

**AN ANALYSIS OF DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4 THE MOVIE**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the various forms and strategies of directive speech acts performed by characters in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. The goal of the study is to identify and analyze the different types of directive speech acts in movie dialogues, as well as the speech act strategies used in conversations. Searle's (1979) theory is utilized to categorize directive speech acts, while Cutting and Fordyce's (2021) framework is used to examine speech act strategies. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data from movie dialogues through observation. The data reveal 95 occurrences of directive speech acts, categorized as follows: 26 commands, 8 orders, 18 requests, 34 suggestions, 2 invitations, and 8 prohibitions. In terms of speech act strategies, direct strategies are the most common, accounting for 67 occurrences, while indirect strategies account for 28. The study then focuses on ten data points, with an equal allocation of five for direct and five for indirect strategies. The most common type of directive speech act is suggestion, while the least common is invitation. The research highlights the crucial role of directive speech acts and strategies in facilitating effective communication. The findings contribute to pragmatics by offering insights into the application of speech act theory in a cinematic context, demonstrating how language use in movie dialogues enhances communicative intent and interaction.

Keywords: Directive Speech Acts, Strategies, Pragmatics, John Wick: Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in communication, not only in conveying messages but also in performing actions through speech acts. Speech acts enable speakers to achieve their intended goals, such as requesting, commanding, or persuading, making them essential components of effective communication. Pragmatics, the study of language use in context, examines how meaning is constructed beyond literal interpretations. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) introduced speech act theory, identifying directive speech acts as a category in which speakers attempt to influence listeners' actions. Context plays a vital role in understanding speech acts, as meaning depends on the speaker-listener relationship, setting, and intention (Levinson, 1983). Movies serve as a valuable medium for analyzing speech acts, particularly in dynamic interactions. *John Wick: Chapter 4* (2023) offers rich examples of directive speech acts, reflecting themes of power, loyalty, and survival. The film's dialogues, filled with commands, requests, and persuasive language, highlight how characters assert dominance and navigate relationships through speech acts. Analyzing these speech acts provides insight into pragmatics

in cinematic contexts, illustrating how language constructs and maintains power dynamics. Therefore, this study contributes to the field of pragmatics by exploring the use of directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, demonstrating the practical application of speech act theory in film discourse. This research aims to explore the significance of speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, specifically focusing on directive speech acts. The objectives include identifying the types of directive speech acts present in the movie and analyzing the strategies used in their execution. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to enhance understanding of how directive speech acts function in cinematic discourse. The scope of this research is limited to analyzing directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, focusing on their construction and usage within the film's dialogue. Additionally, this study contributes to the field of pragmatics by providing insights into directive speech acts, offering a theoretical explanation of their role in communication. The researcher hopes that this study will encourage further research on directive speech acts across different media platforms, assisting students and scholars in expanding their knowledge of speech act theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs Searle's (1979) theory to analyze directive speech acts and Cutting and Fordyce's (2021) framework to examine speech act strategies. Directive speech acts are used to influence the listener's actions and include six types: commanding, ordering, requesting, suggesting, inviting, and forbidding.

Commanding involves giving direct instructions without necessarily expecting compliance, while ordering is similar but typically occurs in hierarchical settings, such as the military or workplace. Requesting, on the other hand, is more polite and allows the listener the option to refuse. Suggesting presents an alternative or recommendation rather than a strict directive. Inviting encourages participation in an activity or event, while forbidding explicitly prohibits an action, often with a sense of authority or urgency.

Speech act strategies are categorized into direct and indirect approaches. A direct strategy explicitly conveys the speaker's intention, where the structure of the sentence matches its function, such as in the command, "Get me one." In contrast, an indirect strategy implies meaning beyond the literal words, often using polite or indirect phrasing, such as "Could you get me a tuna and sweet corn one, please?" to indicate a request. While direct strategies ensure clarity and immediacy, indirect strategies allow for subtlety and politeness, often used in contexts where social relationships and politeness conventions influence communication. Understanding these directive speech acts and their strategies provides insight into how language functions as a tool for influence, persuasion, and control in various social contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which is appropriate for analyzing directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research focuses on understanding meanings constructed through social and historical contexts rather than numerical data. This method is descriptive in nature, emphasizing real-world phenomena without experimental manipulation. Since this study examines speech acts through textual analysis rather than statistical measurements, a qualitative approach is suitable for interpreting and describing how directive speech acts are represented in the movie.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study identifies a total of 95 instances of directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. This sub-chapter analyzes 26 selected examples, including 4 cases of commanding, 3 of ordering, 5 of requesting, 7 of suggesting, 2 of inviting, and 5 of forbidding. Additionally, the study examines the strategies used by characters, discussing 5 types of direct strategies from a total of 67 instances and 5 types of indirect strategies from 28 instances.

