



**An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Song Lyrics of Nirvana's
Come as You Are and *You Know You're Right***

THESIS

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UNIVERSITAS JEMBER

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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This Thesis is Presented as One of the Requirements to Achieve of Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

1. My mother, Rifdah, who has given birth and raised me with great love. She has always given me strength, like sunlight and water that help me thrive.
2. My grandmother, Rukiyah, who always looks after me and worries about me, both in this world and the hereafter.
3. My father, Aan Subiyantoro, who has fulfilled his responsibilities and supported me throughout my life.
4. My uncles and aunts, Meta Baliana, Saiful Bahri, and Sri Yunani, who also helped raise and guide me as I grew up.
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8. My college friends, Adri, Afi, Akbar, Arfin, Eji, Fasel, Fikri, Kikik, and Rama, who have helped me from the beginning of university until the end.

MOTTO

The finest day I ever had was when tomorrow never came.

(Kurt Cobain)

DECLARATION

I hereby state that the thesis entitled “An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Song Lyrics of Nirvana’s *Come as You Are* and *You Know You’re Right*” is an original piece of writing. I declare that the research described in this study has never been submitted for any other degree or publication. I state, to the best of my knowledge, that all sources used in this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

Jember, 18 June 2025

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SUMMARY

An Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Song Lyrics of Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*: Muhamad Rifan, 210110101034, 54 pages, English Department, Faculty of Humanities, University of Jember.

This study examines the illocutionary acts in the lyrics of Nirvana's songs *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, which focus on the songwriter's intentions and the functions of each speech act. Using Searle's (1969) theory of illocutionary act types and Leech's (1983) framework of illocutionary functions, the research identifies and classifies 31 lyric lines without repetition from these songs. The study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze how each line performs an act such as stating, inviting, expressing, or promising, and how it functions socially and emotionally through collaborative, conflictive, competitive, or convivial purposes.

The results show that in *Come As You Are*, the most frequent directive acts are often used primarily to invite or suggest actions, while collaborative functions are aimed at mutual understanding. In contrast, *You Know You're Right* features more representative and commissive acts, which describe inner thoughts and emotional withdrawal. The collaborative function is also the most common in this song, and conflictive functions are the second most dominant, which reflects Kurt Cobain's personal struggles and emotional intensity.

This research concludes that Nirvana's lyrics are rich in pragmatic meaning and communicative function. By combining Searle's and Leech's theories, the study reveals how lyrics used language not only to express emotions but also to connect, reject, or reflect on social and personal experiences. The findings emphasize that song lyrics can be a powerful form of speech and help uncover the deeper meanings behind artistic expression.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction contains the background of the study. It starts with background information and the importance of the context under study. The next part of this chapter introduces the research questions and objectives that will be addressed in the study. Then, the scope and limitations of the research contain what will be the focus of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

One of the key concepts in pragmatics is the speech act. Speech acts are actions performed with words that show how language can be used to perform actions and convey messages. According to Yule (1996), speech acts represent the communicative function of language in interaction. Each utterance can be understood as an action depending on the speaker's intentions and the time used. This concept helps explain how language is used in everyday life to achieve goals, build relationships, and navigate social situations.

Austin (1962) explains that speech acts can be divided into three main types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act is the act of producing meaningful sounds or uttering words that form a recognizable sentence. This is the basic level of communication, where language is used to express literal meaning. An illocutionary act goes further by focusing on the speaker's intention or purpose behind the utterance, such as making a statement, giving an order, asking a question, or making a promise. It demonstrates what the speaker is doing through speaking. Additionally, the perlocutionary act defines the impact the statement has on the listener, which may be inspiring, terrifying, amusing, or persuading. When taken together, these three aspects show that language is a dynamic and interconnected process in which meaning is shaped by intentions and the reactions that words evoke in everyday interactions.

Nirvana was one of the most influential bands of the grunge movement, known for blending punk's raw energy with the heavy, distorted sound of metal. Their music gave voice to a generation's feelings of alienation, defiance, and

disillusionment, pushing back against consumerism and societal conformity (Haslam, 2023). With the massive success of their 1991 album *Nevermind*, grunge exploded into mainstream culture. Among its standout tracks, *Come as You Are* explores themes of existential uncertainty, self-acceptance, and ambiguous relationships. The line “*I don't have a gun*” became especially haunting after the frontman of the band Kurt Cobain’s tragic suicide with a shotgun, creating a stark contrast between the song’s message and his real-life end. A decade later, *You Know You're Right*, Nirvana’s final studio-recorded song, released posthumously in 2002, delivered a raw and powerful portrayal of Cobain’s inner confusion. Both songs were written by Kurt Cobain, whose songwriting captured the raw emotion and internal conflict that shaped Nirvana’s style of lyrics.

This research aims to analyze the hidden messages in the lyrics of Nirvana's *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, paying attention to how the messages in the lyrics can be able to resonate with a wide range of listeners. This research tries to capture all the illocutionary acts performed using words such as saying, expressing, or promising that the songwriter does through words. To establish this, the study adopts Searle's (1969) theory of illocutionary acts and applies it to explain what purpose the lyrics are directed towards. The research also employs Leech's (1983) theory of the functions of illocutionary acts to explain how these acts affect the relevant functions. This research contributes to the discipline of pragmatics in the study of popular culture and demonstrates the power that can be conveyed through song lyrics as a tool of communication.

1.2 Research Topic

This research topic uses illocutionary acts in analyzing some of Nirvana's songs *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, which show layers of meaning in the words chosen for the lyrics. The concept of unnecessary and uncertain motives presented in both songs touches the listeners' emotions. The study aims to uncover the underlying messages used and communicative purposes embedded in Cobain’s lyrics through illocutionary acts.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What categories of illocutionary acts are present in the lyrics of *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*?
2. What are the functions of illocutionary in the songs *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*?

1.4 Goals of Study

1. Identify and categorize the illocutionary acts found in the lyrics of *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right* by Nirvana.
2. Explore the functions of illocutionary acts of the song *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

This thesis focuses on analyzing the illocutionary acts in Nirvana's songs *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. It applies Searle's theory to identify how the lyrics perform acts such as stating, commanding, promising, or expressing emotions. It also applies Leech's theory to examine the functions of these illocutionary acts within the lyrics. The analysis does not include musical elements, live performances, or audience interpretations. The scope of this study is the English lyrics only, without any consideration of other Nirvana songs for comparison or analysis, nor translations into different languages. This work applies certain theories and seeks to decode the concealed intentions and meanings that the authors might have put in the words of the lyrics.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, previous research attempts are provided in order to highlight gaps as well as create a Searle (1969) and Leech (1983) framework for further explanation of the lyrics' meaning and function.

2.1 Previous Researches

Previous research on illocutionary acts has been widely conducted in various contexts, demonstrating that language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a form of action. One study by Rismayanti (2021) analyzed the use of illocutionary acts in the film *Five Feet Apart* using Searle's (1969) theory. The findings identified four types of illocutionary acts: representative, directive, commissive, and expressive, while declarative acts did not appear. These acts served several communicative purposes, such as stating, questioning, refusing, and expressing surprise. The results indicated that the speaker's intentions influenced the communication outcomes, supporting the use of Searle's theory in analyzing speech acts in film dialogue.

The second study was carried out by Sari and Emelia (2022), who analyzed the illocutionary acts in the lyrics of the *Doo-Wops & Hooligans* album of Bruno Mars. They were analyzing the data with Searle's source code to find out how dissimilar kinds of speech acts functioned in the analyzed song lyrics. It had been discovered five types of illocutionary acts (representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative), and the representative act was the most frequent. These actions were primarily to demonstrate feelings, ideas, and major points of the lyrics. The results indicated that song lyrics employed more depictive actions to convey meaning, which projected the experiential and thematic content of music. Their research confirmed that Searle's theory could be effectively used to analyze creative texts like song lyrics and helped explain the songwriter's intentions.

