



An Analysis of Directive Speech Act Found in “Moana 2” Movie

Gede Eka Suasta Putra¹, Ida Ayu Putri Gita Ardiantari²

^{1,2}English Study Program, Faculty of Foreign Language,
Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar

Corresponding E-mail: ekasuasta1205@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse directive speech acts found in the animated movie Moana 2 using Searle's (1979) theory of illocutionary acts. Directive speech acts are utterances that are intended to persuade the listener to take action, either directly or indirectly. The data were gathered through observation, by observing the film and reading the official script. According to the categories of directed speech acts, the utterances were categorized and interpreted using a descriptive qualitative technique. The result of data analysis showed that every character in the movie utilized a total of 45 directed speech acts. They were divided into five categories: warnings, suggestions, requests, commands, and advice. Command represented 40% of the data, making it the most dominant category among them. Requests and suggestions were following. This dominance highlights Moana's strong leadership role, as she regularly employs commanding words to influence people and steer the plot. Additionally, the results showed how the social context, character relationships, and narrative suspense of the film all influence the directed speech actions. In this study, the role of directive acts in animated film was analyzed in detail, which advances the subject of pragmatics. It should offer helpful references for future studies on media language usage and speech act theory.

Keywords: *Directive Speech Acts, Movie, Moana*

Introduction

Language is not merely a tool for conveying information but also a medium through which people perform actions. As social beings, humans use language not only to share ideas but also to influence others behavior, express feeling, make promises, and more. This functional use of language is encapsulated in the concept of speech acts which is a key element in the field of pragmatics.

In the field of pragmatics, language is analyzed not only in terms of its structure but also its use in real communicative situations. Pragmatics gives us deeper insight into what others are saying. Learning pragmatics teaches us what others mean when they speak. One crucial theory within pragmatics is speech act theory, introduced by Austin (1962a) and developed further by Searle (1979). Based on Austin theory, speech act can be divided into three categories, which are locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts.

According to Austin (1962), "locutionary act is the act of saying something or basic act of utterance". A locutionary act can be said to be the fundamental utterances. Moreover, he stated that "illocutionary act is performed in saying something". An illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance. In addition, "perlocutionary act is the effect has on the listener". A Perlocutionary acts are those that result from the speaker producing a statement or making a request after doing an illocutionary act.

According to Searle (1979) the concept of illocutionary act divided into five categories, which are assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declaration. Assertive is an act functioned to express their conviction or dedication to the veracity of a message. Whereas, the directive can be orders, requests, or recommendations, are meant to persuade the recipient to take action. Moreover, commissive expresses threats, refusals, or promises, express the speaker's intention to carry out a future action. Besides, expressive aims to make the speaker's emotional reaction to a certain circumstance or psychological condition clear. Furthermore, the declaration refers to an utterance made by a speaker with a particular status or authority that brings about a change in a given situation.

One of the five categories of illocutionary acts, namely directives, which play a significant role in the dynamics of interpersonal interaction, serves as the central focus and main finding of this study. Directive speech acts are statements that aim to persuade the listener to do something in accordance with the speaker's objective. In the framework of illocutionary functions, directive speech acts are among the most significant categories since they seek to guide, influence, or control the hearer's behavior.

According to Cutting & Fordyce (2020), directions are statements which can range from orders and requests to invitations and suggestions that speakers use to try to persuade their interlocutors to take action. According to Hasler-Barker (2018), a directive articulates the speaker's goal to influence other people's behavior, thereby aiming to match the speaker's intended outcome with the course of situations. Directives are essentially about achieving something by saying it, rather than just saying it. This is a key idea in speech act theory that was first presented by Austin (1962) and developed by (Searle, 1979).

There are various related subjects that are relevant to the study of illocutionary speech acts. The first study was carried out based on an article authored by Fitriani et al. (2020) emphasizes the examination of illocutionary acts in the fantasy film "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets." The study identifies four categories of illocutionary acts: directive, expressive, representative, and commissive. Of these, directive is the most commonly employed. However, the authors point out a major research limitation: because the main character in the story lacked power, declarative acts were not examined. They propose that in order to have a more comprehensive knowledge of the use of illocutionary acts, future research can profit from looking at them in various genres or situations.

