

AN ANALYSIS OF DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACT IN THUNDERBOLT MOVIE: PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the types of directive speech acts found in the movie Thunderbolt. This descriptive qualitative research focuses on the utterances produced by characters in the film, with direct speech acts serving as the main data source. Data were collected through an observational method using a non-participatory technique. The data analysis applied Sudaryanto's (2015) method of identifying language elements, while the theoretical framework was based on Searle's (1979) classification of directive speech acts. The findings show that the characters frequently employed directive speech acts to influence others' actions. Out of 57 identified utterances, 20 were categorized as asking, 15 as requesting, 5 as ordering, 5 as commanding, 5 as giving advice, 5 as begging, and 2 as inviting. The most dominant type was asking. These speech acts were primarily used to give instructions, request help, and express urgency, especially in high-pressure scenes. This research offers insights into the use of directive speech acts in film dialogues and highlights their relevance to real-world communication and interaction.

Keywords: *Directive Speech Acts, Pragmatics, Communication, Speech Act Theory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As social beings, people must interact or communicate with one another to survive. Communication is an action that people are using for expressing their feelings, command, ideas, and more. When we want to communicate with someone, we need to know about language and their intention first, so we will know what kind of language they use, and what's the inside meaning and what they want to express in a conversation, maybe about sarcasm, compliment, politeness, humor or irony. If it's about language, we need to choose one language in the world, like English is a common language that will use by international people. After we know these two points, we will fluently know

what they said, then we will know how to face it, and answer it. According to Yule (1996), successful communication requires recognizing not only the literal meaning of utterances but also the intended function behind them. This reinforces the importance of studying speech acts in real-life and fictional contexts.

From the statement above, there is a concept in English called speech act, which refers to how people use language to perform actions through their words. According to Birner (2013), Speech act has three types, there are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. A locutionary act is about the basic meaning of the words, the actual sentence and how it's put together. An

illocutionary act shows what the speaker wants to do with their words, like asking for help, giving advice, or making a command. A perlocutionary act is about how the listener reacts, such as feeling surprised, confused, or happy. Among these three, the illocutionary act is the most important because it shows the speaker's real intention. To understand this, we need to pay attention to both the words and the situation in which they are spoken.

When studying speech acts, it's important to know whether communication is spoken or written, and whether it's a monologue (one person speaking) or a dialogue (two or more people talking). Conversations are very useful for studying speech acts because people often say things indirectly. This means we must look deeper to find the true meaning behind their words. To do this, we need to understand not only the language but also the situation, the relationship between speakers, and the culture they come from.

One of the most important types of illocutionary acts is the directive act. As explained by Searle (1979), directive acts are used when a speaker wants the listener to do something. These acts are meant to guide, suggest, or push someone to act. Examples of directive acts include asking, ordering, inviting, advising, requesting, or even begging. In each case, the speaker is trying to get a response or action from the listener. Studying directive acts helps us understand how people use language to give instructions, make requests, or influence others in daily life. It shows that language is not only about sharing ideas, but also about getting things done through communication.

For example, a directive speech act can be found in the news article "Letter to the Editor: Why the left hates America and Trump" by Fillmore Country Journal.

The sentence "In any election, the overriding consideration in voting should be the political ideologies associated with candidates and the direction America should take." serves as a form of advice. The speaker suggests voters focus on political ideologies and the nation's direction, aiming to influence decision-making without commanding. Though declarative in form, its illocutionary force is to guide voters toward responsible, informed choices.

Similarly, Directive speech acts are also commonly found in movies, which are a form of literary work created by humans to express thoughts, emotions, and meaning. Every movie typically includes a script and a specific purpose or message. Within these scripts, there are many different utterances, each carrying its own meaning. To fully understand a movie, it is important to recognize the purpose behind each conversation. This helps avoid misinterpretation and improves our understanding of the characters and their intentions.

Because of that, this study looks at directive speech acts in the movie *Thunderbolt*. There are three main reasons for choosing this topic. First, directive speech acts are often used by people in daily conversations, so they are important to understand. Second, directives show a close connection between the person speaking and the person listening. Third, directive speech acts are used to get someone's attention or ask them to do something, which is a big part of how we communicate with others. The goals of this study are to help readers understand the different kinds of speech acts and to explain the types of directive speech acts used in the movie *Thunderbolt*.