The latest research study by Nasution et al. (2022) focused on the illocutionary acts in Yusuf Hamka's speeches during his appearances on Deddy Corbuzier's podcast. Based on Searle's framework, they identified four types of

illocutionary acts: assertive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The findings suggested that these acts were aimed at educating and motivating audience engagement as well as active participation. Given that podcasts feature spontaneous speech and dialogue, the research indicated that different sets of illocutionary acts were employed based on the speakers' communicative objectives. These changes happened as the speakers adjusted their language to inform, influence, or respond to each other's intentions in direct conversation.

Previous researches showed that illocutionary acts were useful for analyzing various forms of communication, including speeches, films, podcasts, and song lyrics. Grasping these concepts helped speakers achieve their goals within their messages. On the other hand, numerous studies defaulted to classifying these actions without examining their functions in detail. This is where this research differed, by employing Leech's theory to explain functional roles, along with Searle's theory for classification, provided a different perspective, revealing how language within song lyrics conveyed intentionally crafted meaning, which had largely been overlooked in prior studies.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study pertains to the field of pragmatics, and the data are organized according to speech act theory. The study elaborates on Searle's various illocutionary acts as well as Leech's functions of illocutionary acts. This describes how the researcher intends to examine intently every detail that gives sense and intention to the words uttered.

2.2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on how language is used in context to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning, which involves analyzing how speakers use language to achieve communicative goals based on context. Pragmatics looks at how people understand what others say. It considers things like what the speaker intends, the relationship between the people talking, cultural rules, and the situation they are in. This field also explores how implied

meanings, pointing words (deixis), assumptions (presuppositions), indirect requests, and unstated messages all affect how we interpret meaning. Essentially, by studying the connection between language, meaning, and context, pragmatics explains how we manage to understand each other in everyday conversations.

As defined by Leech in 1983, pragmatics deals with the use of language within a given communicative context, thus focusing upon 'what a speaker really means' and 'What social relationship exists between participants in communication'. It studies the relation between society and language. This branch emphasizes relations such as what lies behind the intention of an utterance and who utters it, whose ears receive the words, when, where, how those words are articulated; and therefore, which leads have significance attached to them concerning meaning or function while serving some utility purposes. It explores sometimes deeper meanings than what is literally expressed through different social contexts. A pragmatic theory clarifies for us why meaning is relative (subjective) in nature, depending on social interactions among persons participating together for mutual understanding about something essentially real.

2.2.2 Speech Act Theory

John Searle, a well-known philosopher of language, made important contributions to speech act theory. He suggested that language is not just a way to communicate, but rather an organized system of behavior guided by rules. Searle stated, "*Speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior*" (Searle, 1969: 12). This means that when we use language, the speakers are not just expressing themselves but also engaging in a structured activity that follows social and linguistic conventions that the speakers expected to stick to. Searle's theory is built on the idea that every speech act has specific rules that clarify what it means to perform actions like giving an order or making a promise. He pointed out that while some behaviors, like fishing, depend on natural facts, speech acts rely on established rules.

Austin's theory is based on the idea that speaking is an action itself, not just a way to share information. As Austin puts it, "*The uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action*" (Austin, 1962). This shows that speech acts are

not based on natural facts but are governed by social conventions that determine what counts as performing specific actions through language. According to Austin (1962), there are three main types of speech acts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Each type focuses on a different part of communication.

A. Locutionary Act

A locutionary act is the act of saying something with a certain sense and reference; it involves the utterance of words with their conventional meaning. According to Austin, this includes producing sounds, forming words, and constructing sentences that refer to specific things and convey literal meaning.

Example (Act A):

“He said to me ‘Shoot her!’, meaning by ‘shoot’ shoot and referring by ‘her’ to her.”

(Austin, 1962: 101)

This is a straightforward act of using language to express a meaningful proposition or statement, without yet considering the speaker’s intent or the listener’s reaction.

B. Illocutionary Act

An illocutionary act occurs when the speaker performs an action in saying something, such as asserting, commanding, warning, or advising. This level captures the speaker’s intent and how the utterance functions as a conventional act within a social context.

Example (Act B):

“He urged (or advised, ordered, etc.) me to shoot her.”

(Austin, 1962: 101)

In this case, the act of saying “Shoot her!” is not merely stating something; it is doing something, like giving a command or making a request, depending on the context.

C. Perlocutionary Act

A perlocutionary act refers to the effect the utterance has on the listener, whether intended or not. This includes persuading, scaring, amusing, or otherwise influencing the thoughts or actions of the audience.

Example (Act C.a): “He persuaded me to shoot her.”

Example (Act C.b): “He got me to (or made me, etc.) shoot her.”
(Austin, 1962: 101)

While the illocutionary act focuses on what is done in saying something, the perlocutionary act highlights what is done by saying something, namely, the consequences or outcomes that result from the utterance.

2.2.3 Classifications of Illocutionary Act

Searle’s work has proven itself to be a fundamental aspect of pragmatics, highlighting how individuals apply language to fulfil objectives in communication. As he explains, “*linguistic characterizations which do not record particular utterances but have a general character, deriving from the fact that the elements are governed by rules*” (Searle, 1969: 13). His classification offers a structured approach to examining speech acts across different domains, such as linguistics, literature, and music. Searle’s theory explores the purpose behind speech, offering a richer insight into how language works in various settings from casual chats to official environments and artistic expressions.

According to Searle, we do not just use language to share information; we use it to perform actions. The illocutionary force of what we say reveals the meaning the speaker intends and how that meaning gets understood in the right context. Therefore, Searle argues that speech acts are actions shaped by specific rules and intentions. Five types of acts are grouped by him: assertives (stating facts), directives (giving orders or requests), commissives (making promises), expressives (stating feelings), and declarations (altering the status quo). This framework shows how language works as a planned and organized way for people to communicate (Searle, 1969: 22). Based on the goal of the speech and what the speaker wants to achieve, Searle reorganized classification into five clear groups:

A. Representatives

Representatives are speech acts that commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. They are judged by how true or false they are, which makes words fit with the world. This group includes acts where the level of belief or commitment can be very different, such as making assumptions, boasting, or complaining. This group includes verbs like "state," "assert," "conclude," and "deduce," which are often defined by their ability to show the speaker's interest or the relationship between the words used in a sentence.

B. Directives

Directives are things like requests, commands, and ideas that are meant to get the listener to do something. The world and the words become more connected when these things happen, from nice ideas to strong orders. With seriousness, the person hears something and wants the action to happen. The content usually involves the person hearing about doing an action in the future. This is shown by words like "ask," "order," "invite," and "advise." Questions are a type of directive because they want answers, which fits with the world-to-words way of fit.

C. Commissives

Commissives express an intention to act and commit the speaker to the future of action. They fit words to the world, like instructions, but they focus on the speaker's duty instead of convincing the listener, which makes them different. Some common commissives are "promise," "vow," and "pledge." Even though they both follow directives in the same way, commissives are still different because they are committed to their work and do not let outside factors affect them.

D. Expressives

Expressives are actions that convey the speaker's emotional state, including apologizing, thanking, congratulating, and welcoming. Expressives express the speaker's emotional state about a certain situation. The truth of these acts is assumed rather than affirmed or changed, so they do not fit in any way. Some examples are "apologize," "thank you," "congratulate," and "condole." This shows how they can be used to show feelings without changing the truth.

E. Declarations

Declarative actions change the outside world just by being said if the person making the statement has the right power. In a way that no other action does, the successful act itself creates the fit between words and reality. Declarative often depends on the power of an institution, such as in "resign," "appoint," "christen," and "declare war." Some declarations, like court or umpire decisions, are a combination of assertives and other types of words. They use parts of both types to settle disagreements or set facts within boundaries.

