culture and its nature, including the group's ideologies and history (3) identity centrality deals with importance degree of someone's association of a cultural group over his or her self-concept and it is regarded as stable over time (4) identity salience deals with the importance degree of one's participation in a cultural group within different situations given, thus it is dynamic depending on the situations (5) and (6) cultural roles and roles enactment are sets of behaviors that had been obeyed within a certain cultural group and its enactment by the group's member (7) cultural regard is a positive or negative effect of someone's membership of a certain cultural group on three different areas; toward the cultural group he belongs to, toward his feelings over his own membership or private regard, and toward different cultural groups as he is regarded as an outsider.

The involvement of language within behavior, routines, rituals and various norms and communication conventions (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) are some cultural group representations which can be mirrored through someone's speech acts. Thus, this study sets its purposes to classify the main character's speech acts' type and functions and to discover how those speech acts functions reveal his cultural identity. These aims are useful in actual conversation as the interlocutor could enhance the speaker's intended meaning by understanding their cultural background as it is one of several attributes that influence how someone speaks. Therefore, this study carries a new insight compared to the previous studies conducted by Yuniati et al. (2018), Rahayu et al. (2019), Rizki & Golubović (2020) and other former studies by presenting the role of pragmatic knowledge and connected it to genuine aspect of the speaker's identity that is cultural identity. The three mentioned afore studies merely analyzed the speech acts performances of the character without employed them to examine further facet which influenced how they performed those speech acts. While this study utilized the main character's speech acts performances as a tool to dig deeper one feature which unconsciously shaped how he delivered his

utterances that is his cultural identity. By observing the speaker's speech acts functions within the speaker's utterances, the interlocutor may comprehend better what the intended meaning is delivered by the speaker regarding his cultural identity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative type by using Yule's (2013) pragmatic approach of speech acts and cultural identity aspects (Grayman-Simpson, 2017). The source of the data is from movie *The Man Who Knew Infinity* while the data of the research are taken from conversations of two selected scenes during minutes 26:03 – 26:53 and 1:25:18 – 1:26:18 with merely focus on the utterances of main character; Ramanujan, as the informant of this study. The data collection technique used in this research is documentation as Bowen (2009) stated that documentation means assessing both printed and non-printed materials. The research instrument is the researcher herself since the researcher is a favorable respondent during the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). This data collection technique is used by applying two steps through the researcher's involvement in inferring, analyzing, and concluding the data; first is by watching the movie then selected specific scenes carefully to obtain the source of the data, second is by transcribing the conversations into written form and separated them into one utterance of expression delivered by the speaker to analyze its speech acts' functions. Data analysis technique of this study consists of three steps; data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). The condensed data of this study are the main character's utterances within the selected scenes. The conversations contain the main character's and his interlocutors' utterances, yet the data required is the main character's utterances only. Thus, the utterances from the interlocutors are not included. The data display of this study are table and descriptive. These two forms of data display are used to differentiate the sub-section of result and discussion as follows; table is used to classify the speech acts' types and functions for each utterance while descriptive is applied to elaborate result displayed in the table by explaining the speech acts' functions and cultural identity aspects revealed through those utterances. The conclusion drawing and verification applied by verifying the result of this study with the theories applied; speech acts' types by Yule (2013), speech acts' functions by Searle (1979), and cultural identity aspects by Grayman-Simpson (2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Main Character's Speech Acts

The main character's utterances within the two selected scenes are displayed in the table below. Datum 1 until 7 are the utterances in scene A (26:03 – 26:53) and datum 8 until 15 are the utterances in scene B (1:25:18 – 1:26:18). The abbreviation for speech acts types and functions are used for efficiency. L stands for locutionary act, I stands for illocutionary act, P stands for perlocutionary act, R stands for representative, D stands for directive, C stands for commissive, E stands for expressive, and De stands for declaration.