Types of Directive Speech Acts

According to Searle (1979), directive speech acts are used by speakers to influence their interlocutors toward a desired action, including commands, orders, requests, suggestions, invitations, and prohibitions. This study addresses the first research question by identifying 95 instances of directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. From this total, 26 examples are analyzed in detail, examining how these speech acts are used within the movie.



Figure 1

- Caine : Hello, old friend.
Shimazu : So good of you to visit after all these years. You are with them now?
Caine : No.
Shimazu : Your daughter?
Caine : Mia? Alive. And your daughter Akira?
Shimazu : Well.
Caine : I'm glad. You know...we don't have to end this with blood.
Shimazu : **Then leave.**
Caine : No one defies The Table. I remember once you understood that.
Shimazu : And I remember a time when you understood the meaning of brotherhood.

In this scene from *John Wick: Chapter 4*, a conversation unfolds between two old friends, Shimazu and Caine. Sent by the Marquis to locate John Wick, Caine arrives at the Osaka Continental, where he encounters Shimazu. Caine attempts to resolve the situation peacefully, expressing his intent with the suggestion, “*You know... we don't have to end this with blood.*” However, Shimazu, valuing his brotherhood with John Wick, responds with a direct command, “*Then leave,*” instructing Caine to depart without asserting authority. The utterance is

situational, arising from the immediate context where Shimazu confronts a High Table enforcer who has learned of John Wick's location.

Speech Acts of Ordering

This research identifies a total of eight instances of ordering as a directive speech act in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. However, the study focuses on analyzing three specific utterances that exemplify the concept of ordering based on the theoretical framework of directive speech acts.



Figure 2

The Marquis : **Bring me Caine.**

The scene depicts the Marquis de Gramont ordering his subordinate, Chidi, to bring him Caine, a highly skilled assassin tasked with eliminating John Wick. This directive occurs within an interpersonal context, as the conversation is based on shared background knowledge between the Marquis and Chidi. Holding a position of authority within the High Table, the Marquis issues the order with clear authoritativeness, reinforcing his hierarchical superiority. According to Searle's (1979) theory, ordering as a directive speech act occurs when a speaker in a higher hierarchical position commands an interlocutor to perform a specific action. In this case, the Marquis employs an explicit directive to assert control and ensure that his command is carried out.

Speech Acts of Requesting

This research identifies a total of 18 instances of speech acts of requesting in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. However, the analysis focuses on five selected utterances that align with the theory of directive speech acts in terms of requesting. These examples illustrate how characters employ requests within various contextual interactions, highlighting their pragmatic functions in the film.



Figure 3

The harbinger: The Manager, **please**.

This scene falls under situational context, as it depicts the Harbinger's sudden visit following John Wick's murder of a High Table elder. The Harbinger, a key figure ensuring adherence to the High Table's rules, arrives to enforce consequences. The phrase "The Manager, please." serves as a direct request directed at the hotel's waiter, instructing them to summon the Manager. The inclusion of "please" adds politeness to the request, reinforcing its classification as a directive speech act in the form of a request.

Speech Acts of Suggesting

This research identifies 34 instances of speech acts of suggesting, making it the most dominant type of directive speech act found in *John Wick: Chapter 4*. However, the writer focuses on analyzing seven selected utterances that align with the theory of directive speech acts in terms of suggesting.



Figure 4

The waiter : Today is not the day you will die. Of that, I am sure.

The Manager : You have the unshakeable faith of David, my friend,

but you shouldn't be here. This will not be pleasant.

This scene portrays a conversation between the hotel's manager and a waiter who insists on accompanying him to meet the Marquis for punishment. The manager responds with, "You have the unshakeable faith of David, my friend, but you should not be here. This will not be pleasant." His utterance represents a directive speech act in the form of a suggestion rather than

a command. The use of "should" indicates an implicit suggestion rather than a direct instruction, aligning with an indirect strategy.

According to Searle (1979), suggestions are directive speech acts that encourage the interlocutor to take action. In this case, the manager subtly urges the waiter to reconsider his decision, implying that staying would lead to unpleasant consequences. This reinforces the idea that the manager's utterance serves as a suggestion rather than an order, reflecting his concern for the waiter's well-being.

Speech Acts of Inviting

In this study, the writer discovered that there are just two data points for spoken actions of invitation in total. As a result, the author addresses all of two data sets of utterances addressing the idea of directive speech acts in terms of inviting that based on the research object, namely the movie John Wick Chapter 4.



Figure 5

Chidi : **You, come with me.**

Caine : Think twice before accepting.

The scene takes place in a specific situational context where Mr. Nobody visits the Marquis for a business deal regarding John Wick's excommunicado status. Chidi, acting as the Marquis's representative, invites Mr. Nobody to follow him with the utterance, "You, come with me." The absence of politeness markers and the commanding tone reflect the hierarchical structure of the High Table and the seriousness of the meeting.

Caine's response, "Think twice before accepting," highlights the potential consequences of accepting the invitation, reinforcing the gravity of the situation. This interaction demonstrates how formal protocols within the High Table require careful consideration, making Chidi's statement a directive speech act in the form of an invitation, though it carries institutional authority rather than a casual social request.