2.2.4 Leech's Varieties of Illocutionary Functions

Leech's theory of illocutionary functions extends the understanding of how language is used not just to communicate but also to maintain social harmony and achieve specific social goals. His framework classifies illocutionary functions into four main types based on their purpose and alignment with politeness principles: competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive.

A. Competitive

Competitive acts involve illocutionary goals that compete with social harmony, for example, getting someone to lend you money, which serves as a request softened by politeness strategies. In the image, acts like ordering, asking, demanding, and begging are highlighted as competitive, where the speaker's goal is prioritized over the addressee's convenience. According to Leech, politeness strategies in such cases aim to mitigate the intrinsic discourtesy of the act by softening its impact.

B. Convivial

These acts align the illocutionary goal with the social goal, typically in the form of positive politeness strategies. Politeness here takes a more positive form of seeking opportunities for comity. These acts include thanking, offering, and congratulating, for example, if you have an opportunity to congratulate someone on their 100th birthday, you should do so.

C. Collaborative

Collaborative acts are neutral regarding politeness, as they neither promote nor hinder social harmony. These include assertives such as stating facts, reporting,

or explaining. This category provides information without any overtly polite or impolite intent.

D. Conflictive

Conflictive acts intentionally disrupt social harmony, such as insults, accusations, or threats. For instance, in the case of conflictive illocutions, such as insults or threats, politeness is not expected, as these speech acts are inherently intended to offend. Conflictive functions oppose social goals, often disrupting harmony through confrontational acts. Examples include threatening, accusing, quarreling, and reprimanding.

Leech's categorization of illocutionary functions emphasizes the role of politeness as a pragmatic tool to navigate the inherent tensions between achieving individual goals and maintaining social relationships. Leech supports Searle's view by showing that the effectiveness of an illocutionary act depends not only on rules but also on how it fits within the context of communication. Based on Leech (1983), the link between our reasons for communicating and the way we use language is complex and deeply connected to pragmatics. Pragmatics helps us understand how language works in real-life situations, from everyday conversations to various kinds of social interaction.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains how the research was analyzed and organized. The research section clearly explains the type of research, the data collection process, and the data processing and analysis.

3.1 Types of Research

To discuss the meaning and role of language in song lyrics, this research uses using qualitative method. Creswell (2009) says that qualitative research tries to understand how people interpret, understand, and find meaning in their experiences by focusing on rich and detailed descriptions rather than numbers.

This study gives a more structured look at how Nirvana's lyrics affect a response, and it estimates the frequency and distribution of illocutionary acts in its two songs. This approach looks at both songs and their measurable impact on language and society.

3.2 Data Collection

This research involved using the documentary method to gather data. That means we examined and interpreted existing texts and audio. As Creswell (2009) points out, qualitative researchers often use documents to understand participants' language and the meaning within those materials. For this study, the main data came from the lyrics of two Nirvana songs: *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. The lyrics came from *Genius.com*, a popular website known for providing verified and annotated song lyrics. The researcher also listened to the official recordings of both songs on *Spotify* to make sure everything was accurate. This helps to make sure the lyrics are right and that there are no errors or missing parts. The data was collected in the following steps:

1. The lyrics of *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right* were downloaded from Genius.com as the main text for analysis.
 - *Come As You Are*: <https://genius.com/Nirvana-come-as-you-are-lyrics>

- *You Know You're Right*: <https://genius.com/Nirvana-you-know-youre-right-lyrics>
2. The researcher listened to the original audio of both songs on *Spotify* and compared the lyrics with the recordings.
 3. Any differences, repeated lines, or missing words found during the comparison were noted and corrected to ensure the lyrics were accurate.

Finally, from this data collection, the number of collected data is 31, involving: (1) in *Come As You Are*, there are 11 data; (2) in *You Know You're Right*, there are 19 data.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the data, it was processed and analyzed using organized procedures. First, the researcher closely looked at the lyrics of Nirvana's songs *Come as You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. The words were then separated into individual lines to better understand each one. Next, the researcher identified and marked all the lines that acted as illocutionary acts. Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary types was used to identify them. These types include assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. In addition, Leech's (1983) model of illocutionary functions was used to understand the social and communicative goals behind each act. These frameworks helped determine if a particular line was an assertion, a request, an expression of emotion, or another type of speech act. To make sure that the lyrics were understood the same way every time, they were reviewed multiple times. This careful process showed how the words in the songs convey more than just their literal meanings. It revealed how the songs' language communicates ideas, intentions, and their role in society.

Next, this study explains each category of illocutionary acts and their functions as found in the two Nirvana songs chosen. The data is labeled using the format S.1 for *Come As You Are* and S.2 for *You Know You're Right*. The number after each label shows the specific line of the lyrics being analyzed. Each data point is broken down using Searle's classification of illocutionary acts and Leech's

illocutionary functions. The findings are explained in more detail in the next section, where this is shown by the types and functions of illocutionary acts, which reflect the speaker's intentions and add to the deeper meaning of the lyrics.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the study's results, focusing on how illocutionary acts are classified and what their functions are in the chosen song lyrics. The analysis includes a detailed breakdown of each type of illocutionary act and its communicative function, followed by a discussion of how the type relates to its intended meaning.

4.1 Data Findings

From Nirvana's songs *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, 31 data points were selected based on the findings. The analysis identified four types of illocutionary acts based on Searle's (1969) classification: representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. However, declarative illocutionary acts were not found in the lyrics, which means there were no utterances that changed social reality within an institutional context. The analysis also revealed four distinct functions of illocutionary acts, which were categorized following Leech's (1983) framework: collaborative, competitive, expressive, and conflictive. These functions show how the lyrics convey information, express emotions, assert intentions, or suggest actions.

4.1.1 Types of Illocutionary Acts

This section classifies illocutionary acts according to Searle's (1969) theory, which includes representative, directive, commissive, and expressive acts. The distribution and frequency of each type are also summarized to show which forms are most dominant in the songs.

4. 1 The Types of Illocutionary Acts

No	Title of Songs	Types of Illocutionary Acts	Lines	Number of Data
1	<i>Come As You Are</i>	Representative	(S.1.3) <i>As a friend, as a friend</i> (S.1.4) <i>As an old enemy</i> (S.1.13) <i>As a trend, as a friend</i>	3

			(S.1.20) <i>No, I don't have a gun</i>	
		Directive	(S.1.1) <i>Come as you are, as you were</i>	6
			(S.1.2) <i>As I want you to be</i>	
			(S.1.5) <i>Take your time, hurry up</i>	
			(S.1.6) <i>Choice is yours, don't be late</i>	
			(S.1.7) <i>Take a rest as a friend</i>	
			(S.1.12) <i>Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach</i>	
		Commisive	(S.1.19) <i>And I swear that I don't have a gun</i>	1
		Expressive	(S.1.9-11) <i>Memoria</i>	1
2	<i>You Know You're Right</i>	Representative	(S.2.8) <i>You won't be afraid of fear</i>	10
			(S.2.9) <i>No thought was put into this</i>	
			(S.2.10) <i>And always knew it would come to this</i>	
			(S.2.11) <i>Things have never been so swell</i>	
			(S.2.12) <i>I have never failed to fail</i>	
			(S.2.14) <i>You know you're right</i>	
			(S.2.17) <i>I no longer have to hide</i>	
			(S.2.19) <i>Steaming soup against her mouth</i>	
			(S.2.20) <i>Nothing really bothers her</i>	
			(S.2.21) <i>She just wants to love himself</i>	
		Directive	(S.2.18) <i>Let's talk about someone else</i>	1
		Commisive	(S.2.1) <i>I will never bother you</i>	6
			(S.2.2) <i>I will never promise to</i>	
			(S.2.3) <i>I will never follow you</i>	
			(S.2.5) <i>Never speak a word again</i>	

			(S.2.6) <i>I will crawl away for good</i>	
			(S.2.7) <i>I will move away from here</i>	
		Expressive	(S.2.16) <i>I'm so warm and calm inside</i>	2
			(S.2.13) <i>Pain, pain, pain</i>	

Table 4.1 shows the types of illocutionary acts present in the lyrics of Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. In *Come As You Are*, the most common illocutionary act is the directive, with 6 instances or 50%. This is followed by representative acts with 4 instances or 33%, and both commissive and expressive acts appear once, each accounting for 8%. In contrast, *You Know You're Right* exhibits a different pattern, with representative acts being the most frequent, a category that totals 10 instances or 53%. Commissive acts occurred 6 times or 32%, while expressive acts appeared 2 times or 10%, and directive acts only once or 5%. From these findings, it can be concluded that *Come As You Are* mainly employs directive acts to engage the listener, while *You Know You're Right* relies more on representative and commissive acts to describe the speaker's personal state and emotional reality. This illustrates how the two songs use different illocutionary strategies to reflect distinct communicative goals, which are the underlying intentions or purposes the speaker aims to achieve through their utterances, such as informing, persuading, or expressing feelings.

