

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DECLARATIVE SPEECH ACTS IN *THE FATHER* AND ELDERLY CARE PRACTICES IN THE *LANTERA* PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

This comparative mixed-method study examines *declarative speech acts* in elderly care communication across two contrasting contexts: the fictional portrayal in *The Father* by Florian Zeller and real-life interactions within the *LANTERA* program in Paseh, Bandung. This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of Pragmatics, particularly speech act theory. The research investigates how declarative functions such as informing, asserting, clarifying, reassuring, assigning roles, and expressing authority construct social meaning in caregiving. Data on fictional text are examined through discourse analysis, while data from the *LANTERA* program derive from questionnaires, observations, and semi-structured interviews, supported by descriptive statistics on respondents' characteristics and communication patterns. Finding indicates both convergence and divergence between fictional and real contexts. In the fictional narrative, declaratives frequently reflect cognitive decline, power negotiation, and emotional tension, often producing ambiguity and disorientation. In contrast, *LANTERA* interactions emphasize clarity, politeness, and social harmony shaped by Sundanese cultural norms. Gender patterns appear in both settings: female caregivers tend to employ inclusive and mitigating declaratives expressing empathy, while male caregivers more frequently use assertive forms associated with authority and task orientation. The study highlights how linguistic choices mediate dignity, control, and relational balance in elderly care. The research recommends integrating culturally grounded communication training, empathy-oriented scripting, and monitoring of pragmatic quality to improve elderly services. By juxtaposing fiction and lived practice, the study underscores the value of literary representations as tools for reflecting on real-world caregiving discourse.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Declarative Speech Act, Elderly Care, Fiction-Nonfiction Comparison

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## INTRODUCTION

In caregiving contexts, particularly elderly care, language is not merely a tool for communication but a mechanism through which dignity, authority, empathy, and social roles are enacted (Kouwagam, 2024). Language is not merely a medium of communication but a reflection of social and cultural identity. Speech act theory originates from the work of Austin (1962), who introduced the idea that language functions not only to convey information but also to perform actions. This foundational framework was later refined and systematically developed by Searle (1969), who classified speech acts into categories such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Searle, 2012). Within this framework, declarative speech acts are particularly significant, as they have the power to change social reality when uttered under appropriate conditions.

In speech act theory, declarative speech acts play a crucial role in shaping interpersonal relations by producing social effects through linguistic expressions (Salam & Sakinah, 2024). Declaratives are utterances that enact a change in institutional or interpersonal states, such as assigning duties, confirming status, or making official announcements. These linguistic acts shape interpersonal relations by transforming words into socially recognized actions. This study focuses on declarative speech acts within elderly care communication by comparing two distinct yet complementary contexts: fictional representation in *The Father* (2020) by Florian Zeller and real-life interactions in the *LANTERA* elderly service program in Paseh, Bandung. *LANTERA* is an acronym for *Lansia Tangguh Sejahtera*. The comparison between fiction and non-fiction is important because literary narratives often dramatize realities such as cognitive decline, confusion, and power shifts, while institutional programs reflect practical communication shaped by policy, culture, and service norms (Khalaf et al., 2022). By juxtaposing these domains, the research seeks to understand how declarative language functions across imagined and live caregiving environments. Declarative speech acts frequently occur in elderly care settings.

Elderly service settings involve complex interpersonal communication that demands sensitivity, respect, and heedfulness. Declarative acts here may involve instructing, confirming, or reassuring, and their tone is influenced by both cultural and gender factors (Wicaksono, 2018). Elderly service attendants should receive training in declarative phrasing—emphasizing brevity, politeness, and integration of local language. The Bilingual Scripts is a framework for developing bilingual (Indonesian–Sundanese) declarative templates for routine communication (Haris Sumadiria et al., 2022). The declarative announcements, accompanied by written or pictorial aids for low-literacy participants, encourage elders to respond with brief confirmations, allowing a two-way declarative exchange (“Yes, I understand,” “I have received the message”).

