



Directive Illocutionary Acts in *Hoppers*: A Contextual Analysis of Refusal Possibility

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-08-09 Revised: 2026-09-02 Accepted: 2026-09-11 Keywords: <i>directive illocutionary acts;</i> <i>Hoppers;</i> <i>pragmatics;</i> <i>field, tenor,</i> <i>and mode;</i> <i>possibility of refusal</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.12220 Corresponding Author: I Putu Wika Diatmika Wikadiatmika14@gmail.com English Literature Program, Faculty of Foreign Language, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar	<i>Directive illocutionary acts encourage the hearer to perform a particular action. Although previous movie-based studies have examined how such acts are classified, most focus mainly on identifying directive types and rarely connect them systematically to situational context or to the hearer's possibility of refusal. This study addresses that gap by identifying the directive illocutionary acts produced by the characters in the movie Hoppers and analyzing how field, tenor, and mode, following Halliday and Hasan (1989), shape their realization based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) classification, along with the extent to which the hearer is given the possibility of refusal. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using observation and note-taking techniques. Thirty-three directive illocutionary acts were identified, from which ten utterances were purposively selected for detailed analysis, representing the major communicative functions and situational configurations found in the data. The findings reveal nine directive sub-types, namely ask, request, command, order, suggest, warn, advise, urge, and require, with ask as the most dominant, occurring eleven times (33.3%). The analysis further shows that these directive sub-types can be interpreted through four communicative-function groups: directives allowing the hearer the possibility of refusal, directives expressing advice and warning, directives expressing urgency, and directives based on power or authority. These findings indicate that directive illocutionary acts and the hearer's possibility of refusal vary systematically according to the situational context and the relationship between participants, particularly the relative power between speaker and hearer. This study contributes to pragmatic research by integrating directive classification, context of situation, and the hearer's possibility of refusal as an analytical framework for examining directive language in movie dialogue.</i>

1. Introduction

Language enables speakers to convey ideas, intentions, and attitudes, but the meaning of an utterance often extends beyond its literal form and depends on the context in which it occurs (Yule, 1996). Speech act theory captures this by proposing that utterances perform actions rather than merely describe them (Austin, 1962), and illocutionary acts refer to the communicative function carried by such utterances, whether encouraging the hearer to act, giving a warning, or asking a question.

Directive illocutionary acts, which express the speaker's intention to get the hearer to perform a future action, are classified by Searle and Vanderveken (1985) into sub-types such as ask, request, command, order, suggest, warn, advise, urge, and require. While this classification identifies the communicative function of each sub-type, it does not by itself explain how situational factors shape their realization in actual interaction. This study therefore integrates Halliday and Hasan's (1989) notion of context of situation, comprising field, tenor, and mode, to examine not only which directive sub-type is produced but also how the situational configuration shapes the speaker's choice and the degree of freedom given to the hearer.

Although Searle and Vanderveken (1985) do not explicitly propose a scale for measuring the hearer's freedom to refuse, their classification of directive sub-types implies that this freedom varies systematically: an ask or suggest inherently leaves the decision with the hearer, whereas a command or order presupposes the speaker's authority to expect compliance. Building on this implication, the present study develops possibility of refusal as an analytical construct describing how much freedom a directive illocutionary act grants the hearer to accept or reject the proposed action, distinguishing open possibility, where the hearer can freely accept or decline; constrained possibility, where refusal is technically available but discouraged by urgency, personal appeal, or social expectation; and minimal or no possibility, where institutional authority or an extreme power imbalance leaves little realistic option but to comply.

The movie *Hoppers* was selected as the data source because it presents diverse communicative situations involving family members, teachers, colleagues, and characters with differing levels of authority, offering a range of relational configurations suited to examining how directive illocutionary acts, context of situation, and possibility of refusal interact. While *Hoppers* has not previously been examined in pragmatic research, the primary contribution of this study lies not in the novelty of the data source itself but in the integration of directive classification, context of situation, and possibility of refusal as an analytical framework.