The second study was derived from an article authored by Sianipar et al. (2025) Identify and evaluate illocutionary acts in the animated movie "inside Out 2." Five categories of illocutionary acts are identified by their research, with representatives being the most common sort. Like the last study, this one has its limitations, especially the fact that it didn't examine the emotional background of the illocutionary behaviors. The authors suggest that in order to further understand this phenomenon, future research could look into illocutionary acts in other animated movies or emotional circumstances.

The third study was taken from article by Ariasih et al. (n.d.) analyzed the use of illocutionary acts in the film "Nimona." All five categories of illocutionary acts were found by the researchers, but expressive acts were the most common. They note out that the influence of character connections on the employment of these actions was not examined in their study, which may have shed light on the communication dynamics in the movie. In order to better examine this element, the authors recommend that future studies concentrate on illocutionary acts in other animated movies with compelling character dynamics.

The fourth study was taken from article by Ardiantari and Andriyani (2023) examined directive speech acts in real-life conversations between sellers and buyers in traditional marketplaces in Penglipuran Village. Their findings revealed that directive forms such as commands, requests, and suggestions were frequently employed to influence the listener's actions and maintain cooperative communication. While their study was situated in a real-life sociocultural context, it emphasizes the universality of directive speech acts across both every day and narrative discourse.

This supports the present study, which seeks to explore how similar directive strategies are utilized in fictional settings specifically in animated films like Moana 2. By analyzing directives in a cinematic context, this research aims to contribute not only to pragmatic theory but also to the understanding of how characters in media reflect and replicate real-world communication patterns. Although earlier research has helped us comprehend illocutionary acts in different movies, the majority of these studies have focused on broad categories rather than a particular kind of speech act.

Besides, there is still limited research that centers exclusively on directive illocutionary acts as the primary subject of analysis. Therefore, based on these reasons, current study attempts to close this gap by examining the kinds and purposes of directive speech actions employed by the main character in *Moana 2*. This will give a more thorough and targeted explanation of directive language use in animated film dialogue. This qualitative research analyzed an animated movie from Disney+ intitled “*Moana 2*” which the utterances uttered on dialogues among the characters represent those types of directive illocutionary act proposed by Searle (1979).

According to Aaglave (2024), *Moana 2* continues the journey of Moana, now a seasoned wayfinder, who receives a vision from her ancestor, Tautai Vasa. The legendary island of Motufetu has been drowned by the storm god Nalo, cutting off the islands' connection, she discovers in this vision. In order to save her home island, Motunui, from a bleak future, Moana gathers a motley crew, which includes Loto, Moni, and Kele, as well as her animal companions, Pua and Heihei, to set off on a risky mission to find and restore Motufetu.

Method

This qualitative method was utilized to gain more knowledge of the film's usage of directed utterances and to interpret the speech acts in context. The data for this research were taken from an animated adventure movie produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios entitled *Moana 2*, which was released in 2024. The film is a sequel to *Moana* (2016), and it follows the story of Moana as she embarks on a new journey to reconnect her people and rediscover a lost island threatened by a powerful storm god. The data were collected using an observation method, noted taking technique through watching the movie and reading the official script. All utterances that uttered by the characters that contain directive speech acts were identified based on Searle (1979) classification of illocutionary acts.

The collected data were then grouping into directive types grouping them into several directive types, including command, requests, suggestions, advice and warning. The results of data analysis were then presented in the form of a table to show the classification of directive speech acts, and further explained descriptively to provide a clearer interpretation of the data in relation to Searle (1979) theory.

Results & Discussion

This study aimed to analyze directive speech acts in the movie *Moana 2* using Searle's (1979) classification of illocutionary acts. Directive speech acts are statements that aim to persuade the listener to take action stated (Searle, 1979: 12). Observations and data gathered from the official script and video of the film led to the identification of 45 directed speech actions in total.

Table 1. Types of Directive Speech Act Found in Moana 2 Movie

Type of Directive	Frequency	Percentage
Command	18	40%
Request	10	22%
Suggestion	7	16%
Advice	6	13%
Warning	4	9%
Total	45	100%

According to Searle's (1979) theory, the directive speech actions in the Moana 2 film are categorized in the table above. The table shows that, with 18 occurrences, or 40% of the total data, command is the most dominant type. This shows that Moana, as the main character, often gives direct instructions or orders to others, especially in urgent or important situations. The second most common type is request, with 10 incidents (22%), which usually happens when the speaker wants help or cooperation in a more polite way. Suggestions were found 7 times (16%), and they are mostly used during conversations or decision-making moments between characters. Then, advice appears 6 times (13%), usually coming from older or wiser characters like Tautai Vasa to guide Moana. Lastly, warnings appear 4 times (9%) and are used to give alerts or protect others from danger. Overall, the table helps show how each type of directive speech act plays a role in shaping the interaction between characters and how the story moves forward.