4.1.2 Functions of Illocutionary Acts

This section presents the functions of illocutionary acts in Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, based on Leech's (1983) theory. Each line is analyzed to see if it shares ideas, shows conflict, influences the listener, or expresses politeness. These functions help reveal how Cobain uses language to express emotions, intentions, and social meaning.

4. 2 The Function of Illocutionary Acts

No	Title of Songs	Function of Illocutionary Acts	Lines	Number of Data
1	<i>Come As You Are</i>	Competitive	(S.1.2) <i>As I want you to be</i>	3
			(S.1.5) <i>Take your time, hurry up</i>	
			(S.1.6) <i>Choice is yours, don't be late</i>	
		Convivial	(S.1.1) <i>Come as you are, as you were</i>	3
			(S.1.7) <i>Take a rest as a friend</i>	
			(S.1.12) <i>Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach</i>	
		Collaborative	(S.1.3) <i>As a friend, as a friend</i>	4
			(S.1.4) <i>As an old enemy</i>	
			(S.1.13) <i>As a trend, as a friend</i>	
			(S.1.9-11) <i>Memoria</i>	
Conflictive	(S.1.20) <i>No, I don't have a gun</i>	2		
	(S.1.19) <i>And I swear that I don't have a gun</i>			
2	<i>You Know You're Right</i>	Competitive	(S.2.18) <i>Let's talk about someone else</i>	1
		Convivial	(S.2.1) <i>I will never bother you</i>	1
		Collaborative	(S.2.8) <i>You won't be afraid of fear</i>	11
			(S.2.9) <i>No thought was put into this</i>	
			(S.2.10) <i>And always knew it would come to this</i>	
			(S.2.11) <i>Things have never been so swell</i>	
			(S.2.12) <i>I have never failed to fail</i>	
			(S.2.17) <i>I no longer have to hide</i>	
(S.2.19) <i>Steaming soup against her mouth</i>				

			(S.2.20) <i>Nothing really bothers her</i>	
			(S.2.21) <i>She just wants to love himself</i>	
			(S.2.16) <i>I'm so warm and calm inside</i>	
			(S.2.13) <i>Pain, pain, pain</i>	
		Conflictive	(S.2.14) <i>You know you're right</i>	6
			(S.2.2) <i>I will never promise to</i>	
			(S.2.3) <i>I will never follow you</i>	
			(S.2.5) <i>Never speak a word again</i>	
			(S.2.6) <i>I will crawl away for good</i>	
			(S.2.7) <i>I will move away from here</i>	

Table 4.2 shows the analysis of illocutionary functions found in the lyrics of Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*, based on Leech's (1983) framework. In *Come As You Are*, the most common function is the collaborative, which appears in 4 and this makes up 33% of the data. This indicates that the speaker often shares ideas and descriptions to build mutual understanding. The competitive and convivial functions each occur in 3, and these represent 25% of the data, which suggests that the speaker also uses language to influence the listener or to show politeness. Meanwhile, the conflictive function appears in 2 lines, which accounts for 17%, and reflects moments where the speaker's words create tension or challenge social norms. Similarly, in *You Know You're Right*, the collaborative function remains the most dominant, with 11 lines or 58%, which implies that the speaker mainly uses language to express beliefs or describe events in a way that promotes understanding. The conflictive function follows with 6 lines or 32%, and this indicates personal resistance or tension in communication. The competitive and convivial functions each appear once, at 5%, which shows these purposes are less frequent in this song. Overall, the collaborative function is the most common in

both songs. This demonstrates that Nirvana's lyrics primarily aim to convey personal views, experiences, and meanings in a way that supports communication and reflection, which aligns with the collaborative use of language.

4.2 Discussion

This section explains the types of illocutionary acts and their functions as found in Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. The types are analyzed using Searle's (1969) framework, while their functions follow Leech's (1983) classification. Each lyric line is examined to identify how the act type (such as stating, promising, or expressing) connects with its function (such as collaborative or conflictive). The relationship between type and function reveals how Cobain's lyrics express intention, emotion, and meaning.

4.2.1 The Types and the Functions of Illocutionary Acts in *Come As You Are*

1. Representative

a. Stating

(S.1.3) *As a friend, as a friend*

(S.1.4) *As an old enemy*

These two lines are examples of the representative acts, more specifically, the act of stating. According to Searle (1969), representative acts are used when the speaker says something they believe to be true about the world. In this case, the speaker describes the listener using two opposite roles: "*friend*" and "*enemy*." The speaker is not expressing feelings or trying to influence the listener's actions but is stating how they view or remember the relationship. This makes the lines representative because they are based on the speaker's belief or judgment about the past. The speaker is giving a version of reality that they consider true about the relationship between those two lines, even if it is complex or contradictory.

Kurt Cobain explained that *Come As You Are* talks about how people behave differently depending on how others expect them to act (Azerrad, 1993). By saying "*As a friend*" and "*As an old enemy*," the speaker shows that relationships can have more than one meaning. A person can be remembered both for good times and for hurtful actions. These lines show that the speaker sees relationships as confusing

and not just one-sided. They are considered representative acts because the speaker is describing what they believe to be a real situation.

These lines also show a **collaborative** function because the speaker shares their perspective without trying to control or oppose the listener. According to Leech (1983), collaborative functions are used to provide information that encourages mutual understanding. In this case, the speaker is not criticizing or commanding but simply describing how a relationship is remembered. The lines “*As a friend, as a friend*” and “*As an old enemy*” suggest that Kurt Cobain is reflecting on how one person can be both comforting and hurtful at different times. He is expressing the idea that relationships are often complex and filled with emotional contradictions. By sharing this view, the speaker invites the listener to understand his experience thoughtfully and openly.

b. Describing

(S.1.13) *As a trend, as a friend*

This line depicts someone through vivid and conflicting images. The speaker uses “*trend*” and “*friend*,” which represent public image versus personal connection. According to Azerrad (1993), Cobain often felt torn between being authentic and conforming to public and media expectations. This line portrays the experience of being seen and judged by others, as the media shaped him by turning his identity into a product, emphasizing his fame, fashion, and behavior as part of a trend rather than recognizing him as a person. This line reflects the feeling of being viewed not for who you truly are, but for how you appear or perform in public. The speaker expresses how people may judge based on image or hype and neglect real personal connections.

The line “*As a trend, as a friend*” functions **collaboratively**, which shares an observation about shifting identity roles. In this context, the speaker illustrates how individuals are perceived socially, both as something popular and as someone personally known. That line employs vivid contrasts to encourage the listener to reflect on how people are influenced by external forces. The stance remains reflective that aiming to foster shared understanding rather than conflict.

c. Informing

(S.1.20) *No, I don't have a gun*

This line serves as informing acts. The speaker conveys to the listener that they want to clarify that he does not have a weapon. According to Searle (1969), informing occurs when someone shares factual information. As cited in (Azerrad, 1993), Cobain said that this line was not meant to threaten anyone but was more symbolic. However, it gained attention after his death, which leads many to feel that the line carried a darker meaning.