Speech act theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1975), classifies utterances based on their function: assertive,

directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Declarative speech acts are unique because they bring about a change in the social or institutional world through language—for example, assigning tasks or confirming decisions. The manuscript mixes declaratives with other speech-act types: informative, assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive. In the informative function, we used to provide factual information or share knowledge. *Example:* “The library closes at six o’clock”, so a function of this utterance The listener gains new information. In the Assertive function, it expresses the speaker’s belief or stance about something. *Example:* “I believe this approach is more effective”, so a function of this utterance is the speaker’s opinion or authority. In Expressive function, it conveys the speaker’s feelings or attitudes through statements. *Example:* “I’m really disappointed with the result.”, The function of this utterance reveals emotional stance rather than factual content. In Directive Function, although declarative in form, it can *imply a request, command, or suggestion*. *Example:* “You might want to check the door”, so the function of this utterance encourages the listener to act. In the Commissive function, it can state a commitment or intention. *Example:* “I’ll handle the report tomorrow”, so the speaker commits to a future action.

Speech act theory, introduced by Austin and developed by Searle, classifies utterances according to their communicative function, including assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Ruminda and Hamidah, 2018). In elderly care, declaratives commonly appear in informative statements “The check-up will begin at nine.”, confirmations “Your complaint has been recorded.”, reassurance “You are safe here.”, or role assignments “The nurse will assist you.”. These utterances influence not only understanding but also emotional security and compliance. Cultural context determines how speech acts are interpreted and valued. In Sundanese culture, politeness (*tatakrama basa Sunda*) governs linguistic interactions through norms of respect, humility, and social harmony. These norms influence the use of declarative speech acts, where speakers must balance authority with politeness to maintain *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* (mutual care, learning, and respect)(Khumaeroh Sa’adah & Sakinah, n.d.).

In contrast, fictional discourse in *The Father* (2020) presents declarative speech acts amid dementia and subjective disorientation. Statements that would normally clarify reality instead intensify ambiguity, reflecting shifting perceptions of identity, time, and authority. This highlights how the effectiveness of declaratives depends not only on linguistic form but also on cognitive context and interpersonal trust. Comparing such portrayals with real interactions in *LANTERA* provides insight into how communication strategies can either alleviate or exacerbate vulnerability in elderly care.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how declarative speech acts function across fictional and non-fictional elderly care settings, with particular attention to gender and cultural influences. It investigates the comparison of the use of declarative speech acts among the elderly between *The Father* (2020) by Florian Zeller, a fictional case, and *LANTERA* in Paseh Bandung, a non-fictional case. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how language mediates social relationships, power dynamics, and emotional well-

being in elderly care. The comparative approach demonstrates that both literary narratives and community programs offer valuable insights into communicative practices, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive, empathy-oriented training to enhance the pragmatic quality of interactions with older adults.

There are some relevant previous study found with my analysis, the first previous research related into this research can be seen in the title “An Analysis of Declarative Speech Act in the Movie *My Lawyer, Mr Jo*: Pragmatics Approach”, the article analyses declarative speech acts in *My Lawyer, Mr. Jo* using a pragmatic approach, emphasizing that such speech act function to change social reality when performed under appropriate conditions (Östman & Verschueren, 2018). Their effectiveness is highly dependent on context, speaker authority, and institutional roles, particularly within formal settings such as legal proceedings, where utterances like verdicts or official statements carry immediate consequences. The study further demonstrates that declarative speech acts reflect underlying power relations and social hierarchies among characters, illustrating how language operates not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for enacting authority and producing tangible social effects.

The second previous research can be appeared into other Pragmatics book title, “The Handbook of Pragmatics in Pragmatics of Language Performances by Clark. This article shows how language seems orderly when it appears in novels, plays, and news broadcasts, but much less so when it is heard in cafes, classrooms, offices, or other places. The most important things can be reached in several ways (Horn & Ward, n.d.). The first one is in saying and displaying. How to use language in direct and indirect forms. The second is coordinating the use of language. It can be appeared into grounded performance indexes in dialogue. The last one is collateral signals. This area can be divided into inserts, modifications, juxtapositions, and concomitants.

The last previous research can be seen in the article titled “Zeller’s *The Father* (2020) and Anne Father-Daughter Narrative: A Performative Psychoanalytic Study”(Al-Basiony\_2025\_Pages 42-68, n.d.). This study analyses Anne’s silence in *The Father* as a response to fear, grief, and guilt arising from her father’s cognitive decline. Having already endured the loss of her younger sister. Anne is paralyzed by the looming reality of losing her father (not to death), but to the slow erosion of his mind. Her silence is not passive; it is a deliberate retreat from the overwhelming burden of responsibility and the moral dilemma she faces. Trapped between her duty to obey her father and her spoken yearning for freedom.