In conducting this study, the researcher took some previous research

that was relevant to the topic. Halil et al., (2023) carried out a qualitative investigation of directed speech acts in Kolaka primary school classroom interactions. The research focused on how teachers and students employed directives to manage behavior, encourage participation, and reflect cultural identity. Using observation and Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive analysis model, the study identified four directive types: demanding, commanding, begging, and challenging. These were frequently marked by clitics such as *-ko*, *-mi*, *-na*, and *hae*, which indicated levels of politeness and carried cultural meaning. The findings showed that requesting and commanding forms were the most common in teacher–student exchanges, often combined with politeness strategies to balance authority with encouragement. Meanwhile, demanding was used in urgent contexts, begging appeared in requests for help, and challenging functions to provoke or test peers. Overall, the study showed how local knowledge and cultural norms impact language usage in education and suggested that directed speech actions are essential for upholding classroom order, encouraging motivation, and creating a pleasant learning environment.

Next, Rizki et al., (2023) conducted a study analyzing directive speech acts performed by the main character in the short movie *Ke Jogja*. The aim of the research was to identify the types of directive speech acts used by the character in conversations involving cultural and linguistic differences. The data source was the *Ke Jogja* short movie from the Paniradya Kaistimewan YouTube channel, which was transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative approach. The study applied Searle's (1976) speech act theory, particularly focusing on directive speech acts. The

findings showed that three types of directive speech acts were used by the main character: asking (15 utterances / 25%), telling (42 utterances / 70%), and commanding (3 utterances / 5%), with *telling* being the most dominant. This suggests that the character often used speech to convey information clearly to avoid misunderstandings due to cultural and language barriers. The researchers concluded that the use of simple, direct utterances was a strategy to ensure effective communication between individuals from different backgrounds.

Additionally, the researcher also found another relevant study by Aini et al., (2023) conducted a descriptive qualitative study entitled *Discourse Analysis of Directive Speech Acts Used by Teachers in Classroom Interactions*. The study examined how English teachers used directive speech acts during online classes with third-grade students at SD IT Widya Cendekia. Data were taken from video recordings of Microsoft Teams lessons and analyzed using Yule's (1996) framework of directive speech acts, with the process supported by Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model. The findings showed a total of 21 directive utterances, divided into five categories: commands (7 utterances), requests (9 utterances), suggestions (2 utterances), invitations (2 utterances), and prohibitions (1 utterance). Requests were the most frequent type, indicating their importance in encouraging participation and guiding learning activities. The study concluded that directive speech acts are vital for classroom management and teacher–student interaction, where teachers rely on requests to engage students, use commands to maintain discipline, and employ other types such as suggestions and prohibitions to support the learning process in more specific ways.

This present research is important because it uses more data and applies Searle's full theory, so the types of directive speech acts are explained more completely than in earlier research. What makes it special is that it shows asking is the most common type in the Thunderbolt movie, while previous studies often found other types more dominant. This means that even in action scenes full of tension, characters still rely on asking questions to keep the situation clear and coordinated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or writer and understood by a listener or reader. It is more concerned with what people mean when they talk than with the dictionary definitions of words. Put differently, pragmatics focuses on the meaning conveyed by the speaker (Austin, 1962).

This kind of study also examines how people interpret meaning based on the situation, who they are speaking to, where they are, when they are speaking, and other contextual factors. That's why pragmatics is also called the study of contextual meaning. When someone doesn't express their meaning directly, pragmatics examines how people can deduce or guess what they mean. Many forms of communication involve invisible meaning, or concepts that are understood without the use of words. Levinson (1983) emphasized that pragmatics allows us to bridge the gap between language structure and speaker intention, particularly in culturally varied interactions.

Therefore, pragmatics enables us to easily understand how more is conveyed than is stated. Pragmatics also considers the idea of distance, how close or far people are socially, physically, or

emotionally. This influences the amount of explanation or silence. Thus, pragmatics also examines how people express meaning according to their circumstances or relationships. Because pragmatics studies meaning, context, and intention, it is closely related to speech acts especially directive acts, like commands, requests, suggestions, or advice. These speech acts focus on the speaker's intended action for the listener as well as the words they use. Context, social distance, and the listener's comprehension of the words' underlying meaning or purpose all affect how effective a directive is.