Previous studies on directive illocutionary acts in movie dialogues, spanning both animated films such as *Brave*, *Inside Out 2*, *Moana 2*, *Next Gen*, *Frozen II*, *Up*, and *You People* (Dewi & Jannah, 2022; Arum, 2025; Putra & Ardiantari, 2025; Putra & Satwika, 2025; Indrayani et al., 2022; Khoirotusyarifah et al., 2025; Wati et al., 2025; Widianingsih et al., 2025; Sita & Suastini, 2026) and non-animated films such as *Jumanji: The Next Level*, *Dunkirk*, and *The Commuter* (Trihanto et al., 2022; Saragih et al., 2022; Silaen et al., 2022; Yudha, 2022; Ch et al., 2023; Latuapo & Sahayu, 2024; Nurcahyadi et al., 2024; Prabawa & Permana, 2024; Insyra & Supri, 2024; Putra & Candra, 2024), converge on a similar conclusion: characters' directive choices are shaped by their intentions, relationships, and the situations in which they interact.

Where these studies diverge is in analytical depth. Most classify directive sub-types and report their frequency, but few systematically connect these classifications to the situational factors that motivate them, and fewer still examine whether the hearer is actually given room to refuse the proposed action. This leaves an unresolved question that the present study addresses: not simply which directive sub-types occur, but how the

configuration of field, tenor, and mode shapes both the choice of sub-type and the hearer's possibility of refusal.

Based on this gap, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What types of directive illocutionary acts are produced by the characters in the movie *Hoppers*? (2) How do field, tenor, and mode shape the realization of these directive illocutionary acts and the hearer's possibility of refusal?

Accordingly, this study aims to identify the directive illocutionary acts produced by the characters in *Hoppers* and to analyze how field, tenor, and mode shape both the speaker's choice of directive sub-type and the hearer's possibility of refusal. The novelty of this study lies in integrating three dimensions that have rarely been examined together: the type of directive illocutionary act produced, the situational configuration in which it occurs, and the degree of autonomy it leaves to the hearer. Taken together, these dimensions show that the same communicative purpose can be realized with markedly different degrees of interpersonal pressure depending on the situation in which it is expressed.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to identify and analyze directive illocutionary acts in the movie *Hoppers*, an animated science fiction movie directed by Daniel Chong. The object of this study consisted of the utterances containing directive illocutionary acts produced by the characters in the movie. These utterances were analyzed based on directive sub-types according to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), context of situation according to Halliday and Hasan (1989), and the possibility of refusal construct developed in this study. The data were drawn from the English subtitles provided on the Disney+ streaming platform, cross-checked against the dialogue as it appears in the movie itself to ensure transcription accuracy.

The data were collected through observation and note-taking techniques. The researcher repeatedly watched the movie while examining the subtitle transcript, identifying every utterance that met the inclusion criteria for a directive illocutionary act: the utterance had to be produced by a character addressing another character, and it had to carry an illocutionary point of getting the hearer to perform a future action, regardless of its grammatical form. Utterances that only described a state of affairs, expressed the speaker's own future action, or functioned as a greeting or exclamation without directive intent were excluded. Each identified utterance was noted together with the scene, the speaker, the hearer, and the situational context in which it occurred.

The identified utterances were then classified according to Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) directive sub-types: ask, request, command, order, suggest, warn, advise, urge, and require. Because several of these sub-types are conceptually close, ambiguous cases were resolved using the following operational distinctions. Request was distinguished from command by the presence or absence of the speaker's authority over the hearer: an utterance was coded as a request when the speaker had no institutional or situational authority to expect compliance, and as a command when such authority was present.

Command was distinguished from order by the degree of power asymmetry and the manner of address: command was used when the authority was institutional or role-based and the hearer retained a nominal status as an interlocutor, whereas order was reserved for utterances in which the speaker treated the hearer as entirely subordinate, with no expectation of negotiation. Suggest, advise, and urge were distinguished primarily by intended beneficiary and urgency: suggest was coded when the speaker proposed an option without indicating urgency or a clear beneficiary; advise was coded when the recommended action was intended to benefit the hearer specifically; and urge was coded when the utterance conveyed time pressure or an undesirable consequence of delay, regardless of who benefited from the action.