The line “*No, I don't have a gun*” functions with a **conflictive** illocutionary force. In this utterance, the speaker denies being a threat or having harmful intentions. The reference to a gun suggests danger, which may be interpreted as either violence toward others or the possibility of self-harm. By saying he does not have a gun, the speaker seems to reject the idea that he is dangerous, aggressive, or unstable. This could reflect a desire to correct public misunderstandings about his personality. However, the repetition of the line throughout the song adds emotional intensity, which makes the denial feel defensive or troubled. After his death, the line was seen by many as ironic or tragic because it appeared to contradict the reality of what happened. This creates a conflict between the speaker's denial and how society interpreted the statement later.

2. Directive

a. Inviting

(S.1.1) *Come as you are, as you were*

(S.1.2) *As I want you to be*

(S.1.12) *Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach*

These lines are examples of inviting directive acts, as seen in the lines “*Come as you are, as you were*” and “*Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach.*” According to Searle (1969), directives are speech acts where the speaker wants the listener to do something. In these lines, the speaker invites the listener to come forward, whether as their true self, as someone they used to be, or even in a confused or imperfect condition. The speaker seems to be asking the listener to show up

honestly, without hiding their identity or past. However, the line “*As I want you to be*” adds pressure. It suggests that even when the listener comes as they are, there is still an expectation to meet the speaker’s ideal image. This shows that the speaker not only wants the listener to be present but also to meet certain personal or social standards, which creates tension between acceptance and judgment.

The line “*Come as you are, as you were*” functions **convivially** because the speaker invites the listener to come freely, without needing to change or pretend. The line “*Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach*” can be seen as having a **convivial** function because it indirectly invites the listener to confront the contrast between appearance and expectation. Though it describes a state of being, the use of contradiction between “*mud*” and “*bleach*” may be interpreted as a subtle way of advising or warning, which reflects a polite attempt to influence awareness without confrontation. In contrast, “*As I want you to be*” reflects a **competitive** function, as it shows the speaker’s desire that may limit the listener’s freedom. This expectation reduces politeness by placing the speaker’s wants above the listener’s comfort.

b. Suggesting

(S.1.5) *Take your time, hurry up*

(S.1.6) *Choice is yours, don’t be late*

(S.1.7) *Take a rest as a friend*

These lines are examples of suggestions, which are a type of directive that acts. According to Searle (1969), directive acts are used when the speaker wants the listener to do something. The line “*Take your time and hurry up*” create a contradiction, which reflects the speaker’s own confusion or pressure. The line “*Choice is yours, don’t be late*” encourages the listener to decide for themselves, but still adds urgency. “*Take a rest as a friend*” suggests that the listener should find comfort or peace in the presence of someone they trust. In this case, the speaker offers advice or ideas rather than giving direct orders. The speaker seems to suggest that the listener should make their own decision whether to slow down, act quickly, or take a break. Overall, the speaker is suggesting that the listener should choose their own pace and actions, but under the tension of mixed expectations.

The lines “*Take your time, hurry up*” and “*Choice is yours, don’t be late*” both function as **competitive** acts. They suggest actions while subtly pressuring the listener, this reflects the speaker’s urgency or expectations. The urgency in these lines may represent the speaker’s inner conflict and wanting the listener to act quickly while also appearing patient. This contradiction reflects the tension between freedom and pressure in relationships. The expectation could be that the listener must make a decision soon, perhaps about identity, conformity, or emotional closeness. By saying “*don’t be late,*” the speaker implies that there is a limited time to respond or change, which is suggest emotional or situational pressure to meet the speaker’s unspoken standards. These mixed messages highlight the emotional tension Cobain often expressed in his lines, between acceptance and control, freedom and demand.

3. Commisive

a. Promising (Assuring)

(S.1.19) *And I swear that I don’t have a gun*

This line also fits the commissive act type, where the speaker makes a promise or reassurance. By saying “*I swear,*” the speaker commits to the truth of what is being said. Cobain explained that this was not meant as a threat but a way of calming fears (Azerrad, 1993). The line shows the speaker’s attempt to assure the listener that they mean no harm.

The function of this line is **conflictive** because, although the speaker tries to offer reassurance, the choice of strong words and the emotional context of the song make the statement feel unsettling. According to Leech (1983), conflictive acts often oppose social harmony. In this case, the speaker’s attempt to silence the listener by saying “*And I swear that I don’t have a gun*” might instead raise emotional tension, especially when considered alongside the darker themes in the song and Cobain’s personal history.

4. Expressive

a. Expressing emotion

(S.1.9-11) *Memoria*

The repeated word “*Memoria*” is an expressive act. It communicates feelings related to memory, possibly nostalgia, regret, or confusion. Searle (1969) describes expressive acts as ways of showing psychological states. Azerrad (1993) noted that Cobain used abstract or symbolic words to express emotional pain. The repetition suggests the emotion is deep and unresolved.

The function of this line is **collaborative** because the speaker does not command or accuse but instead shares an emotional experience. The repeated use of the word “*Memoria*” expresses a deep, personal feeling without forcing interpretation. According to Leech (1983), collaborative acts aim to share thoughts or feelings in a way that maintains social balance. Here, the ambiguity of the word shows that Cobain simply wants to express his emotion, which allows the listener to feel and reflect without creating conflict or confrontation.

4.2.2 The Types and the Functions of Illocutionary Acts in *You Know You’re Right*

1. Representative

a. Describing

(S.2.8) *You won’t be afraid of fear*

(S.2.9) *No thought was put into this*

(S.2.10) *And always knew it would come to this*

(S.2.11) *Things have never been so swell*

(S.2.12) *I have never failed to fail*

(S.2.17) *I no longer have to hide*

(S.2.19) *Steaming soup against her mouth*

(S.2.20) *Nothing really bothers her*

(S.2.21) *She just wants to love himself*

These lines are examples of **representative** illocutionary acts, where the speaker presents statements that they believe to be true. According to Searle (1969), representative acts include asserting, stating, describing, or reporting, where the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition.

In these lines, the speaker shares ideas about themselves or another person. For example, lines such as “*You won’t be afraid of fear*” and “*No thought was put into this*” are statements that reflect the speaker’s belief or view about a situation. The line “*And always knew it would come to this*” shows the speaker’s certainty that a particular outcome was expected.

Statements like “*Things have never been so swell*” and “*I have never failed to fail*” may appear positive but are better understood as descriptive judgments about past experiences. These lines are representative because the speaker is describing how they view events or their personal history, though the language may be ironic or humorous, the purpose is to describe a view of reality, not to mock or criticize.

Lines (S.2.19) to (S.2.21) shift focus to a female figure, possibly as an observation or as a symbolic description. For example, “*Steaming soup against her mouth*” and “*Nothing really bothers her*” are descriptive statements about someone’s actions or behavior. The line “*She just wants to love himself*” contains a grammatical inconsistency, which may suggest a broader reflection by the speaker rather than a direct report. Regardless, these lines still perform a representative function because the speaker appears to describe what they observe or believe to be the case. Overall, these lines present personal views and descriptions, which shows how the speaker constructs meaning through statements they hold to be true.

