Illocutionary Speech Acts of Articulating Commands in the Movie "Marvels": An analysis of Linguistics Principles

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Abstract

Speech acts play a crucial role in human communication, allowing individuals to perform actions through language. The application of speech act is crucial especially in communication because it is an action of communication. Therefore, this study investigates the various forms of illocutionary acts, with a particular emphasis on directive speech acts, as presented in the film "The Marvels" from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This study uses qualitative methodology to deeply analyze the use of directive speech acts in The Marvels. This qualitative approach is appropriate because it emphasizes a detailed examination of the dialogue, context, and pragmatic functions of language in the narrative. By focusing on the meaning and purpose behind the directive speech acts used by the main characters, this study aims to uncover patterns, relationships, and insights that cannot be easily measured. Utilizing Searle's theory of speech acts, Grice's conversational implicature theory, and the situational context framework proposed by Halliday and Hasan, the research explores the way the characters' dialogues are shaped by these linguistic principles. The analysis focuses on how the context of the dialogue influences the illocutionary force of the characters' interactions, revealing the intricate ways in which meaning is conveyed. The findings highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding communication in film, showing that the study of language within specific contexts can enhance people's appreciation of character interactions and narrative development. This research contributes to the broader field of linguistic analysis in literature and offers valuable insights for students and scholars.

Keywords: Speech acts; Illocutionary Acts; Conversational Implicature; Contextual Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Speech acts are crucial to human communication because they let people utilize words to carry out actions. Speech acts include illocutionary acts, which are crucial since they directly relate to the speaker's goals and the desired effects on the listener. The type of speech act shown corresponds to the type of attitude being expressed (Batubara et al., 2020). This conception states that a command is a particular kind of illocutionary act with the power to instruct the listener on what to do (Searle, 1976). An illocutionary act influences communication in the form of conversation with a specific intended meaning for the listener (Putri et al., 2024). The illocutionary speech acts that express commands, as seen in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) movie "The Marvels," are explored in this study, along with their function in the narrative and character interactions. "The Marvels," like many other films in the MCU, is not only a visual spectacle but also a rich tapestry of verbal interactions that drive the story forward. The characters in the film often

find themselves in high-stakes situations that necessitate clear and effective communication, particularly through commands that assert power, authority, and urgency. Understanding how these commands are articulated within the dialogue provides deeper insights into the film's narrative strategies and the linguistic mechanisms that underpin them.

This study is based on John Searle's theory of speech acts, where he grouped speech acts by the intention of a speaker that it will be impacted as well as conventional forces that are related to the utterance. Searle (1969) as cited in Dezas Perdani (2023) has added and improved Austin's theory in illocutionary speech acts by dividing illocutionary speech acts into five kinds: representative, directive, expressive, declarative, and commissive. The directive speech act can be the most frequently used in human life, the directive speech act is the kind of speech act utilized by the speakers to speak and address the intended meaning in the form of commands or orders, requests, and suggestions(Adnjani CH et al., 2023). Commands—so-called because they are a directive illocutionary act—are especially intriguing in this way, since by definition they elicit a response from the hearer and frequently paint an interesting picture of the power dynamics at play. This research also utilizes Grice's theory of conversational implicature and Halliday and Hasan's theory of situational context to investigate the way Context changes the illocutionary force (ILF) of commands in film.

This research concentrates on the area that helps to understand more the functioning of language i.e. "how" it helps/ works in "The Marvels." This helps better within the field of linguistic analysis of films as well as how language is purposefully used in films. Determining where, when, and why constructs (such as speech acts) fit into the broader scope of the (MCU) and the characters' roles. (Kurnia Utami & Sudana, 2018a). Understanding how these commands are articulated within the dialogue provides deeper insights into the film's narrative strategies and the linguistic mechanisms that underpin them.

The Theory of Speech Act proposed by (Searle, 1976), which represents the focal point of this analysis, divides speech actions into several categories, depending on how the speaker wants what is said to be understood and how he/she motivates the utterance. Commands represent an important class of directives as illocutionary acts since they elicit in audiences a response that often unveils the power dynamics between the central figures of the dialogue. This research also applies Grice's theory of conversational implicature, and Halliday and Hasan's notion of situation, in order to investigate how the illocutionary force of direction in a dialogue context in the film may be affected by the inclusion of additional material.