The possibility of refusal was determined using a three-level rubric developed for this study. An utterance was coded as open possibility when the hearer could accept or decline without social or situational pressure, typically realized through interrogative or modalized forms. It was coded as constrained possibility when refusal remained technically available but was discouraged by urgency, a personal appeal, or social expectation, typically realized through declarative or exclamatory forms addressed to a familiar interlocutor. It was coded as minimal or no possibility when institutional authority or an extreme power imbalance left little realistic option for the hearer to decline, typically realized through bare imperatives directed at a subordinate or powerless hearer.

Classification of directive sub-type and possibility of refusal was carried out by the first author. To reduce subjectivity, ambiguous cases were discussed with the second author, who supervised the study, and the operational distinctions described above were refined through this consultation until both authors agreed on the classification criteria applied to the full dataset.

All 33 identified utterances were coded using this classification to produce the frequency distribution presented in Table 1. From this dataset, ten utterances were purposively selected for detailed qualitative analysis because they best represent the four communicative-function groups identified in the data and provide sufficient contextual information for the analysis of field, tenor, and mode. *Require*, which occurred only once in the dataset, is reported in the frequency distribution in Table 1 but was not included among the ten examples selected for in-depth analysis, as the ten examples were chosen to represent the range of communicative functions rather than every individual sub-type.

Each selected utterance was analyzed through the following systematic steps: (1) identification of the utterance as a directive illocutionary act; (2) classification of its directive sub-type according to Searle and Vanderveken (1985); (3) examination of its linguistic realization, including clause type, modality, and politeness marking; (4) analysis of its context of situation in terms of field, tenor, and mode following Halliday and Hasan (1989); (5) determination of its possibility of refusal using the three-level rubric described above; and (6) interpretation of its communicative function in relation to the surrounding interaction. The findings were then presented descriptively through the distribution of directive types in Table 1, followed by a discussion of the ten selected data organized into four communicative-function groups.

3. Results

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), directive illocutionary acts consist of several directive sub-types that differ according to the speaker's communicative intention. Based on this framework, the present study identified 33 directive illocutionary acts occurring in the dialogues of the movie *Hoppers*. These utterances are classified into nine directive sub-types, namely ask, request, command, order, suggest, warn, urge, advise, and require. The distribution of each directive type is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Directive Illocutionary Acts Found in *Hoppers*

No	Directive Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ask	11	33.3%
2	Request	4	12.1%
3	Command	4	12.1%

No	Directive Type	Frequency	Percentage
4	Order	4	12.1%
5	Suggest	4	12.1%
6	Warn	2	6.1%
7	Urge	2	6.1%
8	Advise	1	3.0%
9	Require	1	3.0%
	Total	33	100%

Table 1 shows that ask is the most frequently occurring directive type, with 11 occurrences (33.3%), followed by request, command, order, and suggest with four occurrences each (12.1%), while warn and urge each occur twice (6.1%) and advise and require occur once each (3.0%). The ask example examined in depth in this study (Data 1) illustrates one instantiation of this category, in which the speaker seeks permission rather than information; the broader pattern across all eleven ask instances is discussed further in the Discussion.

For in-depth analysis, ten representative utterances were selected to illustrate the directive sub-types and communicative functions identified in the data. To facilitate the discussion, these utterances are organized into four communicative-function groups: directives allowing the hearer the possibility of refusal, directives expressing advice and warning, directives expressing urgency, and directives based on power or authority.

3.1 Directives Allowing the Hearer the Possibility of Refusal

Data 1

Scene: 06.15

Directive Sub-type: Ask

Utterance

A: Mabel: "Grandma, can I come here every day?"

B: Grandma: "Anytime you want."

Context

Mabel visits her grandmother's house after school and enjoys spending time with her there. Wishing to visit more often, she politely asks permission rather than assuming she may come every day.

Analysis

The utterance "Grandma, can I come here every day?" is classified as an *ask*, since Mabel uses a question to request permission from her grandmother, seeking permission to visit everyday. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), ask has two distinct uses, namely asking a question and asking someone to do something; here, Mabel uses ask in the sense of asking a question, expecting a response from her grandmother regarding whether she may visit every day. The interrogative form "Can I...?" conveys the request for permission in a way that allows the hearer to accept or refuse it. This is evident from Grandma's response, "Anytime you want," which grants the requested permission.