All of the sources are applying in how to make the declarative speech act appear to indicate that elderly speakers often employ more cooperative, polite, and mitigating forms. Such differences reflect broader social expectations and role constructions. In caregiving contexts, these variations may affect how elderly clients perceive authority, empathy, and reassurance. Fictional depictions in *The Father* highlight how gendered communication interacts with vulnerability and confusion, whereas real-world services demonstrate

how institutional roles and professional training mediate these tendencies in *LANTERA* Paseh-Bandung.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This perspective moves beyond structural meaning to the study of how utterances operate in real contexts—an area known as pragmatics (Östman & Verschueren, 2018). Within the field of pragmatics, speech act theory plays a central role. The declarative speech act holds a unique position because it can change the external reality simply through words.

### Pragmatics and Declarative Speech Act

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies how language is used in context — focusing on the relationship between linguistic meaning and situational use. According to several scholars, Yule defines pragmatics as “the study of how more gets communicated than is said,” emphasizing *speaker meaning* and *contextual inference* (Yule, 1996, n.d.). Levinson in (Sanjo Pulungan, n.d, 2022) explains pragmatics as “the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of a language.” Eragamreddy extends this to the study of *speaker intention*, *context-dependent meaning*, and *inference*, including areas such as speech acts, deixis, presupposition, and implicature (Eragamreddy, n.d.). In short, pragmatics connects form and function—it examines how utterances become actions, and how meaning depends on who says what, when, where, and to whom. Speech act theory, first introduced by Austin and refined by Searle, proposes that when people speak, they are not merely saying something but also doing something through their words.

There are five major types of speech acts:

1. Assertives – state what the speaker believes (e.g., “The earth is round.”)
2. Directives – attempt to get someone to do something (e.g., “Close the door.”)
3. Commissives – commit the speaker to a future action (e.g., “I’ll call you tomorrow.”)
4. Expressives – express the speaker’s feelings (e.g., “I’m sorry.”)
5. Declarations – change the reality by the utterance itself (e.g., “You’re fired.”)

These categories show that meaning in communication is not limited to semantics (what words *mean*), but includes the illocutionary force what the speaker *does* with those words. Declarative speech acts are unique because they alter the external status or condition of an object or situation *through the act of speaking itself*.

According to Austin in Sari and Pd (2023), A declarative act brings about a change in the world solely by the act of utterance itself. Declarations depend on institutional or social authority. The speaker must be sanctioned by the

community (e.g., judge, referee, teacher) to make the utterance effective. The listener's reaction is largely irrelevant in declarative speech acts because their effectiveness depends not on acceptance or interpretation, but on the speaker's institutional authority and the fulfillment of conventional procedures. In declaratives, *words change the world*—the act of utterance itself creates a new reality.

The study contributes to pragmatic research by situating speech acts within culturally specific service settings, highlighting how language mediates social relationships in elderly care contexts. Declarative speech acts are not primarily intended for conveying information; rather, they function to enact changes in social reality through institutional authority. Acts such as informing or explaining are more accurately categorized as assertive speech acts. However, the observed pattern from the research instrument and demographic data indicates a strong emphasis on clarity of information in communication practices. This suggests a correlation between participants' preferences. For clear, understandable language and the effectiveness of interaction in elderly care contexts. Methodologically, this distinction is important, as it prevents the misclassification of speech act types while still acknowledging that clarity of information may support the successful interpretation and impact of declarative acts in practice. The next is announcing or directives (Eragamreddy, n.d.). This type is how to observe a pattern: Staff performs declarative announcements. These are institutional declaratives that structure behavior. The pragmatic implications of announcements carry authority but should be framed politely (using modal markers and local honorifics) to fit Sundanese norms of respect toward elders.

Acknowledging or confirming (Horn & Ward, n.d.) is a way to observe patterns in the questionnaire probes that assess whether the elderly feel heard — this is a social effect of successful declarative confirmations. The Pragmatic implication of short explicit declarative confirmations to validate the speaker's concerns and close repair sequences. In Sundanese culture, such confirmations combined with polite address forms and smiles are particularly important (02 Russo, n.d.). The last one is how culturalized declarations can integrate local wisdom (rituals, salutations) (Yamori, 2019). In this we can use the Sundanese language, including local prayers/salams, and traditional values in activities. Many respondents indicate positive responses to the inclusion of local idioms, gestures, and prayer. Declaratives that are culturally aligned (e.g., opening statements that include local greeting formulas or references to communal norms) increase perceived respect and acceptance. In Pragmatic implication: A declarative like giving Salam as a Sundanese-style greeting performs both information and face-saving functions — it both opens the interaction and locates it culturally (Sanjo Pulungan, 2022 n.d.).