The data that present on the table can be clearly explain in this discussion below.

1. Command

The highest data in this research was obtained from "command," which appeared 18 times. A command is an action taken by an individual who gives a clear directive or order, requesting the listener to follow the speaker's instructions. Below are some examples of commands:

Data 1

Moana: You guys?

The Crew: (Whimpering)

Moana: **Cargo hold!**

(**"Moana 2", 0:36:40-0:36:43**)

According to the dialog above, in an emergency, Moana orders her crew to head straight for the cargo hold. The utterance "**Cargo hold**" highlighted in bold above, is a directive speech act categorized as a command, which is a direct manifestation of a directed speech act. Being the crew's leader, Moana has the power to give orders that must be followed right away. Her leadership position and the severity of the situation lend credence to the categorization of this statement as a directed illocutionary conduct.

Data 2

Moni: I spent my whole life learning our people's stories. Because of you, I get to live one.

Moana: All right then. **Let's break a curse.**

("Moana 2", 01:08:10-01:08:18)

When Moana says, "**Let's break a curse**" it is evident that she is giving a clear directive as the head of her people. The information discovered indicates that Moana is essential in leading her crew on the adventure. Since the bold statement demonstrates how a person with leadership power instructs others to carry out a certain activity, it may be referred to as a command. Here, Moana is the one who starts and guides a group decision to break the curse. As a result, the above sentence might be regarded as a commanding.

2. Request

Searle (1979) stated, requesting is another type of directive speech act where the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action, but in a less forceful and more polite way than commanding. It often uses modal verbs or softened structures, allowing the hearer the option to refuse.

Data 3

Maui: (Rolled)

Maui: **Guys, could you please just roll me back?**

("Moana 2", 00.45.41-00.45.50)

The phrase "**Guys, could you please just roll me back?**" is classified as a requesting directive illocutionary act because it shows that the speaker is attempting to request rather than order the hearers to do anything. When the modal word "**could**" be used, it conveys politeness and indirectness, two important characteristics of a request as opposed to a command. Searle (1979) asserts that requests are different from commands in that they provide the hearer the option to agree or refuse, and they frequently demonstrate social decency or regard for the hearer's independence. Additionally, the sentence is framed with a pleasant tone by referring to "Guys," which further softens the directional power of the remark and supports its classification as a request rather than a command.

3. Suggestion

Searle (1979) stated, suggestion is the act of putting up an idea or possible course of action for the hearer's consideration. The speaker encourages collaboration or creative thought rather than demanding action from the hearer. It is frequently context-dependent and places an emphasis on shared decision-making.

Data 4

Sina: **Moana, you need a crew.**

Sina: Heihei and Pua don't count.

Moana: it's the other side of the ocean. How could I ask them to?

Sina: Our people will rise, if you let them.

("Moana 2", 00.23.22-00.23.30)

The utterance "**Moana, you need a crew.**" can be categorized as a suggesting directive illocutionary act. Although it is written as a declarative phrase, the speaker is giving Moana something to think on rather than just expressing a fact. The speaker presents a potential course of action, with the hearer having the option to accept, reject, or alter the proposal, according to Searle (1979). While without explicitly requesting it, the speaker suggests that Moana might benefit from having a crew. This illustrates the collaborative and non-imposition character of an idea.

Data 5

Moana: (Crying)

Maui: Maybe breaking the curse is like you said.

Maui: **We gotta work together, I pull it form the sea, but a human has to land on its shores.**

("Moana 2", 01.02.25-01.02.27)

The utterance "**We gotta work together, I pull it from the sea, but a human has to land on its shores.**" can be categorized as a suggesting directive illocutionary act. Although it contains assertive language like "**we gotta**," the overall tone of the sentence reflects collaborative intent rather than strict instruction. According to Searle (1979), a suggestion is a directive in which the speaker proposes a course of action for mutual benefit, usually in a way that is open for discussion or agreement. In this case, the speaker uses inclusive language "**we**" and frames the plan as a shared strategy, which implies a cooperative, not authoritarian, approach.