Speech acts play a crucial role in human communication, allowing individuals to perform actions through language. The application of speech act is crucial especially in communication because it is an action of communication (Duha, 2023). Among the various types of speech acts, illocutionary acts are particularly significant because they directly relate to the speaker's intention and the effect they seek to achieve in the listener. (Koller & Searle, 1970). The Illocutionary Speech Act especially the Directive Speech Act is occurs when the speaker undertakes to give or communicate the intended meaning to the listener in order to make the listener carry out the action from the intended meaning that the speaker tries to communicate(Situmorang & Handayani, 2020)

Based on the theory of speech acts developed by John Searle, which divides speech acts according to the intention of the speaker and the conventional force embodied in the utterance. This explains why commands as a type of directive illocutionary act place an audience in reaction and often expose the power relations among the characters being portrayed. The theory of conversational implicature by (Grice, 2019) and the theory of

situational context by Halliday and Hasan are also consulted in this study to seek the contextual factors that may modify the force of directives in the film. Previous studies have analyzed illocutionary acts in various contexts, including political speeches, everyday conversations, and films. Several previous studies focusing on the analysis of Illocutionary Speech acts in Movie or Films in various genres such as adventure, comedy, romance, kids, and mystery etcetc (Ayu Mas Wiliastini et al., 2021; Kurnia Utami & Sudana, 2018b; Nanda Putri et al., 2022; Oktaviani et al., 2021; Rama Jayantha et al., 2022; Tarigan et al., 2022) . it can be concluded that the application of the Speech Act especially the Directive Speech Act always occurred in everyday life(Maharani & Sari, 2023).

This study examines how directive illocutionary acts manifest in "The Marvels", by examining their role in facilitating teamwork and advancing narrative goals. This study aims to identify and categorize directives, analyze their adaptation to situational and relational dynamics, and explore their role in overcoming the unique challenges of power exchange among the main characters by exploring how characters, in "The Marvel" command in situations when they are preparing to unleash their superpowers in confrontational moments against each other. The instances highlighted here are drawn from "The Marvel". This study is important for understanding how language promotes coordination in high-stakes team-based scenarios and contributes to the field of pragmatics by analyzing the interplay of verbal and nonverbal communication in a cinematic context. Not only that besides textbooks, Movie can be utilized as effective learning tools to improve student`s vocabulary and improve the learning process(Sukmawati, 2022). That is made this study can contribute to the students and scholars.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is particularly well-suited for exploring the research topics related to directive illocutionary acts in the film *The Marvels*. Qualitative research is effective in capturing the complexity of communication within specific social and cultural contexts, as it allows for a deep, nuanced understanding of verbal and nonverbal interactions. In this study, the focus is on the analysis of directive illocutionary acts, such as commands, requests, and suggestions, which play a significant role in the film's narrative. These acts are examined within specific scenes that are critical to the plot, such as those involving teamwork, conflict resolution, and high-stakes situations. A qualitative approach allows for a detailed exploration of how these directive acts are used to advance the story and develop characters, particularly in moments of emotional intensity or urgency, where communication becomes pivotal.

The research adopts a contextual analysis framework, incorporating illocutionary theory and conversation analysis to investigate the dynamics of speech acts. By focusing on the roles of the speaker and listener, as well as factors such as urgency, power relations, and accompanying nonverbal cues, this study aims to understand how communication functions beyond mere linguistic content. The qualitative design is particularly effective in capturing these subtleties, as it enables the researcher to examine not only the content of the utterances but also the situational context in which they occur. This context includes both the social environment and the characters' individual experiences, which influence their communicative choices. Through this lens, the study can uncover the implicit meanings conveyed by the characters' directive illocutionary acts and explore how these acts contribute to the development of relationships and narrative outcomes in *The Marvels*.