## **METHOD**

The methods section outlines the research design, participant characteristics, and procedures for data collection and analysis. It specifies the number of subjects and their demographic profiles, as recommended by Azwar (Azwar, 2007). In quantitative research, this section should clearly

describe the measurement instruments used, including the instrument name, number of items, reliability coefficients, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis. In qualitative research, the study should adopt an appropriate interpretative perspective and explicitly explain the data collection procedures, such as interviews, observations, or document analysis, as well as the stages of data analysis, including coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, the analysis procedure was described step by step to ensure transparency and replicability, for example, by detailing how data were organized, how codes were developed, how themes were derived, and how interpretations were validated. This level of clarity is essential to strengthen the methodological rigor and credibility of the study.

### Research Design

This study employs a comparative qualitative research design integrating pragmatics to examine declarative speech acts in two distinct contexts: the fictional work *The Father* by Florian Zeller and real-life interactions within *LANTERA* elderly program in Paseh, Bandung. The design enables systematic comparison between literary representation and institutional practice of elderly care communications. The research adopts a mixed data approach: textual analysis (fictional data) and field-based analysis (non-fictional data). This study employs mixed-methods, grounded in pragmatics, comprising qualitative and quantitative approaches. It focuses on real-life language use in elderly service contexts to capture natural variations in declarative speech acts (Ahmad et al., 2019; Morse, 1991).

The quantitative method is used to extract demographic counts and aggregated counts from the spreadsheet summary (gender, age ranges, education, status). These give the profile of respondents and allow us to situate communication patterns (Strijker et al., 2020). The qualitative pragmatic method involves interpreting the questionnaire items through speech-act theory (focusing on *declarative* and related illocutionary acts). I identify likely declarative functions in interaction (informing, asserting, confirming, promising, acknowledging) and map them onto the questionnaire themes (clarity of information, politeness, use of local language, gestures, touch) (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). The study was conducted in Paseh District, Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia. Participants included 10 elderly service providers (5 male, 5 female) and 15 elderly clients aged 60–80 years. The setting includes community elderly service centers and home care visits. Data collection took place over a defined period, from August to November 2025, during which observations, interviews, and documentation were systematically carried out. Data were collected through (Ahmad et al., 2019):

1. **Observation:** Recording of natural interactions between caregivers and elderly clients. This section on perceptions of services, verbal/nonverbal communication, and local wisdom in services.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews/ Questionnaire instrument:** To understand participants' perceptions of politeness, respect, and gendered speech norms.

3. **Documentation:** Transcripts of selected interactions analyzed for speech act categorization. It contains aggregate entries and summary rows for gender, age, status, education, and some response tallies. The spreadsheet contains 146 rows overall, with a clear subgroup of **113** respondents coded as *Lansia* (elderly), whose demographic breakdown is reported in the file.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with individuals chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the study. The inclusion criteria were:

1. Active involvement in *LANTERA* elderly care program
2. Direct participations in caregiver-elderly interactions
3. Willingness to participate in interviews and observations

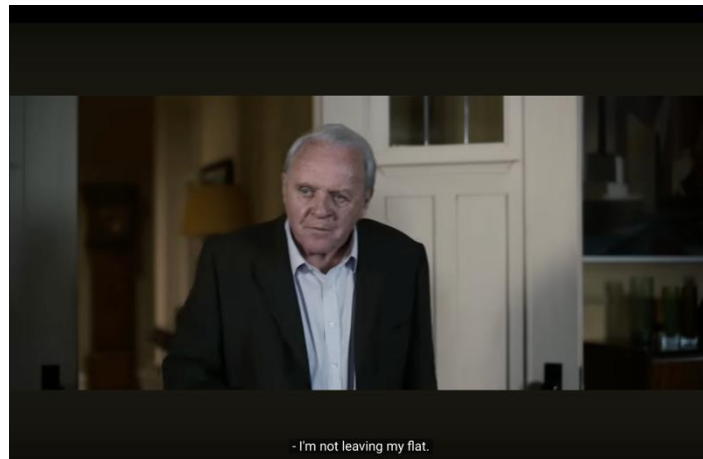
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study indicate differences in the use and function of declarative speech acts between the fictional work *The Father* (2020) by Florian Zeller and elderly care interactions in the *LANTERA* program in Paseh, Bandung. Rather than focusing on “types of elderly people”, the analysis highlights variations in communicative patterns and the roles of participants in each context. The study presents these findings through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative descriptive analysis of dialogues and interaction with quantitative data derived from questionnaires. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how declarative speech acts operate across both fictional representation and real-life elderly care practices.