From the perspective of Halliday and Hasan's (1989) context of situation, the field concerns Mabel's wish to visit her grandmother regularly, while the tenor reflects their close family relationship, shown through the address term "*Grandma*." Although they have a close family relationship, Grandma is still the person who has the authority to grant permission. The mode is realized through spoken conversation, with Mabel using an interrogative clause to elicit a response. This configuration explains why Mabel uses an ask rather than a more forceful directive: she seeks permission without imposing an obligation on her grandmother, leaving the decision to visit entirely to her.

Data 2

Scene: 12.04

Directive Sub-type: Request

Utterance

A: Mabel: "*Doc! I need your help.*"

B: Dr. Sam: "*Uh... I don't go by 'Doc'.*"

Context

After encountering an unexpected situation, Mabel immediately approaches Dr. Sam, believing she is the only person capable of helping her, and directly expresses her need for assistance.

Analysis

The utterance "**Doc! I need your help.**" is classified as a *request*, since Mabel asks for Dr. Sam's help in facing an unexpected situation. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a request is a directive illocutionary act in which the speaker attempts to get the hearer to perform an action, while the decision to comply remains with the hearer. Although the utterance is declarative in form, its illocutionary force is directive because it is intended to obtain assistance from the hearer, making it an indirect request. Since Mabel has no authority over Dr. Sam, the decision to assist rests entirely with her, distinguishing the utterance from an order.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns Mabel's urgent need for help, while the tenor reflects an informal but non-authoritative relationship, shown through the address term "*Doc*," which Dr. Sam rejects in her reply. The mode is realized through direct, face-to-face spoken interaction. This context explains why Mabel expresses her need as a request rather than an order: the urgency prompts her to approach Dr. Sam directly, but her lack of authority over her means she can only state her need and leave her free to respond or refuse.

Data 3

Scene: 20.25

Directive Sub-type: Suggest

Utterance

A: Mabel: "*Oh, wait. Hold up. Dr. Sam, you could save the glade.*"

B: Dr. Sam: "*Uh, what do you mean?*"

Context

After Dr. Sam asks Mabel to put down the robotic beaver, she suddenly realizes it could be used to save the glade and immediately shares the idea with her.

Analysis

The utterance "**Dr. Sam, you could save the glade.**" is classified as a *suggest*, since Mabel proposes a possible solution rather than demanding action. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a suggest is a directive illocutionary act in which the speaker recommends a course of action without obliging the hearer to carry it out. The modal

"could" marks the utterance as a recommendation, leaving Dr. Sam free to accept, question, or dismiss it. Her response, "*What do you mean?*", reflects this freedom to postpone or even reject the proposed action.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns Mabel's sudden realization that the robotic beaver could help save the glade, while the tenor reflects a collaborative relationship in which Mabel introduces a new idea rather than an instruction. The mode is realized through spontaneous spoken interaction marked by the discourse markers "Oh, wait. Hold up." This context explains why Mabel formulates the utterance as a suggest: their relationship is cooperative rather than authoritative in this exchange, so she offers her idea tentatively, leaving Dr. Sam free to evaluate its feasibility.

Data 4

Scene: 20.33

Directive Sub-type: Suggest

Utterance

A: Mabel: "*If you can talk to animals as an animal, you could find a beaver and get it to move back to the glade.*"

B: Dr. Sam: "*Out of the question.*"

Context

After Dr. Sam asks what she means, Mabel explains that the robotic beaver could be used to persuade a real beaver to return to the glade and save its ecosystem.