Research Object

The research object of this study is the verbal and nonverbal directive illocutionary acts present in the film The Marvels. Directive illocutionary acts, such as commands, requests, and suggestions, are central to the analysis. The study focuses on moments in the film that are critical to the narrative, particularly those involving the three main characters, each with their own unique cultural and social context. These sequences are essential to understanding character development and the application of directives in varying situations.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was conducted through the analysis of the official script of The Marvels and the observation of selected film scenes. Specific attention was given to scenes involving teamwork, conflict resolution, or emergencies, where directive illocutionary acts are prominently featured. The data were captured through orthographic transcription of the film's dialogues, systematically documenting and coding utterances according to thematic categories (e.g., "commands for coordination" and "requests for clarification"). Triangulation was used to validate the findings by cross-checking data from the script, film scenes, and related literature, ensuring the reliability and robustness of the analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of directive illocutionary acts in *The Marvels* was systematically structured following Kreidler's (2002) framework for classifying illocutionary acts. This framework was used to categorize the various forms of directives, such as commands, requests, and suggestions, and to examine their situational contexts within the narrative. The first step in the analysis involved selecting the relevant data from the film, which focused on scenes involving key moments of conflict, high-stakes action, or teamwork—scenes that are rich in directive illocutionary acts. These scenes were carefully chosen because they represent pivotal moments in the film where communication plays a crucial role in advancing the plot and character development. Once the data were selected, the next step involved displaying the data through systematic transcription and categorization of the dialogue and nonverbal cues. This step allowed for an organized presentation of the data, making it easier to identify patterns and relationships in the use of directive illocutionary acts. Each utterance was coded according to thematic categories, such as "commands for coordination," "requests for clarification," or "suggestions for problem-solving," ensuring that the analysis remained structured and focused on the key research questions.

Following the data selection and display, the final step in the qualitative analysis was drawing conclusions based on the observed patterns in the data. The study utilized Grice's (2019) theory of conversational implicature and Halliday and Hasan's (2014) theory of situational context to interpret how directive illocutionary acts operate within the broader social and cultural contexts of the characters. This interpretive approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how the characters' use of directives is influenced by factors such as their relationships with other characters, the urgency of the situation, and the cultural or social dynamics in play. By drawing on these theoretical frameworks, the analysis aimed to uncover the underlying meanings and functions of directive illocutionary acts, shedding light on their role in shaping the characters' behavior, communication, and interactions. Ultimately, this process of coding, displaying, and interpreting the data enabled the researcher to make informed conclusions about the narrative significance of directive acts and their impact on the film's character development and thematic exploration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part explain the research result and discuss the research based on the data collected from the data source, "The Marvels" movie, and discuss the illocutionary speech acts of articulating commands from three main characters. In The Marvels movie analysis of the command speech acts used by Captain Marvel (Carol Danvers) Kamala Khan (Ms.Marvel) and Monica Rambeau is discussed in detail to showcase how each character demonstrates their powers and influence through their speech interaction.

Table 1. The Types of Directive Speech Acts in Movie Based on Three Main Characters

Character	Total Directive Acts	Types of Directive Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Percentage	Explanation
Captain Marvel	45	Request	15	33%	Requests for action or reaction, often related to combat or coordination.
		Command	25	56%	Direct, authoritative instructions for immediate actions, especially in combat situations.
		Suggestion	5	11%	Offers options for team actions, typically in less critical situations.
Monica Rambeu	35	Request	12	34%	Requests for cooperation, communication, or clarification from teammates.
		Command	20	57%	Provides authoritative commands but with a collaborative tone.
		Suggestion	3	9%	Makes suggestions for team coordination and tactical moves.
Kamala Khan	32	Request	18	56%	Seeks clarification or confirmation from teammates, reflecting her subordinate role.
		Command	8	25%	Less frequent but still issues commands, often as part of a team effort, usually not as authoritative as others.
		Suggestion	6	19%	Makes suggestions or offers help, showcasing eagerness and enthusiasm.
Total	112		100%	100%	

Based on Table 1, directive illocutionary acts are distributed among the three main characters with distinct patterns. Captain Marvel uses a total of 45 directive acts, with the majority being commands (56%), followed by requests (33%) and a smaller proportion of suggestions (11%). This reflects her authoritative role, where she leads the team with decisive instructions, emphasizing goal-oriented actions. Monica Rambeau, with 35 directive acts, shows a balance between commands (57%) and requests (34%), demonstrating her dual role as both a leader and collaborator. Her occasional use of suggestions (9%) highlights her tactical and flexible approach to teamwork. Kamala Khan, who contributes 32 directive acts, uses requests (56%) most frequently, reflecting her position as a learner in the team, seeking clarification or confirmation.