### **A. Declarative Speech Act through the Fiction in *The Father* (2020) by Florian Zeller**

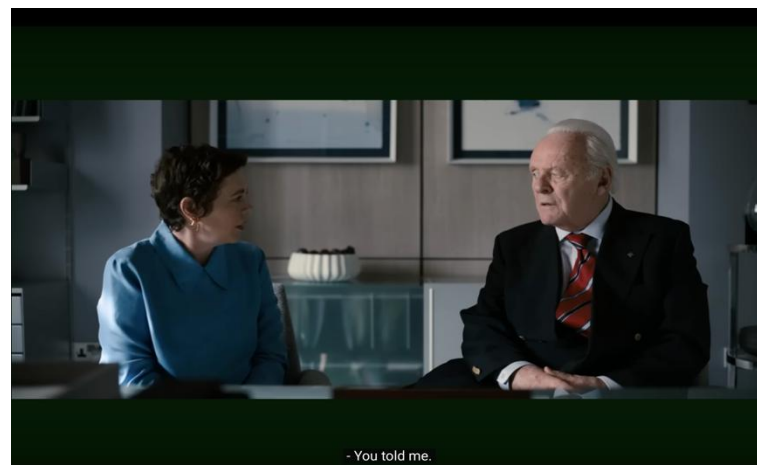
Declarative speech acts expressing disorientation of identity and reality appear in the protagonist, Anthony. Anthony produces declarative utterances that assert a version of reality inconsistent with objective circumstances due to dementia. Anthony insists that the apartment he occupies belongs to him, despite evidence to the contrary. He claims that caregivers have stolen his possessions.

Table/Picture 1



These declaratives demonstrate that in dementia contexts, statements function less as information transfer and more as attempts to preserve cognitive coherence and personal identity. Another pattern reflects the decline of patriarchal authority. Anthony uses firm declarative statements to maintain his former social role as a dominant father figure. He rejects assistance by stating he does not need help and he criticizes his daughter's decisions regarding his care. The pragmatic functions can appear in assertions of authority, role preservation, and defensive self-presentation. These utterances reveal underlying vulnerability and loss of autonomy. In contrast, in an institutional elderly care setting, such declarations often generate interpersonal tension rather than coordination.

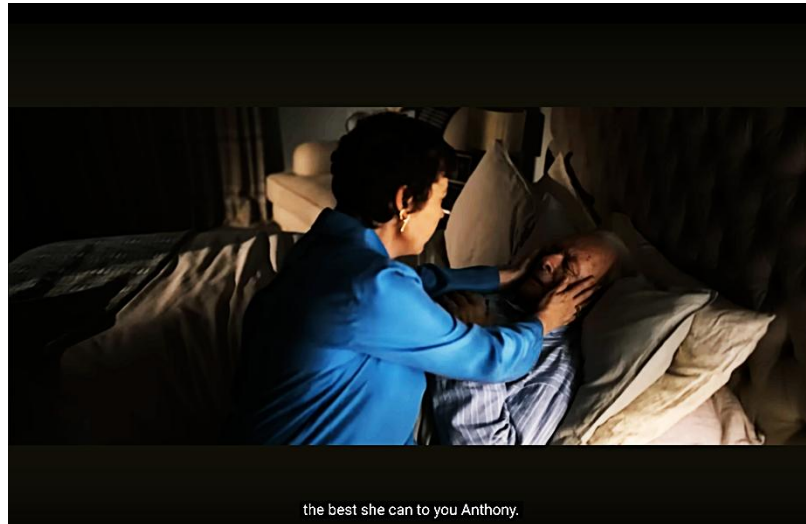
Table/Picture 2



The interactions between Anthony and his daughter are marked by ambivalent emotions such as affection, resentment, grief, and confusion. Anne is comparing unfavorably with her deceased sister. Anne's expression is a blaming attribution. She expresses unresolved emotional trauma. The father's utterance "*You told me*" is a declarative speech act asserting reality. This