Analysis

The utterance "**If you can talk to animals as an animal, you could find a beaver and get it to move back to the glade.**" is classified as a *suggest*, since Mabel proposes a specific strategy rather than instructing Dr. Sam to act. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a suggest recommends an action while leaving the decision to the hearer. The conditional structure "*If you can... you could...*" and the modal "*could*" frame the proposal as contingent and optional, and Dr. Sam's blunt refusal, "*Out of the question,*" confirms that the utterance genuinely allowed for rejection.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns Mabel's elaboration of her plan to use the robotic beaver to persuade a real beaver back to the glade, while the tenor reflects the uneven relationship between an enthusiastic student and a more cautious figure who controls whether the plan proceeds. The mode is realized through an extended spoken explanation. This context explains why Mabel maintains the suggest form even while elaborating her plan: she continues to present the idea as an option rather than an obligation, because Dr. Sam is the expert responsible for making the decision.

3.2 Directives Expressing Advice and Warning

Data 5

Scene: 12.20

Directive Sub-type: Warn

Utterance

A: Dr. Sam: "*Look, I understand your passion, I do. But you're failing my class, you're breaking your bones. **This obsession with the glade is ruining your life.***"

B: Mabel: "*But Dr. Sam we're running out of time.*"

Context

After class, Mabel follows Dr. Sam to her office to discuss Jerry's plan to destroy the glade. Dr. Sam worries that Mabel's obsession with the glade is harming her studies and safety.

Analysis

The utterance **"This obsession with the glade is ruining your life."** is classified as a *warn*, since Dr. Sam alerts Mabel to the negative consequences of her behavior. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a warn makes the hearer aware of a possible danger or undesirable consequence to influence future action. Although expressed in a declarative form, the utterance functions as a warning because it highlights the harmful consequences of Mabel's current behavior and is intended to influence her future actions. Mabel's reply, *"But Dr. Sam we're running out of time,"* shows that she acknowledges the warning without accepting its implied advice. This response demonstrates that a warning does not demand immediate compliance; rather, it allows the hearer to recognize the possible consequences while still deciding whether to change their behavior.

From the perspective of Halliday and Hasan's (1989) context of situation, the field concerns Dr. Sam's concern that Mabel's studies and safety are being harmed by her obsession with the glade, while the tenor reflects the relationship between a concerned lecturer and her student, combining institutional authority with personal care, as shown in the concessive opening *"Look, I understand your passion, I do."* The mode is realized through a face-to-face conversation in Dr. Sam's office. This context explains why Dr. Sam produces a warn rather than a command: although Dr. Sam has institutional authority as Mabel's lecturer, she cannot determine Mabel's personal decisions. Therefore, she expresses a warning rather than imposing a command, leaving Mabel to decide whether to change course.

Data 6

Scene: 12.30

Directive Sub-type: Advise

Utterance

A: Dr. Sam: *"My dear, you won't be in college forever. **You need a plan for the future.**"*

B: Mabel: *"Well, what about the glade's future?"*

Context

Continuing the same conversation, Dr. Sam reminds Mabel that she will not be in college forever and needs to plan for her future, but Mabel remains focused on the glade instead.

Analysis

The utterance **"You need a plan for the future."** is classified as an *advise*, since Dr. Sam recommends an action for Mabel's own benefit. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), an advise encourages the hearer to act for the hearer's benefit rather than the speaker's interest. Although the modal expression *"need"* gives the utterance a relatively strong force, its illocutionary purpose is to benefit the hearer rather than to impose an obligation. Mabel's response, *"Well, what about the glade's future?"*, shows that the decision to follow the advice remains hers.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns Dr. Sam's concern about Mabel neglecting her long-term prospects, while the tenor reflects the same lecturer-student relationship combined with personal affection, shown in the address term *"my dear."* which softens the directive and reflects Dr. Sam's personal concern, making the utterance sound supportive rather than authoritative. The mode continues the face-to-face office conversation from Data 5. This context explains why the utterance functions as advice rather than a stronger directive: although Dr. Sam encourages Mabel to think about her future, the final decision remains with Mabel.

3.3 Directives Expressing Urgency

Data 7

Scene: 21.23

Directive Sub-type: Urge

Utterance

A: Dr. Sam: "Mabel, we need to get you out of there now!"

B: Mabel: "Wait! Wait... Oh, nice. Look, Doc, I'm just gonna borrow it to—"

Context

After confirming that Mabel's consciousness is connected to the robotic beaver, Dr. Sam, worried for her safety, urgently tells her to leave it immediately, though Mabel's response is heard only as beaver sounds.