She also issues commands (25%) and suggestions (19%), demonstrating her evolving participation and eagerness to contribute. These findings align with the characters' roles in the narrative, with Captain Marvel taking the lead, Monica balancing authority and collaboration, and Kamala learning through interaction. The distribution of directive types—requests, commands, and suggestions—illustrates the power dynamics and communication strategies within the team, highlighting the need for precise coordination and effective teamwork in high-stakes situations.

In "The Marvels", the use of directive illocutionary acts requests, commands, and suggestions reflects the characters' roles, the dynamic of their teamwork, and the high-stakes situations they face. Below is a detailed explanation of the context surrounding the use of these directives.

Data 1

Captain Marvel Talk with Monica Rambeu
Setting : Aladna (Alien Planet)

Captain Marvel: "Monica, take me in 1...2...3..."

Monica Rambeu: ....

(They switched positions because they employed their powers together.)

In *The Marvels*, the use of illocutionary speech acts during the characters' confrontation with Dar-Ben on Aladna offers a compelling example of how language can transcend the mere conveyance of information and act as a powerful tool to prompt a specific response in a high-stakes situation. In this context, Captain Marvel's command—"1...2...3..."—functions as a directive illocutionary act, where the speaker's utterance is not simply providing information but is designed to elicit a precise, coordinated reaction from her team. This speech act is a command that requires the recipients to not only understand the directive but to act upon it in real-time, with urgency and synchronization. The command is not ambiguous; it's a call to action that sets the stage for the team to respond immediately as a unified force. By counting out loud, Captain Marvel is not merely counting numbers but creating a shared mental framework that aligns the actions of the team, providing structure to the chaos of battle. This strategic use of counting serves as an essential linguistic tool that breaks down the complexity of the situation (Mariani, Susilawati, & Salam, 2023), making it easier for each character to process and respond to the command in perfect synchronization.

Moreover, this particular illocutionary act highlights the importance of context and timing in directive speech acts. The urgency of the situation on Aladna amplifies the impact of Captain Marvel's command. In a chaotic, life-or-death battle, where each second counts, the command to act in unison becomes more than just a simple instruction—it is a critical moment of coordination. The simplicity of the phrase "1...2...3..." belies its profound function: it acts as both a verbal cue and a psychological trigger that helps the team members anticipate and respond in a split second, minimizing room for error. In this way, the command is not merely linguistic but also performative, as it constructs the necessary conditions for the characters to act together as a single unit (Insyra & Supri, 2024; Latuapo & Sahayu, 2024). By utilizing such a directive illocutionary act, Captain Marvel is not just directing the flow of the battle, but also reinforcing the cohesion of the team, ensuring that their actions are interdependent and synchronized (Maghfiroh & Ratih, 2023). The act of counting, therefore, is more than a method for giving

instructions—it is a key component in building the momentum and shared focus required to overcome the formidable threat posed by Dar-Ben. Through this, the narrative demonstrates how illocutionary acts, particularly commands, are indispensable in high-pressure environments where the need for coordinated action outweighs individual decision-making.

This immediate demand is an example of the rapidity that goes into high-stakes decision-making. Captain Marvel edges, where she is at the top of the hierarchy and teamwork is important by boiling down her commands. How successfully their actions must synchronize and blur against Dar-Ben is crucial, if they don't succeed, the entire root of why well-combined plans serve even such dangerous situations as this one will be thrown on stage.

Data 2

Setting: Skrull Planet

Captain Marvel : Get back to the ship, and don't use the powers

Kamala Khan : But I can help! I want to fight!

Captain Marvel leads it off by calling out Kamala Khan and telling her to "embiggen" (a power that lets Kamala make parts of her body grow larger). The command is straightforward and efficient, suggesting an immediacy ("now") with a minimum of detail (but short"). Captain Marvel realizes that the reversing of places is something that has to be tamed; it should not work randomly. Her competency as a tasking commanding leader in high-stress situations.