2.2. Speech Acts

In connection with this, interacting with other people is a natural social need for every human being. To fulfill this need, people use language to communicate, share information, and express opinions. Vanderveken (1990) noted that illocutionary acts carry specific force that shapes interpersonal understanding and expectation, essential in directive acts. Each person may express themselves differently depending on their speech style and the kind of speech acts they use. Understanding how someone speaks and what kind of speech they perform is important because it shows the impact their words can have on others.

Speech acts explain how language is used to do things, not just say things. Austin (1962) defined the illocutionary act as an action that is performed through speaking and demonstrates the speaker's intention. Every speech has a purpose. Later, Searle (1979) expanded on this idea and distinguished various categories of illocutionary acts. One of the most relevant is the directive category, where speakers attempt to persuade the audience to act. Asking, begging,

commanding, ordering, and requesting are a few examples of directive acts.

2.3. Types of Directive Speech Act

A directive speech act occurs when a speaker attempts to persuade or motivate the listener to act in a way that advances the speaker's goals (Searle, 1979). This type of speech involves the speaker using language to guide the listener's behavior. It means the speaker wants their words to lead to a certain response or action. Often, the objective is to persuade the listener to believe or do as the speaker says. For example, asking, order, suggesting, requesting, advice, and so on are examples of directive speech acts.

1) Asking

Asking usually takes the form of interrogatives (e.g., “Can you...?”, “Would you...?”) and is often used as an *indirect request*. It doesn't just seek information but may imply the speaker's intention for the hearer to do something. It often appears in the form of questions and may also serve as a polite way to make a request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

2) Order

Ordering is a direct attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something, often using an imperative structure, like “Close the door!” or “Stop talking!” It reflects the speaker's authority or control over the hearer and aims to make the world match the speaker's words via the hearer's actions.

3) Request

A request, which usually has less authority than an order, is an act in which the speaker wants the listener to do something. Both direct and indirect forms may be used. More polite indirect requests are frequently phrased as inquiries about a person's capacity or

willingness (e.g., “Could you help me?”). They aim to reduce imposition and maintain politeness (Holmes, 1995).

4) Begging

A speech act wherein the speaker makes a desperate or urgent request from the listener. It usually involves a strong desire for the listener to comply and emotional appeal (Leech, 1983). For example: “Please forgive me.”

5) Command

Like an order, a command is a strong directive in which the speaker expects the listener to take immediate action. It usually expects obedience (Green et al., 1983).

Example: “Stand up straight!”

6) Invite

A speech acts in which the speaker asks the listeners to attend or take part in a particular activity or event. In general, it is respectful and friendly (Trosborg, 1995). Example: “Would you like to come to my birthday party?”

7) Advice

A speech act where the speaker suggests what the listener should do, often for their benefit. The listener is free to accept or reject the advice (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Example: “You should take a break and rest.”

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research examined the use of directive speech acts by Thunderbolt movie characters using qualitative research methods. The data was collected by watching the movie carefully using an observational method, as explained by Creswell (2013), who said that qualitative research helps describe and understand social situations in detail. The researcher did not join or change anything in the movie but only

observed and wrote down the dialogue that showed directive speech acts, such as asking, ordering, or advising. These utterances were chosen because they showed how one speaker tried to get another person to do something. All the dialogue was taken directly from the scenes in the film where these types of speech were used.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed it using a method based on Sudaryanto (2015), who introduced techniques for identifying and separating language elements in a sentence. The analysis focused on the situation, tone, and words used by the speaker. The types of directive speech acts were explained using the theory from Searle (1979), Searle grouped directive speech acts into several kinds: ask, order, request, beg, command, invite, and advice. This theory helped the researcher understand what each speaker wanted the listener to do and how they said it. By using these ideas, the research showed how language is used to guide others through speech.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This study revealed that the *Thunderbolt* movie script contained several directive speech acts. Based on Searle's theory, the researcher identified and categorized 57 utterances into seven types: asking, ordering, requesting, begging, commanding, inviting, and advising. Their classification and frequency are presented in Table 1. From this dataset, 15 utterances were chosen for detailed analysis in the discussion. This was done on purpose: the full 57 utterances show the overall findings, but the 15 examples were selected as representative of each directive type, with at least two examples analyzed per category. Each type was treated differently because the utterances carry

different purposes in the movie. For instance, asking is often used to seek clarity, requesting softens the demand, commanding and ordering show authority, begging reflects urgency or dependence, while inviting and advising emphasizing cooperation and guidance. By showing only key examples, the discussion avoids repeating similar cases and makes it easier to show the different ways directive speech acts work in the movie.