**Table 1.** Results of the main character’s speech acts type classifications and functions

Utterances	Speech Act Types				Speech Act Functions			
	L	I	P	R	D	C	E	De
1. Is Mr. Hardy here?		✓			✓			
2. I’m most excited to meet him.		✓					✓	
3. He must be a very kind man to bring me all this way.		✓		✓				
4. Hello.		✓					✓	
5. Yes, Sir, perfectly.		✓		✓				
6. It’s an honor, Sir		✓					✓	
7. Did I say something wrong?		✓					✓	
8. You wanted to know how I get my ideas.		✓						✓
9. My god, Namagiri, she speaks to me, puts formulas on my tongue when I sleep, sometimes when I pray.		✓		✓				
10. Do you believe me?		✓			✓			
11. Because if you are my friend then you will know that I’m telling you the truth.		✓		✓				
12. If you are truly my friend.		✓		✓				
13. Then you can’t believe in me.		✓		✓				
14. Don’t you see? An equation has no meaning to me unless it expresses the thought of God.		✓		✓				
15. Maybe it is better that we just remain what we were.		✓						✓

Scene A (26:03 – 26:53)

Datum 1 *Is Mr. Hardy here?* holds directive function due to Ramanujan’s intended meaning of command that his interlocutor, Mr. Littlewood, had to do something after hearing his utterance. Ramanujan was demanding a particular response, although it was in a question form. Subsequently hearing the question, the hearer was supposed to deliver an answer expected by him concerning Professor

Hardy presence in the hall, yet he didn't answer it as Ramanujan proceeded to talk. This happening contradicts with an example of a command utterance in *The Message* as Abu Sufyan said *put five more men on north wells*. In several conversations occurred after the speaker commands the hearer, the hearer wouldn't say anything instead directly do the things as commanded (Yuniati et al., 2018).

Datum 2 *I'm most excited to meet him* is expressive function as Ramanujan delivered his excitement to meet Professor Hardy. Although the first utterance had not been replied yet by Mr. Littlewood whether Professor Hardy was present, Ramanujan was unable to hide his enthusiasm to meet him.

Datum 3 *He must be a very kind man to bring me all this way* is a representative function due to Ramanujan belief that Professor Hardy was a gentle man so he willingly invited Ramanujan to prove his works in Cambridge. This statement was dealing with Ramanujan's credence in Professor Hardy's generosity. The concept of Ramanujan praised professor Hardy is similar to Omar Mukhtar's utterance where he praises his student as the student correctly answer his question; given the context of the dialogue below (Rizki & Golubović, 2020):

Mukhtar : *stop right there. Why do we think we begin every chapter of the Qur'an with God the Merciful?*

Student : *because, one of the names of God is mercy.*

Mukhtar : *that's right.* Datum 4 *Hello* is expressive function although it is only a greeting. Datum number 4 took place after Mr. Littlewood was signaling that Professor Hardy was in the room. Ramanujan eagerly showed his gestures to greet Professor Hardy by taking the initiation to greet and reaching out his hand to him. This finding is similar to utterance *Hi me...? Oh. Um. Hi*. In Rahayu et al. study (2019) that also clarify in Finegan's concept as greeting is a form of psychological manner.

Datum 5 *Yes, Sir. Perfectly.* happened subsequently after Professor Hardy welcomed Ramanujan in Trinity College and greeted him by saying his name. Its function as representative was shown with Ramanujan's assertion that Professor Hardy pronounced his name properly.

Datum 6 *it's an honor, Sir.* is an expression of Ramanujan's feeling that he felt much honored to be invited by Professor Hardy in Cambridge. Thus, although the Datum number 6 is in a form of statement, yet it possesses expressive function.

Datum 7 *Did I say something wrong?* is a consequence of Professor Hardy's behavior toward Ramanujan. After datum number 6, Professor Hardy directly said the work will start tomorrow in his office while walking away leaving Ramanujan. The expressive function is performed that through the question, Ramanujan expressed his guilty and confusion at the same time. During the whole conversation, there was no interruption from the third party thus it made him assume perhaps he was saying wrong statements. The reason behind his feelings was that the way Professor Hardy behaved to him by saying the agenda straightforwardly and at the same time walking away left him with Mr. Littlewood without further small talks.