Data 3

Setting : The Spaceship while conflict

Captain Marvel: "Kamala, use your embiggen ability now, but keep it short. We need to control the swap!"

Kamala Khan: "Got it! I'll hold them off for a few seconds—Monica, be ready to absorb the energy when I switch!"

Monica Rambeau: "On it! As soon as you swap, I'll channel the energy towards Carol. Carol, you hit them with a photon blast right after!"

Captain Marvel: "Perfect! Let's do this!"

In *The Marvels*, the power-swapping phenomenon is a pivotal element that shapes the characters' ability to combat their adversaries. The scene where Captain Marvel instructs Kamala Khan to "magnify" her power exemplifies how illocutionary speech acts must be controlled strategically to ensure coordinated action in a high-pressure scenario (Gibbon, 2017). Captain Marvel's directive is not just a simple command; it is an essential component in harnessing the dynamic interplay of their powers. By issuing this concise and direct instruction, Captain Marvel not only demonstrates her leadership but also acknowledges the necessity of using the power-swapping ability with precision. This speech act reflects her deep understanding of the situation (Gibbon, 2017; Dawson, 2016), where every action must be deliberate and calculated to ensure the team operates as a

cohesive unit. The use of "magnify" as a directive is also a clear example of how illocutionary acts function beyond merely providing information—this command is a performance that prompts an immediate, responsive action (Pembecioglu & Yilmazkol, 2024). Kamala Khan, in turn, acknowledges the command with confidence, demonstrating her growing sense of authority and her increasing mastery over her powers. Her acknowledgment and subsequent instruction to Monica—directing her to absorb energy—indicates not just obedience, but a shift in her role from a passive participant to an active strategist within the team. This exchange showcases a transformation in Kamala's character, from someone who initially relied on others' leadership to someone who now understands the importance of her own decisions in the heat of battle.

The strategic use of illocutionary speech acts continues as Kamala issues her command to Monica, instructing her to temporarily fend off the villains while absorbing energy. Kamala's directive reflects her tactical awareness, signaling that she is not just reacting to the situation, but actively planning and directing the flow of the battle. This strategic communication becomes crucial in the context of the power-swapping phenomenon, where control over the team's abilities is vital to their success (Gibbon, 2017; Dawson, 2016). Monica, taking up the mantle of leadership, immediately issues her command: "Attack!" Her instruction serves as a rallying cry for the team, organizing their next steps with clarity and purpose. This further illustrates the role of illocutionary acts in structuring action under pressure. Monica's directive highlights her readiness to assume responsibility in the moment, while also reinforcing the importance of collaboration and coordination in utilizing their powers effectively.

Captain Marvel's final affirmation—"Perfect! Let's do this!"—not only confirms the plan but also serves as a motivational statement that encourages the team to execute the plan with full commitment. Her response is a strategic affirmation of both the plan and her leadership, reinforcing the unity of the group and their readiness to confront the challenge together. In this way, the illocutionary speech acts exchanged between the characters are not just isolated commands but form a network of directed actions that ensure the strategic management of their powers, demonstrating how communication in high-stakes situations can drive success through clear, coordinated leadership (Gibbon, 2017; Dawson, 2016). The entire interaction reflects how illocutionary acts, when employed with precision, become a key component of both tactical decision-making and the dynamic relationships within a team.

Data 4

Setting : Captain Marvel Spaceship
Monica Rambeau: "Okay, we know the switching happens when we use our powers simultaneously. Carol, you start with a low-energy photon burst."

Captain Marvel: "Right. Kamala, once you feel the swap happening, go for a quick teleportation dodge. That should confuse them long enough for me to get behind their defenses."

Kamala Khan: "Understood! And Monica, when I switch places with you, use your energy form to phase through their attacks and disrupt their systems."
Monica Rambeau: "Exactly. We'll keep the cycle going until they can't keep up."