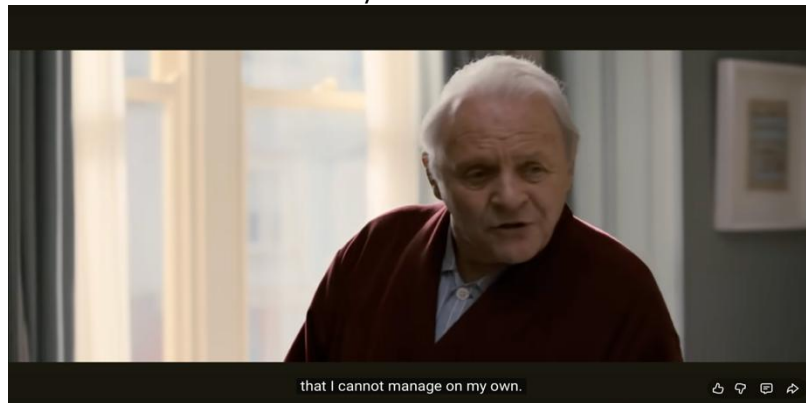
statement reflects how declaratives can function as vehicles for emotional projection rather than rational discourse in family caregiving contexts. However, unlike typical declaratives, it is unstable. It reflects his distorted cognition. Anne, on the other hand, avoids strong declaratives. She uses softer, implicit communication, which shows a caregiving strategy.

Table/Picture 3



The declarative speech act reflecting memory loss and existential anxiety is expressed by Anthony through this picture. In this scene, Anne gently holds her father and says *the best she can do is to you, Anthony*. Anne's utterance functions as a declarative speech act that primarily conveys reassurance and assertion within a caregiving context. When she states that the situation represents the best she can do for Anthony, she is not merely providing information but constructing a version of reality intended to comfort and stabilize him. This declarative serves an emotional function, aiming to reduce anxiety and confusion caused by his cognitive decline. The declarative also signals a shift in relational roles, where Anne assumes a position of authority tempered by compassion. Thus, the speech act demonstrates how declarative language in elderly care operates as a tool for emotional regulation, mediating fear, vulnerability, and relational balance rather than simply conveying objective truth.

Table/Picture 4



In this scene from *The Father*, the statement from Anthony *that I cannot manage on my own* can reflect a declarative speech act of assertion, in which he expresses a perceived truth about his condition. This utterance carries a deeper meaning beyond its literal content. Rather than a stable acknowledgment of dependence, it reflects an internal conflict shaped by his cognitive decline. Anthony attempts to assert control over his identity by verbalizing his capability or incapacity, yet his statements are often marked by hesitation, denial, or contradiction across different moments. This makes the declarative unstable, as it may not consistently align with his actual condition. Therefore, the utterance can be interpreted as a moment of partial awareness and resistance. It highlights how, in this context, declarative speech acts are not merely informative but deeply tied to identity negotiation, emotional tension, and the struggle to maintain selfhood.

### **B. Declarative Speech Act through LANTERA's Program in Paseh Bandung Quantitative by Questionnaire instrument**

The sheet appears to be a summary table rather than line-by-line raw responses (Turyadi et al., 2024). From the spreadsheet preview and summary rows:

1. Total spreadsheet rows: 146 (sheet length).
2. Number of respondents explicitly recorded as *status: LANSIA*: 113 (this subgroup is the primary focus).
3. Gender (of 113 elderly respondents):
  1. Male : 32
  2. Female : 81
4. Age distribution (n = 113):
  1. 60-70 years: 59
  2. 71-80 years: 36
  3. 81-90 years: 16
  4. 91 years: 2
5. Education (visible summary rows): (counts reported in the sheet preview)
  1. SD (elementary school): 87

2. TS (*Tidak Sekolah* / No schooling): 18
3. SMP (middle school): 5
4. (Other categories present in file but truncated in preview; these three are the dominant categories visible)

Table/Picture 5. Demographic Profile of Elderly Respondents (N = 113)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	32	28.3
	Female	81	71.7
<b>Age Group</b>	60–70 years	59	52.2
	71–80 years	36	31.9
	81–90 years	16	14.2
	>91 years	2	1.7
<b>Education Level</b>	No Schooling (TS)	18	15.9
	Elementary School (SD)	87	77.0
	Junior High School (SMP)	5	4.4
	Senior High School (SMA) or Higher	3	2.7