Among 7 utterances performed in this scene, the expressive function possesses the largest portion performed 4 times than representative which appeared 2 times and directive only once. The dominance of expressive function is related to the situation within the scene in which that's the first section which portrayed the main character's arrival in Cambridge as well as his initial meeting with Professor Hardy. Ramanujan being precisely expressive as his enthusiasm to begin his work there, in other words it was Ramanujan's psychological state of his experience (Yule, 2013).

Scene B (1:25:18 – 1:26:18)

Datum 8 *You wanted to know how I get my ideas.* possesses the declaration function because Ramanujan considered that it was the right time to tell Professor Hardy the truth of his thought. Declaration function of this utterance refers in the speaker's power bringing the specified matter (Searle, 1979) where Ramanujan did not expect any response as he already knew that this matter had been raised repeatedly before. Ramanujan wanted to inform his mentor how he got his ideas of his works.

Datum 9 *My god, Namagiri, she speaks to me, puts formula on my tongue when I sleep, sometimes when I pray.* is an assertion uttered by Ramanujan thus it has representative function. Representative is dealing with the speaker's belief, a statement of fact (Yule, 2013). He confidently asserted that his God, Namagiri, was the one behind his knowledge. Ramanujan stated that Namagiri spoke to him and she put the ideas and formulas on his tongue when he sleeps or prays. This statement was dealing with Ramanujan's belief in his God.

Datum 10 *Do you believe me?* is in a form of question in a directive function as a request. Ramanujan was asking Professor Hardy's response if he believed in what Ramanujan said as he knew well that Professor Hardy did not believe in God. Professor Hardy himself once said that he was what Ramanujan called an Atheist. Ramanujan already told him how he got his ideas, in turn Ramanujan asked him if he believed it or not.

Data 11 *Because if you are my friend then you will know that I'm telling you the truth* and 12 *If you are truly my friend* are responses for Professor Hardy's gesture after hearing previous utterance. Professor Hardy lowered his gaze as if he gave a sign that he could not believe what Ramanujan said about the idea that his knowledge was placed by his God, Namagiri. The representative functions represent the utterances' aim that Ramanujan claimed which stated that Professor Hardy will effortlessly believe him of being truthful and if he was truly a friend of him.

Datum 13 *Then you can't believe in me* carried an answer of Professor Hardy's response as he said that he did not believe in God at all, he disbelieved in anything that could not be proved. This utterance conveys a representative function as Ramanujan straightly stated his concern of claim that Professor Hardy would unable to believe him. Data number 11, 12, and 13 is similar to a finding in Rahayu et al. (2019) study by utterance *all you know is how to shut people* which used Finegan's classification of speech act functions that stated representative signifies a state of claim.

Datum 14 *Don't you see? An equation has no meaning to me unless it expresses the thought of God* is a declaration function as Ramanujan's statement was to clarify his thought and belief that every equation in mathematics represents his God's existence. The declaration function occurred as the result of Ramanujan's position as a loyal devotee of God Namagiri; he bring out a certain power to declare that statement as declaration itself is connected with the speaker's power of exposing particular matter (Searle, 1979). Ramanujan wished no feedback response from his hearer as he knew that Professor Hardy would not have confidence in his idea of God's involvement.

Datum 15 *Maybe it is better that we just remain what we were.* was uttered by Ramanujan to end the conversation which seems to have made Professor Hardy dumbstruck. The declaration function occurred since Ramanujan did not want to worsen the situation and disturbed his relationship with his mentor thus he declared that they supposedly maintain their own selves and beliefs.

Within this scene, the representative function appeared 5 times out of 8 utterances. The rest 3 functions performed are 2 declarations and 1 directive. This scene depicted Ramanujan's unwell condition due to his illness thus he wanted to answer Professor Hardy frequently asked question regarding how the proof how he get the knowledge. The way Ramanujan asserted and represented what world he believed made him performing speech acts that influenced by representative function.