Table 4.1 Type of Directive Speech Act'

Type of Directive Speech Act	Frequency
Asking	20
Order	5
Request	15
Begging	5
Command	5
Invite	2
Advice	5

4.2 Discussion

1) Ask

Data 1

A: Can you help me get in there?
(00:29:10)

Through the above data contained in the film, we can understand the use and purpose of an "ask" directive speech act. The speaker, Yelena, used a polite question to seek assistance from a security guard. This utterance shows that asking can be done respectfully and indirectly to gain help or information. The sentence fulfills language use rules by showing curiosity and hope, not pressure. The speaker's intention was to gain entry with the guard's help.

Data 2:

Bob: Are you going to try to leave this place?
(00:38:25)

In the utterance above, Bob spoke to Yelena, who was the interlocutor, while they were having a conversation inside

the underground facility. Bob asked a question to find out what Yelena planned to do. His tone was curious and a little nervous, as he wasn't sure what would happen next. This utterance is an example of an ask directive speech act because the speaker was trying to get information from the interlocutor by using a direct question.

Data 3:

Walker: How did you get in? (00:47:00)

The utterance above shows the function of an "ask" directive speech act used by Walker. The speaker wanted to know how the interlocutor entered a secure area. This sentence reflects how speakers can use direct questioning to gather information. It demonstrates how important asking is to communication and how context and tone, such as mistrust, can affect how a question is interpreted.

2) Order

Data 4:

Valentina: “*Get rid of them, Mel.*” (00:35:15)

In this data, Valentina spoke strongly to Mel in the secret operations room. The speaker gave a direct order to the interlocutor, Mel, telling her to eliminate the people who were seen as a threat. Valentina did not explain or ask politely, she simply commanded Mel to act fast. The tone was serious and urgent, showing that Valentina expected Mel to obey without hesitation. Because the speaker instructed the interlocutor in a forceful and authoritative manner, this line qualifies as an order directive speech act.

Data 5:

Scientist: “Stop right there!” (00:44:40)

This utterance demonstrates an "order" directive speech act, spoken by a Scientist in an emergency. The speaker shouted at someone who was likely entering a restricted area. The interlocutor was told to stop immediately. The sentence was short, urgent language to control someone's actions. This type of speech act is common in dangerous situations where quick obedience is needed. The sentence reflects how orders are used to give strong instructions quickly and clearly.

3) Request

Data 6:

Bob: “Maybe I should have a gun?” (01:00:45)

The sentence above shows a "request" directive speech act. Bob used a polite and indirect way to ask for a gun. The phrase “maybe I should” softens the request, making it less forceful. This data shows how requests can be formed in a careful and respectful way, fulfilling communication rules while still expressing a need. This utterance is a request directive speech act because Bob tries to ask for something in a mild way, hoping for a positive response without pressure.

Data 7:

Bucky: “Just come and testify against her.” (00:42:30)

In this data, Bucky spoke to one of his teammates, who was the interlocutor in this scene. In this moment, Bucky asked the interlocutor to take part in a legal or public action, to testify against a character, most likely Valentina. The speaker did not use a question or polite form. Instead, he used a direct sentence with the word “just”, which makes the request sound simple or obvious. The tone is soft but still firm, showing that

Bucky wants this action to happen, but he is not giving an order. This utterance is a request directive speech act because the speaker asks the interlocutor to do something, but in a way that sounds encouraging rather than forceful.

4) Command

Data 8:

Walker: “Ava, find us an escape vehicle.” (00:47:04)

From the utterance above, we could see the speaker gave a sharp and direct instruction to Ava near the vault. His tone was firm and authoritative, leaving no room for questions or refusal. The sentence was short and clear, showing urgency and control. This utterance functions as a command directive speech act because Walker expects immediate action and shows authority.