Most respondents were female elderly (71.7%), aged 60–70 years (52.2%), and had completed elementary education or less (92.9%). This demographic suggests that communication with elderly service users must rely on *simple, direct, and culturally resonant declarative language*, supported by nonverbal cues. The interpretation of the quantitative snapshot above the sample of elderly respondents is predominantly female (~72% of the 113), largely within the 60–70 age bracket, and with elementary education or less for most. This demographic profile informs pragmatic expectations: comparatively lower levels of formal education imply a greater need for clear, slow-paced, locally framed declarative statements and nonverbal supports.

### Theoretical framing — what we mean by *declarative speech acts*

In pragmatic speech-act (Firdaus, n.d.) theory (Austin; Searle), a *declarative* (also called a declaration) is an illocutionary act that changes the social or institutional state of affairs by virtue of being uttered (e.g., “I now pronounce you married”). In everyday service interactions, researchers sometimes use “declarative” more broadly to mean *statements/utterances that convey information, assert facts, or announce actions or statuses* (informing, asserting, instructing, confirming). For this analysis, we treat declarative-like acts in the service setting as those utterances and ritualized expressions by staff that:

1. provide information or explanations (informing),
2. announce decisions or availability of services (announcing),

3. confirm receipt of complaint/need (acknowledging/confirming), and
4. state routine or policy (asserting/regulating).

These functions are critical in service encounters because they orient trust, compliance, and perceived respect.

### Gendered Patterns in Declarative Speech Acts

Male caregivers tended to use declaratives that were directive and authoritative, such as: “I will handle this; you just rest.” Female caregivers often employed inclusive and empathetic declaratives, for example: “Let’s take the medicine together.” This difference reflects gendered communication patterns: males position themselves as responsible actors giving assurance, while females express solidarity and shared responsibility. Men are more likely to use explicit declarative forms such as “I appoint you...,” “You are now...”, or “This is final”, reflecting institutional authority. Women, particularly in cultures valuing modesty or relational harmony (such as Indonesian culture), may use softened or indirect declarations — e.g., “Let’s make you the leader”, or “I think you should take charge.”

The right to make a declarative act often depends on recognized authority. Men, traditionally occupying more formal leadership positions, are granted the performative power to make declarations. Women’s declaratives, when used, may rely on relational authority (based on care, seniority, or expertise) rather than institutional authority. Male declaratives often show high illocutionary force, using unmodulated or direct performative verbs (e.g., “I declare”, “I decide”, “You must”). Female declaratives tend to include modal softeners or inclusive markers such as “we”, “let’s”, or “maybe”, which make the declaration more cooperative than authoritative.

Example comparison:

Male: “You are now the chairperson.”

Female: “Let’s have you serve as chairperson, shall we”?

Table/Picture 6: Gender Patterns in Declarative Speech Acts



### Cultural Influence of Sundanese Norms

Sundanese politeness norms emphasize indirectness and respect for elders. Declarative acts were often softened using honorific markers like please, sure, or pardon, showing deference:

“Please, I’ve prepared your medicine, Sir.”

Such expressions demonstrate how cultural norms intertwine with gendered pragmatics to maintain harmony and respect in communication.

In cultures with strong gendered hierarchies (like many traditional or collectivist societies), male declarative power is institutionally encoded. In more egalitarian or Westernized contexts, women may make more frequent use of declaratives, particularly in educational or service-oriented fields where interpersonal sensitivity is valued.

Politeness is central in Sundanese behavior, shaped by hierarchical respect toward elders and authority figures. Younger people bow slightly when passing in front of elders, or use polite speech levels such as refined language when talking to older individuals.

“Please, Mother, wait a moment,” said in a humble tone.

Table/Picture 7: Cultural Influence in Sundanese Norms



Declarative acts functioned not only as statements but as tools for maintaining social balance. Female caregivers emphasized emotional support, while male caregivers emphasized order and responsibility. Both styles, however, reflect the broader cultural ethos of *gotong royong* and mutual respect. In an informative function, we use to provide factual information or share knowledge. Sundanese society emphasizes maintaining harmony and working together. Social relationships are prioritized over individual interests. In a village setting, when someone builds a house or holds a wedding, neighbors voluntarily help without expecting payment. This reflects the cultural belief that community well-being is everyone’s responsibility. The findings reveal that gender and culture jointly influence pragmatic behavior in elderly service interactions. The declarative speech acts observed in Paseh reflect localized forms of power, care, and politeness. Gender roles inform how authority and

empathy are expressed linguistically. Cultural norms guide how declaratives maintain respect and social cohesion.