The function of these lines is **collaborative** because the speaker is sharing thoughts and personal reflections without trying to control or pressure the listener. For instance, lines like “*You won’t be afraid of fear*” and “*No thought was put into this*” state the speaker’s perception of a situation, such as a lack of preparation or a shift in fear. According to Leech (1983), collaborative acts are used to provide information or convey thoughts sincerely. In “*I have never failed to fail*” and “*I no longer have to hide,*” the speaker reflects on self-perception and exposure. These utterances are not meant to argue or persuade but to honestly present the speaker’s view. This type of sharing encourages understanding and thought connectivity with the listener, and this supports social harmony.

b. Asserting

(S.2.14) *You know you're right*

This line is a strong representative act with an assertive and slightly defensive textual character. The speaker presents a statement that he believes to be true and expects the listener to accept it. The repetition of “*You know you're right*” emphasizes the speaker’s need to be heard and understood. It suggests that he may feel ignored or dismissed, and now he is expressing his certainty without room for argument. This line does not invite discussion but instead closes it, which shows that the speaker is tired of explaining himself. Cobain likely uses this line to show the emotional pressure of being misunderstood, and the repetition reflects his frustration and desire for recognition.

The function of the line “*You know you're right*” is **conflictive** because it reinforces the speaker’s assertion in a way that may confront or dismiss the listener’s perspective. According to Leech (1983), conflictive illocutionary acts include speech that may cause disagreement or tension, such as accusations or corrections. This statement, though seemingly agreeable, can carry sarcasm or emotional pressure, which suggests frustration or irony. Rather than encouraging open dialogue, it may serve to end a discussion or assert dominance in the conversation.

2. Directive

a. Suggesting

(S.2.18) *Let's talk about someone else*

This is a directive illocutionary act, specifically suggesting a topic shift. According to Searle (1969), directives are attempts to get the listener to do something. The speaker proposes redirecting attention, possibly to avoid confronting painful truths. This line shows Cobain’s discomfort with self-disclosure and desire to deflect.

The line “*Let's talk about someone else*” serves a **competitive** function because it focuses on controlling the conversation rather than fostering closeness. According to Leech (1983), competitive acts are used when the speaker aims to achieve their

own goal, even if it means sacrificing politeness. In this case, the speaker chooses to avoid the current topic, which shows a preference for steering the discussion away instead of maintaining social harmony or connection.

3. Commissive

a. Promising (Assuring)

(S.2.1) *I will never bother you*

This line is a clear example of a commissive illocutionary act, specifically the act of assuring. The speaker commits to a future action that will not bother the listener. According to Searle (1969), commissive acts include promises, refusals, threats, or offers, all of which involve the speaker binding themselves to a certain course of action. In this case, the commitment is to non-interference, which shows a wish to step away from conflict or emotional closeness. This line reflects Cobain's emotional burnout and his need for distance, possibly in the context of a strained relationship. Rather than expressing anger, the speaker offers silence and absence as a form of kindness or protection.

The line "*I will never bother you*" has a **convivial** function because it aims to keep or restore social harmony. Leech (1983) explains that convivial acts include offers, invitations, or reassurances that help maintain good relations. Here, the speaker is not being forceful or aggressive but tries to calm the situation by promising not to cause trouble. Although it may come from feelings of pain or tiredness, the line politely steps back to reduce conflict, which indicates to the listener that the speaker does not want to disturb the listener anymore, which can bring comfort or relief.

b. Promising (Rejecting Commitment)

(S.2.2) *I will never promise to*

(S.2.3) *I will never follow you*

(S.2.5) *Never speak a word again*

(S.2.6) *I will crawl away for good*

(S.2.7) *I will move away from here*

These lines are also examples of commissive acts, but they take on a negative and more conflictive form. Instead of promising to do something positive, the speaker commits to refusing future contact or communication. As Searle (1969) explains, commissives can involve either doing something or refusing to do it. Here, the speaker commits to silence, emotional detachment, and physical withdrawal.

Each line shows a step further into isolation, “*I will never promise to*” rejects trust and future obligations, “*I will never follow you*” cuts off any shared direction or loyalty, “*Never speak a word again*” ends verbal interaction, “*I will crawl away for good*” suggests a painful and permanent exit, “*I will move away from here*” completes the retreat with physical distance.

These lines reflect Cobain’s desire to completely withdraw from people or emotional pressures. The repetition of “*I will never...*” emphasizes a refusal to participate in emotional life. This mirrors Cobain’s struggle with mental health and relationships, his way of protecting himself through distance.

The lines (S.2.2-3) to (S.2.5-7) express a **conflictive** function because they break social harmony by showing rejection and emotional distance. According to Leech (1983), conflictive acts challenge or disrupt relationships. Here, the speaker refuses to make promises, follow, speak, or stay, which signals a clear withdrawal. The language is firm and definite, which results in creating a sense of emotional coldness and despair. Rather than offering comfort or connection, these lines close off communication and show the speaker’s inner struggle and pain.

4. Expressive

a. Expressing Emotion

(S.2.16) *I’m so warm and calm inside*

(S.2.13) *Pain, pain, pain*

These lines are an expressive act; they show the speaker’s psychological state. “*Warm and calm*” contrasts starkly with the rest of the song’s despair, which suggests either irony or a fleeting moment of peace. The single word “*Pain*” is stark and unfiltered, which conveys deep emotional distress. According to Searle (1969),

expressive acts communicate feelings rather than facts. These lines expose Cobain's inner battle between numb calm and raw suffering.

The lines "*I'm so warm and calm inside*" and "*Pain, pain, pain*" serve a **collaborative** function because they express the speaker's feelings without blaming or commanding. According to Leech (1983), collaborative acts aim to foster understanding. In these lines, the speaker shares personal emotions, which invites the listener to empathize rather than respond or argue. The line "*I'm so warm and calm inside*" may express a moment of peace or numbness, possibly masking deeper pain. In contrast, repeating "*Pain, pain, pain*" directly reveals emotional suffering. Together, these lines show a clear difference between an outward sense of peace and a hidden struggle, which suggests the speaker is battling feelings of emptiness, hurt, or emotional conflict.

4.2.3 The Relation between The Types and The Functions of Illocutionary Acts

4. 3 The Relation between Types and The Function of Illocutionary Acts

No	Title of Songs	Illocutionary Act's Type	Classification	The Function of Illocutionary Acts
1	<i>Come As You Are</i>	Representative	Stating	Collaborative
			Describing	Collaborative
			Informing	Conflictive
		Directive	Inviting	Convivial
			Suggesting	Competitive
		Commissive	Promising (Assuring)	Conflictive
		Expressive	Expressing Emotion	Collaborative
2	<i>You Know You're Right</i>	Representative	Describing	Collaborative
			Asserting	Conflictive
		Directive	Suggesting	Competitive
		Commissive	Promising (Assuring)	Convivial

			Promising (Rejection Commitment)	Conflictive
		Expressive	Expressing Emotion	Collaborative

This section presents a deeper analysis and interpretation of the data findings related to the use of illocutionary acts in Nirvana’s song lyrics *Come As You Are* and *You Know You’re Right*. After figuring out the categories and functions of illocutionary acts using Searle’s (1969) classification and Leech’s (1983) framework, this section dives into the main patterns we observed. This research also discusses how these types of illocutionary acts work with their functions to convey Kurt Cobain’s intentions, emotions, and psychological states.

In *Come As You Are*, the most common type of illocutionary act found is the directive act. According to Searle (1969), directive acts are speech acts used by the speaker to get the listener to do something. This may include acts such as inviting, suggesting, commanding, or warning. In the lyrics, Cobain performs this through several lines, most notably “*Come as you are, as you were.*” This line serves as an invitation that encourages the listener to come just as they are, whether in the present or as their past self. The directive here functions convivially, as described by Leech (1983), because it reflects politeness and aims to build social harmony. It offers acceptance and reassurance without pressure. However, this character shifts in the line “*As I want you to be,*” which, although still directive, carries a competitive function. The speaker here imposes a standard or expectation, which subtly pressures the listener to conform to how the speaker desires them to be. The intention is no longer merely welcoming but is shaped by control or inner conflict. This push and pull between freedom and expectation mirrors Cobain's own life. He was famously uncomfortable with fame and all the pressure to live up to public expectations. As Azerrad (1993) explains, he struggled to stay true to himself while being shaped by the media and his fans. This inner conflict shines through in these lyrics, where the directive speech act highlights both a longing for honesty and the heavy burden of outside influence.