7 out of 15 utterances taken from 2 different scenes occupied representative functions; the rest 8 utterances are divided into 4 expressives, 2 directives, and 2 declarations. The representative function controlled Ramanujan's utterances since it carries underlying meaning of Ramanujan's intention that those utterances are based on his own belief toward certain things that he credited as facts, knowing that representative utterances exemplify the world as the speaker believe (Yule, 2013).

## 2. The Relation between Main Character's Speech Acts and His Cultural Identity

Ramanujan's cultural identity is unconsciously exposed through his speech acts performances; cultural narrative, identity centrality, identity salience, cultural roles and roles enactment, and cultural regard.

### *Cultural Narrative*

Cultural narrative carries the idea of psychological narration and nature of the culture (Grayman-Simpson, 2017). Ramanujan accepts as true that the culture of Hindu Indian does have faith that the role of Gods in his devotee's life is decisive. He himself is a devotee of Namagiri. It is shown by statement *my god, Namagiri, she speaks to me, puts formulas on my tongue when I sleep, sometimes when I pray.* Ramanujan could not answer accurately how he acquired his knowledge of formulas due to his faith that God Namagiri is the one who places them in his brain and his tongue. He assuredly told his mentor that he gained and understood the formula as Namagiri set it to him, an illiterate man. He sees all the equations, formulas, and numbers as the representatives of God's existence. The cultural narrative of God's role ideology shows Ramanujan's cultural identity as a member of a particular belief and culture.

### *Identity Centrality*

The idea of identity centrality deals with the significance of someone's association of a cultural group over his or her self-concept and it is regarded as stable over time. This aspect is shown in which Ramanujan's association with his belief was not neglected although he faced a quite tough situation. Despite the fact of facing a completely new environment, Ramanujan kept his faith over time. He came to Cambridge as a foreign invited guest whose surroundings were people who slightly felt strange to him as his origin was India, whereby at that time British ruled the land. Ramanujan originated from the Brahmin family thus he strongly maintained his belief in his God Namagiri. His spiritual connection with God Namagiri shaped his confidence that she is the one who put the entire knowledge of numbers, formulas, and equations of mathematics in his mind and tongue. This is proved by Ramanujan said *don't you see? An equation has no meaning to me unless it expresses the thought of God.*

Moreover, his professor was an Atheist who would not easily be eased by his faith of acquiring insight from God's intervention. Professor Hardy frequently asked for proof regarding Ramanujan's formulas and his awareness on how he got them, yet he neither could provide it nor answer it. Every time the professor asked for the same thing, Ramanujan neither answered it back nor neglected his faith. His attachment with his belief did not affect his works though it slightly created challenging conditions for him.

### *Identity Saliency*

Ramanujan's identity saliency is proved through his way of putting an end to his conversation with Professor Hardy in the second scene by uttering *maybe it is better that we just remain what we were.* Identity saliency is credited as dynamic depending on the situation given; it is contrary to identity centrality which is valued as stable over time (Grayman-Simpson, 2017). Within the given situation whereby his mentor's belief is unlike to him, Ramanujan does not compel his certainty although that's the only answer he has for his mentor's question. Ramanujan's importance extent as a devotee who has reliance on his God does not affect him to neglect his position at that time as an outsider student who faces his professor's skepticism toward his conviction.

### *Cultural Roles and Roles Enactment*

This principle is shown by Ramanujan as he obeyed specific behaviors that had been set within his cultural group. Cultural roles and roles enactment are dealing with sets of manners or behaviors that must be obeyed by members of a certain cultural group (Grayman-Simpson, 2017). Ramanujan's assumption if he said something wrong to Prof. Hardy is due to his manner whereby he directly left Ramanujan after saying their coming agenda, shown in utterance *did I say something wrong?* Ramanujan considers himself who creates the situation because he was certain of an idea if your interlocutors leave you in the middle of a conversation or show ignorant manner, perhaps what you said is considered wrong or disrespectful



for them. Ramanujan enacts his cultural roles by asking if he uttered wrong words to another interlocutor who was present during the conversation.