Speech Acts of Forbidding

In this study, the author discovered a total of eight data points on prohibiting speech acts. However, in this case, the author only addresses 5 data points of utterances addressing the idea of directive speech acts in terms of forbidding that are based on the research object, namely John Wick Chapter 4 the movie.



Figure 6

Chidi : We speak for The Marquis.

Shimazu : And I speak for Osaka. Your guns, please.

Chidi : **Don't repeat the mistake that fool in New York made.**

Shimazu : Fools talk, cowards are silent, but wise men.. listen.

The scene portrays Chidi and his team arriving at the Osaka Continental lobby to investigate John Wick's whereabouts. When Shimazu requests them to surrender their firearms, Chidi responds with, "Don't repeat the mistake that fool in New York made." This statement serves as a forbidding speech act, warning Shimazu against resisting the High Table's authority, as the New York Continental did before its destruction. The use of "Don't" explicitly prohibits a specific action, reinforcing the situational context of preventing resistance. By referencing the New York incident, Chidi not only issues a warning but also reminds Shimazu of the severe consequences of defying the High Table. Thus, this utterance is classified as a directive speech act in the form of forbidding, as Chidi exercises his authority to discourage opposition.

Speech Acts Strategies

Speech act strategies refer to the methods speakers use to effectively deliver speech acts, categorized into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies convey meaning explicitly, with sentence structures that align conventionally with their intended purpose. In contrast, indirect strategies involve implied meanings, often making speech more polite or subtle. By employing both strategies, speakers can achieve effective communication while maintaining social harmony. This section analyzes 10 instances of speech act strategies, consisting of 5 direct and 5 indirect strategies, which will be further examined in the following sub-sections.

Direct



Figure 7

The Manager: **Evacuate the hotel.**

The phrase “Evacuate the hotel” is a direct command from the manager, conveying a clear and explicit meaning without any implied intention. The situational context of this utterance arises as the manager learns that the hotel has been condemned and is about to be bombed, prompting an immediate response. Acknowledging the urgency, the manager directly instructs the hotel’s waiter to evacuate. This utterance exemplifies a direct strategy, as it explicitly communicates the speaker’s intention without ambiguity, ensuring swift action in response to the impending threat.

Indirect



Figure 8

- Shimazu : Welcome to the Osaka Continental, gentlemen. How may I be of service?
- Chidi : The Table has reason to believe that this facility is providing services... to the one who is *Excommunicado*.
- Shimazu : That is a grave accusation.
- Chidi : We will require full access to your hotel.
- Shimazu : Of course. But as you are well aware, no business, not even your kind of business, may be conducted on Continental grounds. **So, I ask you to surrender your firearms.**
- Chidi : We speak for the Marquis.
- Shimazu : And I speak for Osaka. **Your guns... please.**

Shimazu employs indirect strategies in his speech acts to maintain diplomacy while enforcing Continental rules. Instead of issuing direct commands, he frames his demands as polite requests, as seen in “So, I ask you to surrender your firearms” and “Your guns, please.” These statements subtly imply a non-negotiable requirement rather than an explicit order, aiming to prevent conflict and maintain control. Additionally, his earlier remark, “That is a grave accusation,” indirectly expresses skepticism without directly challenging authority. This indirect approach allows Shimazu to uphold Continental regulations while preserving a sense of formality and restraint.

The research findings reveal a total of 95 directive speech acts in John Wick: Chapter 4, with a focused analysis on 26 data points, categorized into commanding, ordering, requesting, suggesting, inviting, and forbidding. The study highlights how directive speech acts reflect the power dynamics within the film’s criminal underworld. Ordering is primarily used by authoritative figures like the Marquis, while commanding does not necessarily imply hierarchical authority. Requests often involve politeness markers to maintain diplomacy,

whereas suggestions are employed to influence others subtly. Invitations are the least frequent and serve formal or ceremonial functions, while forbidding acts appear in emotionally charged situations to prevent severe consequences. The analysis of speech act strategies further reveals that direct strategies are used in urgent or authoritative contexts, while indirect strategies help maintain diplomacy and relationships. The study emphasizes how these communication strategies not only serve basic interactional purposes but also reinforce the power structures, relationships, and formal protocols within the film's world, where mastering both explicit and implicit communication is essential for survival.

CONCLUSION

The study identifies 95 instances of directive speech acts in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, analyzed using Searle's (1979) framework for directive speech acts and Cutting & Fordyce's (2021) framework for speech act strategies. The findings reveal that suggesting is the most dominant category (34 instances), while inviting is the least frequent (2 instances). Among speech act strategies, direct strategies (67 instances) are more prevalent than indirect strategies (28 instances). The research contributes to understanding how directive acts are conveyed in movie dialogues. Future researchers may build on this study by exploring related linguistic aspects, such as politeness strategies, language styles, and implicatures in cinematic conversations.

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