Other directive lines, such as *"Take your time, hurry up"* and *"Choice is yours, don't be late,"* also demonstrate Cobain's conflicted approach. This refers to his struggle with contradictory ideas. These lines offer suggestions while containing opposing concepts. *"Take your time"* implies calmness and freedom, whereas *"Hurry up"* conveys a sense of urgency, which indicates a need for swift action. Similarly, *"Choice is yours"* promotes autonomy, but *"don't be late"* introduces pressure. These contradictions are integral to Cobain's writing style, as he frequently blends open and closed meanings to reflect his internal tensions. The directives in this song are not mere commands, but rather complex messages that reveal the dual expectations Cobain experienced. Through them, he communicates his awareness of how individuals, including himself, address the tension between individuality and conformity.

The second most frequent type in *Come As You Are* is the representative act, which involves stating or describing something the speaker believes to be true. According to Searle (1969), representative acts reflect the speaker's commitment to a particular reality or proposition. In the lines *"As a friend, as a friend"* and *"As an old enemy,"* Cobain uses direct labeling of social roles. These are stating acts because he declares what kind of relationship he is referring to. These lines also serve a collaborative function, as they share Cobain's personal perspective rather than imposing a judgment on the listener. The contradiction between *"friend"* and *"enemy"* reflects a nuanced understanding of relationships, where someone close can also be hurtful. Cobain confirmed this complexity in his interview: *"The lines in the song are contradictory. One after another, they're kind of a rebuttal of each line. It's kind of confusing, I guess. It's just about people and what they're expected to act like."* (Thomas, 1992). His description confirms that these representative acts are rooted in his belief that people often behave according to roles shaped by others' expectations. By using these lines, Cobain does not try to persuade or attack but rather invites reflection on how human connections are often both sincere and contradictory.

Another representative act appears in the line *"As a trend, as a friend,"* where Cobain again states two identities. *"trend"* refers to something temporary

and shaped by external popularity, while *“friend”* is personal and emotional. These descriptions mirror Cobain’s own conflict between being a cultural icon and wanting to be seen as a real person. By placing *“trend”* and *“friend”* side by side, he is stating what he believes to be true about how he is perceived, both as a passing style and as someone deeply connected to others. This line also functions collaboratively because it shares Cobain’s view openly, which allows listeners to consider the difference between how someone is seen and who they are.

A commissive act also appears in *Come As You Are*, particularly in the line *“I swear that I don’t have a gun.”* According to Searle (1969), commissive acts are speech acts in which the speaker commits to a future action or behavior, such as making a promise or taking responsibility. In this case, the speaker makes a promising act, which reassures the listener of their peaceful intentions and denying any threat. On the surface, this line seems to have a convivial function, which, as Leech (1983) explains, aims to create or maintain social harmony, often through politeness and reassurance. The phrase *“I swear”* adds emotional weight, which suggests sincerity and a strong effort to gain the listener’s trust.

However, the meaning of this line becomes more complex when considered in the context of Kurt Cobain’s struggles and eventual suicide. As Azerrad notes, Cobain frequently felt misunderstood or judged by others. In an interview, Cobain stated, *“It’s not a death threat, it’s just saying I don’t want to be perceived that way”* (Azerrad, 1993). This quote notes that Cobain frequently felt misunderstood or judged by others. This shows the line is more than just a peaceful promise, but it is also a defensive statement rejecting the idea that he was violent or dangerous. Because of this deeper emotional context, the line can also be understood as having a conflictive function. Although it appears comforting, it indirectly reflects Cobain’s emotional struggle or disagreement, his fear of being misrepresented, and the tragic irony between what he says and what eventually happened. The lyrics express not only a promise but also a hidden struggle with identity, public image, and emotional pain.

Finally, an expressive act appears in the repeated word *“Memoria.”* While expressive acts typically involve showing the speaker’s emotional state, in this case,

the word can also be interpreted as an expression of a concept that the speaker finds meaningful. “*Memoria*” refers to memory, and its repetition may symbolize the lingering presence of the past. The line functions collaboratively because it invites the listener to connect with a shared human experience and recall something important or painful, without demanding a specific interpretation. The use of this single word shows Cobain’s minimalist style of lyric writing, where even one abstract term can hold emotional and conceptual depth. It reflects his belief in the power of language to suggest meaning rather than force it.

In *You Know You’re Right*, the most dominant type of illocutionary act is the representative act, where the speaker describes or asserts beliefs about reality. According to Searle (1969), representative acts commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition and include asserting, describing, and stating. The line “*You know you’re right*,” which is repeated throughout the song, is a clear example of an assertive representative act. The speaker strongly asserts a belief that leaves no room for disagreement, which gives the utterance a conflictive function. As Leech (1983) explains, conflictive functions occur when the speaker’s intention challenges social harmony or creates emotional tension. In this case, the speaker’s certainty may close off any chance for dialogue or reflection, and this instead reinforces a defensive stance. Cobain, known for his struggles with emotional openness, may have used these repeated lines to assert control in a world where he often felt misunderstood or criticized. His insistence on being right may reflect both internal frustration and a desire to stop explaining himself to others.

Other representative lines, such as “*I have never failed to fail*” and “*Things have never been so swell*,” demonstrate Cobain’s personal view of his life and identity. These represent self-assessments or observations made by the speaker. Although “*Things have never been so swell*” may be initially positive, it is likely intended ironically or critically. These utterances function collaboratively, as they are not delivered with force or judgment but rather as insights into the speaker’s experience. Cobain does not demand that the listener agree, but he simply shares what he believes to be true. This use of representative acts reflects Cobain’s songwriting style, where personal truth is revealed without attempting to control

how others interpret it. These lines also align with his public image as someone who questioned mainstream values and rejected superficial positivity. By presenting his reality as he saw it, whether painful, disappointing, or contradictory, Cobain invited the listener into his world without pretending it was comfortable or easy.

The second most frequent illocutionary act found in *You Know You're Right* is the commissive act, which refers to speech acts where the speaker commits to doing something in the future, such as making a promise, offering a refusal, or rejecting something (Searle, 1969). These acts express the speaker's intention to carry out or avoid a specific action. For example, in the line "*I will never bother you,*" the speaker makes a promise not to disturb or interfere with the listener. This can be seen as a convivial act, which, according to Leech (1983), is a type of speech act that aims to maintain social harmony by being polite and considerate. The speaker's promise of non-interference reflects an intention to give the listener emotional space or freedom, possibly out of care or respect. In this way, the commissive act functions convivially because it shows politeness and a desire to avoid conflict. The line suggests that the speaker values the listener's peace and chooses to step back rather than cause discomfort or tension.

However, other commissive lines such as "*I will never promise to,*" "*I will crawl away for good,*" and "*I will move away from here*" reflect a conflictive function. These are rejecting or withdrawing commitments, where the speaker's future actions involve separation or emotional detachment. These utterances may not appear aggressive, but they still conflict with the idea of closeness or communication. They show the speaker's decision to retreat from social or emotional engagement. This aligns with Cobain's personality and his discomfort with fame and human connection. As documented by Azerrad (1993), Cobain often felt burdened by public expectations and interpersonal relationships. These commissive acts may reflect his belief that removing himself was the only way to avoid causing harm or being harmed. They reveal a speaker who is simultaneously trying to protect others and escape emotional pressure.

The only directive act found in *You Know You're Right* is in the line "*Let's talk about someone else.*" This utterance is a suggestion, where the speaker directs

the conversation away from himself. It functions competitively, meaning the speaker's goal may conflict with social norms or expectations. Leech (1983) states that competitive functions occur when the speaker's intention competes with politeness or empathy. In this case, the speaker avoids vulnerability by changing the subject. Rather than discussing personal feelings or pain, he redirects focus, possibly to hide emotional discomfort. This reflects Cobain's tendency to avoid open discussions about his struggles. By subtly shifting the topic, he attempts to maintain control over what is revealed and what is hidden.