#### *Cultural Regard*

Cultural regard deals with the positive or negative effect of someone's involvement toward his own cultural group, his own affiliation with that certain cultural group, and other cultural group wherein he's not a member of it (Grayman-Simpson, 2017). (1) Ramanujan shows his concern toward his own cultural group and his belonging sense of that cultural group by showing his worry when Professor Hardy left him straight after saying their agenda for tomorrow. The positive-negative effect of him being a member of a certain cultural group and belief provided him a sense of guilt although there was nothing erroneous during the conversation. It might be just Professor Hardy's personality who could not get along with Ramanujan well since it was their foremost meeting thus he did not want to proceed with the small talks and went directly with their vital agenda.

(2) Ramanujan's positive-negative effect of his membership within Hindu Indian cultural group. Ramanujan's belief toward Namagiri existence through the numbers and formulas did not affect his work with the Professor. Though the professor openly disagreed with the idea of Namagiri being the one who placed the formulas in Ramanujan, the main character advanced in writing the formulas and proofs. Ramanujan straightly said if the professor is unable to believe this concept then he could not have confidence in him. This idea disclosed in his utterance *because if you are truly my friend then you will know that I'm telling you the truth*. This proved even though Ramanujan worked very hard to get his formulas published and acknowledged; he was incapable to ignore his spiritual connection with his God and his origin.

(3) Ramanujan's positive-negative effect toward other cultural groups whereby he is not a member of it. Professor Hardy was an Englishman who did not believe in God or a supreme. Ramanujan knew well that his mentor still unable to have faith in the concept of God placed knowledge in him since the professor declared himself as someone who was called an Atheist by people like Ramanujan. The main character ended their obscure debate within the second scene in which he said *maybe it is better that we just remain what we were*. Ramanujan had answered his mentor's long-term question and he understood that this idea would not be accepted plially by the professor, by saying *then you can't believe in me*. Ramanujan neither a member of an English cultural group nor an Atheist yet he did not want to worsen his situation with the mentor thus he just plainly delivered the answer and concluded the conversation by saying the statement.

#### *Unrevealed Cultural Identity Aspect*

One concept was left unexposed; self-categorization. Self-categorization defines how someone identifies himself openly as a member of a certain cultural group. Someone's cultural identity is not merely acknowledged by plainly identifying oneself as a member of a certain cultural group, for example *I am an American* and other self-identifying expressions. Ramanujan did not noticeably identify himself as a Hindu or as an Indian. He just showed that he belonged to a particular cultural group

and belief through performing specific speech acts related to his cultural background and maintaining his faith in God Namagiri.

The six cultural identity aspects; cultural narrative, identity centrality, identity salience, cultural roles and roles enactment, and cultural regard were revealed through seven representative functions, four expressives, two directives, and two declarations. The majority of representative functions within Ramanujan's speech acts performances caused by his trust in several distinctive matters related to his cultural and spiritual concerns.

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes in two different main aspects; (1) how a speaker unconsciously utilizes his speech acts for communicative purpose and (2) how those speech acts played a role as a vital instrument in exposing his cultural identity. Among the main character's 15 utterances, the most dominant speech acts function is 7 representatives, followed by 4 expressives, 2 directives, and 2 declarations. The representative function frequently appears since the main character recurrently asserts statements to his interlocutor as a communicative purpose as well as his conviction toward certain principles he embraces and specified facts he believes. Through those speech acts and the functions, the cultural identity aspects were exposed. There are 6 aspects revealed amidst 7 aspects; cultural narrative, identity centrality, identity salience, cultural roles and roles enactment, and cultural regard. Referring to the results presented, this study contributes on a new understanding that someone's utterance or expression could be influenced by various backgrounds; one of it is the speaker's cultural identity that affected on how he expresses his intended meaning through the utterance which carries particular speech acts' functions.

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