Data 9:

Walker: “Tie him up.” (00:47:01)

This utterance is another example of a "command" directive speech act. Walker gave a clear command to his teammate, who is the interlocutor in this scene, during a critical time near the vault. He told the person to tie up Bob without asking or suggesting, it was a direct and simple instruction. The speaker expected the interlocutor to follow his words immediately. His tone showed control and leadership. This utterance is a command directive speech act because the speaker gave a strong instruction and wanted the interlocutor to act without delay or refusal.

5) Invite

Data 10:

Valentina: “Let’s go for a walk.” (01:20:44)

In this data, Valentina spoke gently to Bob in an outdoor garden. She invited him to walk together, including herself in the activity by using “let’s.” Her tone was warm and friendly, encouraging Bob to join her without pressure or obligation. This utterance is an invite directive speech act because it offers a shared activity in a polite and inclusive way.

6) Advice

Data 11:

Yelena: “Push it down. Just push it down deep.” (00:50:55)

In this moment, Yelena spoke to Bob in an underground location. The speaker was giving Bob advice; she was offering helpful guidance to support him in controlling his emotions. Her tone was calm and encouraging rather than forceful or commanding. She wanted Bob to try a specific way to handle his feelings, showing care and experience. Bob listened to her advice and tried to follow it. This utterance functions as a directive speech act of giving advice.

Data 12:

Alexei: “You need to face her. You and your team.” (00:41:45)

At this scene, Alexei spoke seriously to Yelena, who was the interlocutor, while trying to encourage her to confront a difficult situation involving Valentina. His tone was firm but supportive. He wasn’t giving a command but speaking with concern and motivation. He wanted Yelena and her team to be brave and take responsibility. This utterance is an example of an advice directive speech act because the speaker gave helpful and encouraging words to guide the interlocutor toward the right decision.

7) Suggestion

Data 13:

Yelena: “Let’s stick together until we make it to the surface.” (01:12:21)

In this data, Yelena spoke calmly to her teammates, who were the interlocutors in this situation, inside an underground tunnel. She suggested that they should stay close as a group until they reached safety. Her tone was friendly and caring, showing teamwork and concern. Yelena used the word “let’s,” which includes both the speaker and the interlocutors, making the sentence sound like a shared decision rather than a command. This utterance is an example of a suggestion directive speech act because the speaker gave an idea that the interlocutors could agree to or follow willingly.

Data 14:

Alexei: “Maybe you could put in a good word with Valentina for me.” (00:41:10)

The utterance above revealed a polite and indirect suggestion. Alexei quietly spoke to Yelena, who was the interlocutor, while they were talking during a more relaxed moment. His words were soft and uncertain, using “maybe” to show that he was not demanding anything. Instead, he gently asked Yelena to help him by saying something nice to Valentina on his behalf. This utterance is a suggestion directive speech act because the speaker offered an idea politely and left the decision up to the interlocutor.

Data 15:

Walker: “Why don’t you just go through the walls?” (00:52:20)

The utterance above was indicated directive act. Walker spoke to Ava, who was the interlocutor, while discussing how to escape during a stressful situation. The speaker used a question form to make a "suggestion." Although it’s a

question, it carries the function of offering an idea. The sentence is informal and might include sarcasm but still aimed at encouraging Ava to act. This utterance is a suggestion directive speech act because the speaker offered a possible solution for the interlocutor to consider.

5. CONCLUSION

Directive speech acts are frequently seen in films, such as Thunderbolt, where characters use words to persuade others by giving orders, making requests, making suggestions, and more. These speech acts reflect real-world communication, in which people convey both intentions and ideas. Examining how these behaviors are depicted in the film helps us comprehend how language is used to direct behavior, convey urgency or politeness, and shape interactions according to relationships and context.

In other words, studying directive speech acts helps us better understand how language functions in real-life situations and media, such as movies. This research finds that directive speech acts are important in everyday conversation because they show us how speakers use words not only to talk but also to do things, such as asking for help, giving advice, or telling someone what to do. By comprehending these speech acts, we can better appreciate how language and context affect meaning. Basically, learning directive speech acts helps us become better communicators and better understand how language functions in media like movies and everyday life.

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