Expressive acts also appear in this song, as seen in the lines "*Pain*" and "*I'm so warm and calm inside.*" At first glance, these may seem to directly convey emotional states. The line "*Pain*" is minimal yet powerful. It is neither a request for help nor a complaint; rather, it serves as a simple report that enhances its expressiveness. Similarly, "*I'm so warm and calm inside*" expresses a state that could be interpreted in multiple ways, either sincerely or ironically. Both lines function collaboratively, sharing the speaker's emotions without placing pressure on the listener. The speaker provides a glimpse into his feelings, allowing others to interpret or connect in their own way.

Cobain's interview with Rickey & Carr (1993) supports the depth behind these lyrics: "*I was in pain for so long that I didn't care if I was in a band, I didn't care if I was alive... it had been going on and building up for so many years that I was suicidal.*" This statement shows that his lyrics were not fictional or overstated; they were rooted in real suffering. The collaborative function of these lines reflects Cobain's attempt to communicate honestly without masking his inner life. Rather than using language to control others or create distance, he often used it to be understood, even if it meant being vulnerable.

Declarative acts are not found in either song. As defined by Searle (1969), declaratives require institutional authority to bring about a change in the external world, such as declaring war or resigning. Since Cobain's lyrics are personal and introspective, they do not involve institutional power or formal declarations.

The analysis reveals that *Come As You Are* primarily features directive acts, where Cobain often invites, suggests, or guides the listener's actions through

language. On the other hand, *You Know You're Right* is characterized more by representative acts, in which Cobain asserts or describes his beliefs and personal reality. When looking at both songs together, representative acts appear most frequently, followed by commissive, directive, and expressive acts. These types of speech acts reflect Cobain's overall tendency to use language not just to communicate ideas, but to state what he perceives as true about himself and his world. Many of these acts function collaboratively, which means they are used to share thoughts and experiences without demanding agreement or obedience. Others, however, serve conflictive purposes, which shows emotional resistance, rejection, or inner struggle. Cobain's use of language throughout his lyrics suggests a desire for honesty over harmony. In his 1992 interview, he said, "*My songs have always been frustrating themes, relationships that I've had*" (Kelly, 1992), indicating that his lyrics were deeply rooted in personal and emotional experiences. His words often reflect his discomfort with societal expectations and his difficulty in maintaining personal relationships. Rather than writing to entertain or satisfy an audience, Cobain used illocutionary acts as a tool to process complex emotions, present his inner reality, and navigate the space between vulnerability and self-protection. Through these speech acts, his songwriting becomes a powerful form of communication, which reveals not only what he felt but how he chose to share it. The patterns of his language use suggest a consistent tension between the desire to connect and the need to withdraw, between speaking out and staying hidden.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter gives the final explanation of the research. It includes the conclusion based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. The conclusion explains the types and functions of illocutionary acts found in Nirvana's song lyrics *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right*. After that, this chapter also gives suggestions for future researchers who want to study similar topics, especially in the areas of pragmatics, discourse, or song lyric analysis.

5.1 Conclusion

This research analyzed the illocutionary acts found in Nirvana's *Come As You Are* and *You Know You're Right* using Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts and Leech's (1983) theory of illocutionary functions. A total of 31 lyric lines without repetition were examined, and the study identified four types of illocutionary acts: representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. Declarative acts were not found, as the lyrics do not function within formal institutional contexts.

In *Come As You Are*, directive acts are the most dominant type. These include inviting and suggesting. This shows that the speaker often tries to influence the listener's actions, either softly or directly. Representative acts follow, which show the speaker's statements or descriptions of personal and social identity. Commissive and expressive acts appear less often, but they still carry emotional or personal meaning. The most common function found in this song is the collaborative function, where the speaker shares thoughts and descriptions to promote understanding. Other functions like convivial, competitive, and conflictive also appear, which reflect both emotional connection and inner tension.

In contrast, *You Know You're Right* contains more representative actions, especially those that describe the speaker's thoughts and experiences. This reflects Kurt Cobain's inner struggle and personal honesty. Also frequently appearing in this song are commissive acts that often express rejection or withdrawal. These actions show withdrawal from emotional relationships. Expressive actions clearly express

emotional suffering. Directive acts appear only once, which shows that the speaker rarely tries to influence others directly. The collaborative function is again the most dominant, which is used to present the speaker's inner reality without forcing or controlling the listener. However, the conflictive function appears more often in this song compared to *Come As You Are*, which reflects a stronger sense of emotional struggle and rejection.

Overall, the findings reveal that *Come As You Are* uses more directive and balanced functions to communicate a specific message and advice, while *You Know You're Right* focuses more on inner conflict, emotional pain, and rejection through representative and commissive acts. The frequent use of collaborative functions in both songs shows that Cobain aimed to share personal thoughts and meaning with the listener, which makes his lyrics a powerful form of expressive and communicative art.

5.2 Suggestions

For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the study by analyzing more songs, different genres, or different artists to see how illocutionary acts appear across a wider range of lyrics. Future studies may also include the perlocutionary effects (how the listener is influenced) or compare song lyrics from different cultures or periods. The next researchers could also combine the speech act theory with other approaches, such as stylistics or sociolinguistics, to gain deeper insights. Lastly, it is suggested to explore how the illocutionary acts in lyrics affect listeners emotionally, socially, or ideologically.

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APPENDIX

SONG LYRICS OF *COME AS YOU ARE*

Released date: March 2, 1992

Come as you are, as you were (1)
As I want you to be (2)
As a friend, as a friend (3)
As an old enemy (4)
Take your time, hurry up (5)
Choice is yours, don't be late (6)
Take a rest as a friend (7)
As an old memoria (8)

Memoria (9)
Memoria (10)
Memoria (11)

Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach (12)
As I want you to be (13)
As a trend, as a friend (14)
As an old memoria (15)

Memoria (16)
Memoria (17)
Memoria (18)

And I swear that I don't have a gun (19)
No, I don't have a gun (20)
No, I don't have a gun (21)

Memoria (22)
Memoria (23)
Memoria (24)
Memoria (No, I don't have a gun) (25)

And I swear that I don't have a gun (26)
No, I don't have a gun (27)
No, I don't have a gun (28)
No, I don't have a gun (29)
No, I don't have a gun (30)

Memoria (32)
Memoria (32)

SONG LYRICS *YOU KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT*

Released date: October 8, 2002

I will never bother you (1)
I will never promise to (2)
I will never follow you (3)
I will never bother you (4)
Never speak a word again (5)
I will crawl away for good (6)
I will move away from here (7)
You won't be afraid of fear (8)
No thought was put into this (9)
And always knew it would come to this (10)
Things have never been so swell (11)
I have never failed to fail (12)

Pain, pain, pain (13)
You know you're right (14)
You know you're right, you know you're right (15)

I'm so warm and calm inside (16)
I no longer have to hide (17)
Let's talk about someone else (18)
Steaming soup against her mouth (19)
Nothing really bothers her (20)
She just wants to love himself (21)
I will move away from here (22)
You won't be afraid of fear (23)
No thought was put into this (24)
Always knew it'd come to this (25)
Things have never been so swell (26)
I have never failed to fail (27)

Pain, pain, pain, pain, pain (28)
You know you're right, you know you're right (29)
You know you're right, you know you're right (30)
You know you're right, you know you're right (31)
You know you're right, you know you're right (32)
You know you're right, you know you're right (33)
You know you're right, you know you're right (34)
You know you're right, you know you're right (35)
You know you're right, you know you're right (36)
You know you're right, you know you're right (37)
You know you're right, you know you're right (38)