Analysis

The utterance "**Mabel, we need to get you out of there now!**" is classified as an *urge*, since Dr. Sam encourages Mabel to act immediately in a dangerous situation. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), an urge strongly encourages the hearer to act quickly to avoid an undesirable consequence. The expression "*need to*," the time adverb "*now*," and the exclamation mark intensify the urgency, distinguishing it from a milder suggest. Mabel's continued action indicates that, despite the urgency conveyed by the utterance, compliance ultimately remains her choice.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns Dr. Sam's fear for Mabel's safety after realizing her consciousness is connected to the robotic beaver. The tenor reflects a lecturer-student relationship that becomes temporarily more protective because of the immediate danger faced by Mabel. The mode is realized through an urgent spoken exclamation, complicated by the fact that Mabel's response is heard only as beaver sounds. The immediate danger explains why Dr. Sam chooses an urgent directive rather than a milder form such as a suggestion or request. Unlike a command, an urge seeks immediate action but does not remove the hearer's freedom to decide whether to comply.

Data 8

Scene: 25.01

Directive Sub-type: Urge

Utterance

A: Mabel: "Yeah! You're gonna save the glade. We have, like, one day to dam it up and make a pond, so let's go."

B: Loaf: (Remains silent.)

Context

After Loaf responds with confusion, Mabel explains that the glade is in danger because of an upcoming construction project, and urges him to help build a dam immediately, though Loaf remains silent and unmoved.

Analysis

The utterance "**We have, like, one day to dam it up and make a pond, so let's go.**" is classified as an *urge*, since Mabel encourages Loaf to act immediately before it is too late. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), an urge presses the hearer to act quickly because delay may lead to undesirable consequences. The time expression "*one day*" establishes a strict deadline. The inclusive expression "*let's go*" reduces the interpersonal distance between the speaker and the hearer by presenting the action as a shared responsibility rather than an individual obligation. Loaf's silence may be interpreted as a lack of immediate acceptance, indicating that the hearer is not obliged to comply despite the urgency expressed by the speaker.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns the imminent threat to the glade from planned construction, while the tenor reflects Mabel's attempt to enlist Loaf as a collaborator, shown through the inclusive pronouns "we" and "let's." The mode is realized through a direct spoken appeal following Loaf's confused reaction. This context explains why Mabel formulates the utterance as an urge built around inclusive language rather than a command: because Mabel depends on Loaf's voluntary cooperation, she frames the directive as a shared effort instead of imposing it as a command. Although the utterance conveys strong urgency, the use of inclusive language ("we" and "let's") softens the directive and preserves the hearer's freedom to participate voluntarily.

3.4 Directives Based on Power or Authority

Data 9

Scene: 21.30

Directive Sub-type: Command

Utterance

A: Dr. Sam: "Grab her!"

B: Dr. Nisha: (Dr. Nisha immediately tries to catch the robotic beaver.)

Context

Because Dr. Sam cannot understand Mabel's response and sees the robotic beaver moving away, she assumes Mabel is trying to escape with it, and immediately orders Dr. Nisha to catch it before it can leave the laboratory.

Analysis

The utterance "**Grab her!**" is classified as a *command*, since Dr. Sam directly instructs Dr. Nisha to catch Mabel immediately. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), a command is issued by a speaker holding authority who expects immediate compliance. The bare imperative, together with Dr. Sam's institutional authority and the emergency situation, gives the utterance the force of a command, confirmed by Dr. Nisha's immediate attempt to catch the robotic beaver.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns the perceived emergency of the robotic beaver, inside which Mabel's consciousness is believed to be trapped, as it moves to escape the laboratory. The tenor reflects Dr. Sam's institutional authority over Dr. Nisha, while the mode is realized through a short, urgent spoken imperative with no elaboration. The combination of institutional authority and immediate danger makes direct compliance socially expected, thereby justifying the use of a command rather than a less forceful directive.