4. Advice

Searle (1979) stated, advising is used when the speaker provides recommendations or guidance intended for the hearer's benefit. It often shows up in mentoring or helpful connections and indicates care, experience, or wisdom. Unlike commanding, advising is directed but less forceful.

Data 6

Matangi: Break Nalo curse, and maybe, one day, we will see each other again.

Matangai: Remember, **there's always another way even if you have to get lost to find it.**

Matangi: Goodluck, Tautai Moana.

("Moana 2", 00.54.50-00.54.56)

The utterance “**Remember, there’s always another way even if you have to get lost to find it.**” can be categorized as an advising directive illocutionary act. The sentence begins with the verb “Remember,” which is used to direct the hearer’s attention to an important idea or value. This is not a command, but a motivational reminder, meant to encourage the hearer to remain open to possibilities and persist through uncertainty. Advice is a form of directive speech act in which the speaker recommends a course of action for the benefit of the hearer, typically based on experience, knowledge, or care, according to Searle (1979).

Data 7

Moana: Maui! (surprised to see maui)

Maui: **Do not fear! You have been rescued!**

(“Moana 2”, 00.53.53-00.53.56)

The utterance “**Do not fear! You have been rescued!**” can be classified as an advising directive illocutionary act. Although the form “**Do not fear**” appears to be a command structurally, the illocutionary force of the utterance is more aligned with comforting advice rather than strict instruction. Searle (1979) defined advising as when a speaker suggests a course of action or way of thinking that will benefit the hearer. By assuring the hearer of their safety, rather than using force or power, the speaker in this instance encourages them to cease feeling fearful.

5. Warning

Searle (1979) stated, warning is a directed act intended to inform the hearer of a possible risk or unfavorable consequence. It frequently conveys a sense of urgency and suggests that the hearer need to take preventative measures. It aims to change behavior by being cautious, but it is not a demand.

Data 8

Maui: All right. Be back in a bit

Maui: **Until then, stay alive, talk to no one. And, if you see a crazy bat lady, run.**

(“Moana 2”, 00.46.53-00.46.55)

Maui warns the characters to a possible danger. The statement is straightforward and includes a punishment for disregarding the advice. Because it seeks to avert danger, this kind of directive is categorized as a warning, a subtype of directive act in which the speaker attempts to sway behavior by warning the hearer.

Data 9

Maui: **You’re all gonna die.**

Moana: WHAT?

Maui: Nalo didn’t just hide Motufetu in a strom.

Maui: He did it in a monster strom.

("Moana 2", 00.56.13-00.56.23)

The utterance **"You're all gonna die."** can be classified as a warning directive illocutionary act. The speaker intends to warn the listeners of an approaching threat or danger, not only to provide information, even if the sentence is formally a declarative statement. Searle (1979) defined warnings as a type of directive in which the speaker tries to change the hearer's behavior by alerting them to possible damage and urging them to avoid it. In this instance, the speaker is probably attempting to evoke a sense of urgency or anxiety that might prompt a behavior shift, such as retreating, getting ready for danger, or considering the matter more seriously.

Data 10

Maui: **Stay away, or you will die**

Maui: Be good. Maui, out!

("Moana 2", 00.47.00-00.47.02)

The utterance "Stay away, or you will die." is best categorized as a warning directive illocutionary act. The imperative form "Stay away" and the conditional threat "or you will die" are used in the sentence's construction. This formulation demonstrates that the speaker is warning the hearer of a dire result if nothing is done, rather than merely ordering action. Searle (1979) asserts that warnings belong to the directive class of speech actions, in which the speaker tries to change the hearer's behavior by drawing attention to possible risk. By emphasizing the deadly consequences of disobeying, the speaker aims to protect the listener.

Conclusion

According to the results of data analysis shown above, it can be concluded that the film "Moana 2" consisted 45 directive speech acts based on Searle's (1969) theory. The study found 45 directive utterances, that involved five categories: requests, warnings, advice, suggestions, and commands. The most common type was command, which reflected the protagonist's leadership role and her frequent need to guide others in high-stakes situations. The use of different directive forms also showed how language serves several purposes throughout the story, including establishing cooperation, providing guidance, and ensuring safety. The study's particular focus on directive speech acts advances our knowledge of the use of directive language in animation narrative, particularly in character-driven movies like Moana 2. Further pragmatics research, specifically that examining illocutionary acts in other genres or character roles, may find this study useful.

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