In this exchange, Monica Rambeau takes the lead by explaining the necessity of the power-swapping mechanism and gives Captain Marvel a specific order to use a "low-energy photon burst," reflecting her strategic thinking. Captain Marvel then provides a detailed directive to Kamala Khan, instructing her to evade using teleportation, which

would confuse the enemies and give Captain Marvel the tactical advantage. Kamala, confirming her understanding, gives Monica her order to phase through attacks and disrupt enemy systems, showcasing her growing leadership and teamwork skills. Monica reinforces the plan with a final directive, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the cycle of coordinated attacks to overwhelm the enemies, solidifying her role as the tactical coordinator of the group. This exchange demonstrates the characters' ability to adapt and communicate clearly under pressure, each contributing to the team's success with precise and strategic directives.

Data 5

Setting : Dar-Ben Spaceship

Kamala Khan: "Guys, I'm about to be overwhelmed! Monica, take over!"

Monica Rambeau: "Switching now! Carol, get ready to go full power when I'm out!"

Captain Marvel: "I'm ready! Kamala, once you switch back, drop that energy shield immediately so I can blast through."

Kamala Khan: "Shield's up for now—switching in 3…2…1!"

Captain Marvel: "Photon blast—now!"

In this scene from "The Marvels", Captain Marvel, Monica Rambeau, and Kamala Khan demonstrate effective coordination of their powers to gain the upper hand in a crucial battle. Each character issues direct commands to the others, adapting to the changing situation on the battlefield. Kamala, in a moment of urgency, commands Monica to "take over," signaling a shift in responsibility due to the overwhelming situation. Monica then orders Captain Marvel to "deploy full force" when she emerges, ensuring timely synchronization of their actions. Captain Marvel gives Kamala a precise directive to "drop the energy shield immediately," emphasizing the critical timing required for her photon blast. Kamala, in turn, prepares the team with a countdown to ensure they are aligned for the transition. Captain Marvel's final command, "Photon blast—now!" seals the coordinated effort, underscoring the importance of precise timing and clear communication. This dialogue highlights how directive illocutionary acts, through clear and strategic speech, drive the plot and character development, showcasing the significance of effective communication in executing complex, high-stakes actions.

CONCLUSION

This study examines directive speech acts in the film The Marvels, focusing on how commands are given and how they affect character interactions and story development. The study uses Searle's speech act theory, Grice's conversational implicature, and Halliday and Hasan's situational context framework to show how the film's heroes use commands to solve problems and navigate dangerous situations. The findings reveal that commands from Monica Rambeau, Kamala Khan, and Captain Marvel are central to the development of the plot and characters. The emphasis on Captain Marvel's commands is often on her role as a leader, which involves giving firm and decisive commands to control the team's power dynamics and ensure the success of the mission. Although Kamala Khan's experience is still relatively limited, her directives demonstrate her growing influence within the team, as well as her growing confidence and strategic thinking. The

commands given by Monica Rambeau demonstrate her tactical acumen and ability to remain calm under pressure, emphasizing her role as a unifying factor in the group. These results highlight the importance of precise and contextually aware communication in creating an action-oriented story. In addition to advancing the plot, this study shows how directed illocutionary acts reflect character relationships and growth, furthering our knowledge of film narrative tactics. Future research could expand on this study by exploring how similar linguistic frameworks apply to other genres or by analyzing the impact of illocutionary acts in different cinematic contexts. Additionally, comparative research involving superhero films or other TV series could offer further insight into how directive speech acts function across narrative structures.

RECOMMENDATION

The next phase of the research will focus on analyzing the impact of directive illocutionary acts in high-pressure, action-driven scenarios across multiple genres, particularly within the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). This will involve comparing how directive speech acts function in different narrative tones, such as action films and superhero films, and examining the interplay between verbal and nonverbal communication in high-stakes situations. A detailed analysis of dialogues from multiple MCU films will be conducted, focusing on direct commands, requests, and suggestions, while also exploring the role of character development and authority in shaping these directives. Potential barriers to this research include challenges related to language and cultural differences, the subjectivity of interpreting nonverbal cues, the complexity of multimodal communication, and the evolving nature of character dynamics in the MCU. To address these issues, careful methodological planning will be needed, including establishing clear criteria for interpreting nonverbal communication and ensuring consistency in scene selection and analysis across genres.

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