Data 10

Scene: 22.55

Directive Sub-type: Order

Utterance

A: Owl: "Quiet down, food. My kids need to eat."

B: Mabel: (Screams and struggles to free herself.)

Context

After escaping from Dr. Sam and Dr. Nisha, Mabel gets out of the laboratory while her consciousness remains inside the robotic beaver, but before going far, an owl catches her, mistakes her for prey, and tells her to stop making noise.

Analysis

The utterance "**Quiet down, food. My kids need to eat.**" is classified as an *order*, since the owl directly instructs Mabel to stop making noise. According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), an order is issued by a speaker assuming power over the hearer who

is expected to obey immediately. The imperative "*Quiet down*" carries no mitigation, and the address term "*food*" reduces Mabel to an object rather than an equal participant in the interaction, reinforcing the owl's position of power. Mabel's screaming and struggling show she does not treat the order as optional.

From Halliday and Hasan's (1989) perspective, the field concerns the owl's mistaken belief that Mabel is prey to be fed to its young, while the tenor reflects an extremely asymmetrical relationship that removes any expectation of negotiation. The mode is realized through a brief spoken imperative delivered while the owl carries Mabel through the air. This context explains why the utterance takes the form of an order rather than a milder directive: the owl's assumed total power over Mabel, combined with viewing her as prey, produces a blunt imperative allowing no possibility of refusal.

4. Discussion

The finding that ask is the most frequent directive sub-type in Hoppers, occurring in eleven of the thirty-three identified utterances, is not simply a function of narrative coincidence. Most of the movie's directive exchanges occur between characters who lack clear authority over one another, such as Mabel and her grandmother, or Mabel and Dr. Sam before the plan's more urgent turns. In these situations speakers default to interrogative or modalized forms that request information or permission rather than command action outright.

This pattern echoes findings from *Moana 2* (Putra & Ardiantari, 2025) and *Next Gen* (Putra & Satwika, 2025), where directive choices were similarly reported to favor forms that preserve the hearer's autonomy in peer or near-peer relationships, though it contrasts with studies such as *Frozen II* (Wati et al., 2025) and *Up* (Widianingsih et al., 2025), where a greater proportion of directives were realized through more authoritative forms tied to explicit power differences between characters. The comparatively high proportion of ask in Hoppers therefore appears connected to the story's emphasis on a student protagonist who must persuade rather than command the adults and animals around her. This interpretation is consistent with the ten utterances analyzed in depth, though confirming it fully would require examining the remaining ask instances not included in the qualitative sample.

Throughout the analysis, grammatical form was treated as evidence rather than as the sole determinant of the directive illocutionary act being performed. An interrogative clause such as "*Can I come here every day?*" (Data 1) functions as an ask because Mabel's evident intention, the absence of any authority over her grandmother, and Grandma's cooperative response together support that reading, not because interrogative forms are inherently non-directive. Conversely, a declarative clause such as "*I need your help*" (Data 2) still functions as a directive act despite lacking imperative marking, because Mabel's evident need and Dr. Sam's expected response establish it as a request rather than a mere statement. Classification in this study therefore relied on the convergence of linguistic form, speaker intention, and participant relationship, consistent with the operational distinctions described in the Method, rather than on form alone.

This convergence is especially important for distinguishing directive sub-types that share a similar surface form. Data 9 ("*Grab her!*") and Data 10 ("*Quiet down, food*") are both realized as bare imperatives directed by a more powerful speaker at a less powerful hearer, yet they were classified differently because the underlying relationship differs in kind. Dr. Sam's authority over Dr. Nisha in Data 9 is institutional. Both are colleagues within a professional hierarchy, and Dr. Nisha remains a full participant in the interaction who is expected to comply because of her role, which is the basis for classifying the utterance as a command. The owl's authority over Mabel in Data 10, by contrast, is not institutional at all. It is grounded in an extreme and non-negotiable power imbalance in which Mabel is treated

as prey rather than as an interlocutor, which is the basis for classifying the utterance as an order. The distinction, in other words, does not rest on imperative form, which both utterances share, but on whether the power relation is role-based and negotiable in principle, as in a command, or purely coercive and non-negotiable, as in an order.