Table/Picture 8: Declarative Speech Act and Functions



In Sundanese-speaking communities, politeness is central to communicative competence. Male assertiveness and female inclusiveness are not merely individual choices but culturally patterned performances. These findings align with Tannen’s notion of “rapport vs. report talk” and with Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness.

Table/Picture 9: Declarative Speech Acts and Functions

Type of Declarative Speech Act	Typical Example (in Context)	Primary Function	Pragmatic Impact
<b>Informative</b>	“Registration is open every Monday.”	Providing information	Enhances clarity and orientation
<b>Confirmative</b>	“We have noted your request, ma’am.”	Acknowledging concern	Builds trust and empathy
<b>Announcing/Regulative</b>	“The next meeting will start at 9 a.m.”	Structuring activity	Ensures order; may sound formal
<b>Cultural / Ritual</b>	“Please, welcome Sir/Madam!”	Greeting and inclusion	Strengthens local identity and belonging

Data were analyzed using Searle’s classification of speech acts, with a focus on declaratives. Utterances were categorized and interpreted according to gender and cultural context. Discourse analysis identified linguistic markers of politeness, empathy, and authority. Triangulation was used to ensure validity by cross-verifying observation and interview data. The fictional representation contrast with the real institutional care interactions in several key ways through fiction and non-fiction are attached in the following chart:

Table/Picture 10: Dimension between *The Father* and *LANTERA* on Declarative

No	Dimension	Fiction ( <i>The Father</i> )	Non-Fiction ( <i>LANTERA's</i> program)
1.	Reality orientation	Subjective and unstable	Fact-based and structured
2.	Function of Declaratives	Identity defense	Service coordination
3.	Interactional tone	Conflict laden	Cooperative and respectful
4.	Response patterns	Emotional reactions	Professional empathy
5.	Communication	Self-preservation	Care delivery and reassurance

Declarative speech acts in elderly discourse may express psychological needs rather than factual content. Dementia fundamentally alters the pragmatic functions of language. Fiction provides insight into internal experiences that are difficult to capture through observational research alone. Therefore, comparing fictional narratives with real-world service interactions can deepen understanding of how language mediates aging, dependency, identity, and care.

## CONCLUSIONS

This comparative analysis of declarative speech acts in *The Father* by Florian Zeller and *LANTERA* elderly care program in Paseh, Bandung, demonstrates that the function and force of declaratives are strongly shaped by context. In the fictional narrative, declarative speech acts reflect the elderly protagonist's struggle to preserve identity and authority amid cognitive decline, resulting in unstable and increasingly ineffective assertions of reality. In contrast, within the *LANTERA* program, declaratives serve institutional and socio-legal purposes, formalizing decisions, validating roles, and reinforcing communal responsibility toward the elderly.

Declarative speech acts in elderly service interactions do not merely transmit information; they *perform care, inclusion, and respect*. The analysis shows that declarative communication—when culturally grounded, polite, and multimodal—enhances service satisfaction and strengthens the social fabric of community-based eldercare. In the *LANTERA* program, declarative acts thus function as *micro-performances of social harmony* that embody both linguistic efficacy and local wisdom. This study demonstrates that declarative speech acts in elderly service interactions are deeply shaped by both gender and Sundanese cultural norms. The use of declarative speech acts may vary across individuals and contexts. In this study, some patterns suggest that female participants tend to use declaratives to support emotional connection and cooperation, while male participants more of the use them more to express responsibility or maintain structure. However, these

tendencies should not be generalized, as the use of speech acts is influenced by multiple factors, including context, roles, and individual differences, rather than by gender alone. Both strategies reflect cultural expectations of respect and harmony.

Overall, while *The Father* portrays declarative speech acts as a marker of psychological vulnerability and fragmented selfhood, *LANTERA* interactions illustrate its stabilizing role in structured care systems. The comparison highlights how language in elderly care can either reveal the erosion of personal autonomy or support social order and collective accountability.

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