Where possible, this study relied on the hearer's actual response as evidence for the possibility of refusal, rather than inferring it solely from linguistic form. Data 4 provides the clearest case: Dr. Sam's blunt refusal, "*Out of the question*," in response to Mabel's suggestion confirms that the utterance genuinely left room for rejection. Data 8 is more ambiguous: Loaf's silence following Mabel's urge may indicate a lack of immediate acceptance, but silence is pragmatically underdetermined and could equally reflect hesitation, processing time, or simple inattention rather than refusal. This study therefore treats Loaf's silence only as suggestive rather than conclusive evidence of constrained possibility, and this caution is maintained wherever a hearer's response does not unambiguously confirm or deny compliance.

Across the ten data, field and tenor play complementary but distinct explanatory roles in shaping possibility of refusal, while mode remains comparatively stable. Field appears to set the broad threshold: the three data with a non-urgent field, Mabel visiting her grandmother (Data 1), proposing an idea (Data 3), and elaborating a plan (Data 4), are consistently coded as open possibility, whereas all data involving an urgent or dangerous field (Data 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) fall into either constrained or minimal possibility. Within this urgent group, however, it is tenor that determines the finer distinction between constrained and minimal or no possibility. Data 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 all involve speakers who lack absolute authority over the hearer, whether because of an informal relationship (Data 2), a caring rather than purely institutional bond (Data 5, 6, 7), or a need for voluntary cooperation (Data 8), and all are coded as constrained. Data 9 and 10, by contrast, involve either institutional authority within a professional hierarchy or an extreme, non-negotiable power imbalance, and both are coded as minimal or no possibility.

Mode, meanwhile, remains largely constant across all ten data, realized through spoken, face-to-face, or exclamatory interaction regardless of authority level, and therefore does not distinguish between refusal levels in this dataset. This relationship can be summarized as follows: field sets the broad likelihood that a directive will be urgent enough to constrain refusal at all, tenor determines how far that constraint extends once urgency is present, and mode shapes the linguistic realization of the directive without independently affecting refusal possibility.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the primary contribution of this study is not merely that nine directive sub-types occur in Hoppers, but that the same general communicative purpose of getting a hearer to act can be realized with markedly different degrees of interpersonal pressure depending on the field, tenor, and mode of the situation in which it occurs. A request and a command may both seek to prompt future action, yet only tenor reveals why one leaves the hearer free to decline while the other does not. This finding reinforces the value of integrating directive classification with context of situation, and it further indicates that possibility of refusal is not a fixed property of a directive sub-type in isolation, but an outcome jointly determined by the sub-type and the situational configuration in which it is produced.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of directive illocutionary acts in *Hoppers* reveals nine directive sub-types produced by the characters: ask, request, command, order, suggest, warn, advise, urge, and require. Ask is the most dominant, occurring eleven times out of thirty-three identified utterances, and this study argues that its dominance reflects the story's emphasis on characters who must persuade rather than command one another.

The ten utterances analyzed in depth show that these directive sub-types can be grouped into four communicative functions: directives allowing the hearer the possibility of refusal, directives expressing advice and warning, directives expressing urgency, and directives based on power or authority. The findings indicate that field and tenor play complementary roles in shaping possibility of refusal: field distinguishes utterances produced in non-urgent situations, which consistently allow open possibility, from those produced under urgency or danger, while tenor further determines whether an urgent directive still leaves the hearer some room to decline or removes that room almost entirely, depending on the power relationship between speaker and hearer.

This study indicates that different directive sub-types carry different degrees of freedom for the hearer, ranging from relatively open forms such as ask and suggest to highly authoritative forms such as command and order, and that this variation is best explained not by grammatical form alone but by the situational configuration in which each utterance occurs. By integrating Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) directive classification with Halliday and Hasan's (1989) field, tenor, and mode, along with the possibility of refusal construct developed in this study, this research contributes a more grounded account of how directive illocutionary acts in *Hoppers* are shaped by context. Future research could extend this framework to other movie genres or media, or examine how possibility of refusal is negotiated across longer conversational sequences rather than single utterances.

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