
DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN KUGANE MARUYAMA'S ENGLISH NOVEL OVERLORD VOLUME 16: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This study investigates directive speech acts in Kugane Maruyama's English novel *Overlord Volume 16*, addressing the gap in pragmatic analyses of hierarchical fantasy literature. Using a qualitative descriptive method and Searle's (1979) speech act theory, data were collected from 151 directive utterances in dialogues within the first 100 pages. Findings reveal five dominant types: commanding (48 utterances, 31.79%), requesting (36, 23.84%), advising (30, 19.87%), suggesting (25, 16.56%), and prohibiting (10, 6.62%), with two permissions (1.32%). Commanding prevails due to the novel's hierarchical structure. Pragmatic functions include asserting authority, mitigating imposition via politeness, fostering cooperation, and negotiating power, influenced by social ranks and contexts. This research highlights how directives in fantasy fiction mirror real-world pragmatics, contributing to literary linguistics by linking language to social dynamics

Keywords: *directive speech acts, pragmatics, Overlord, Searle, hierarchy.*

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a tool for performing actions, conveying intentions, and shaping relationships through speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979). Directive speech acts, which aim to prompt actions from hearers, are particularly revealing of power dynamics, politeness, and social hierarchies. In literature, especially fantasy genres like *Overlord Volume 16* by Kugane Maruyama, directives drive character interactions in a world of political power, loyalty, and military command. The novel's English translation adapts Japanese hierarchical expressions, offering insights into cross-cultural pragmatics. Previous studies on directives focus on films like *Harry Potter* (Rahmawati, 2021), emphasizing egalitarian or educational contexts. However, analyses of fantasy literature with complex hierarchies, such as *Overlord*, are scarce despite its rich portrayal of authority and obedience. This gap is significant: *Overlord Volume 16* features interactions where directives encode power and social order, underrepresented in pragmatic literary studies. This research addresses it by examining directives in the novel, contributing to understanding how language constructs hierarchy in fantasy narratives.

Therefore, the objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the types of directive speech acts found in *Overlord* Volume 16.
2. To describe and explain the pragmatic functions in context

This study contributes to the field of pragmatics and literary linguistics by showing how directive speech acts function as pragmatic strategies that embody power relations, politeness, and social structure in literary discourse. It also provides insight into how fantasy fiction mirrors real-world linguistic behaviors through the interaction of authority and obedience expressed in language.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Speech act theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1979), posits that utterances have illocutionary force beyond literal meaning. Directives, per Searle, attempt to get hearers to act, including commands, requests, suggestions, advice, and prohibitions. Their force varies with context, hierarchy, and politeness (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In fiction, directives mirror real communication (Levinson, 1983), revealing interpersonal dynamics. This framework guides classification and functional analysis, integrating politeness theory for mitigated vs. non-mitigated forms.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This qualitative descriptive study adopts a pragmatic approach (Creswell, 2013) to interpret directive speech acts without quantification beyond frequency counts for transparency.

2. Data Source

Data comprise 151 directive utterances from dialogues in the first 100 pages of *Overlord* Volume 16 (English edition), selected for its hierarchical interactions.

3. Unit of Analysis

The unit is the utterance (sentence or clause) expressing directive intent, identified via illocutionary force in conversational turns.

4. Data Collection Technique

Documentation Involved:

- Reading and identifying directive utterances;
- Classifying each utterance based on type (command, request, suggestion, advice, or prohibition);
- Describing the situational context surrounding the utterance.

5. Data Analysis Technique

The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative model:

- **Data reduction** – selecting and organizing relevant utterances;
- **Data display** – categorizing utterances based on directive type and social context;
- **Conclusion drawing** – interpreting the meaning and function of each directive act.

Operational Step:

- a) Identification: Scan for verbs/imperatives implying action (e.g., “go” as command).

- b) Categorization: Classify as command (direct imperative), request (mitigated preference), etc., per Searle.
- c) Function derivation: Analyze via context, using Brown & Levinson (1987) for politeness and hierarchy. Trustworthiness ensured through triangulation (theory cross-check with Yule, 1996), peer debriefing, and audit trail of coding.

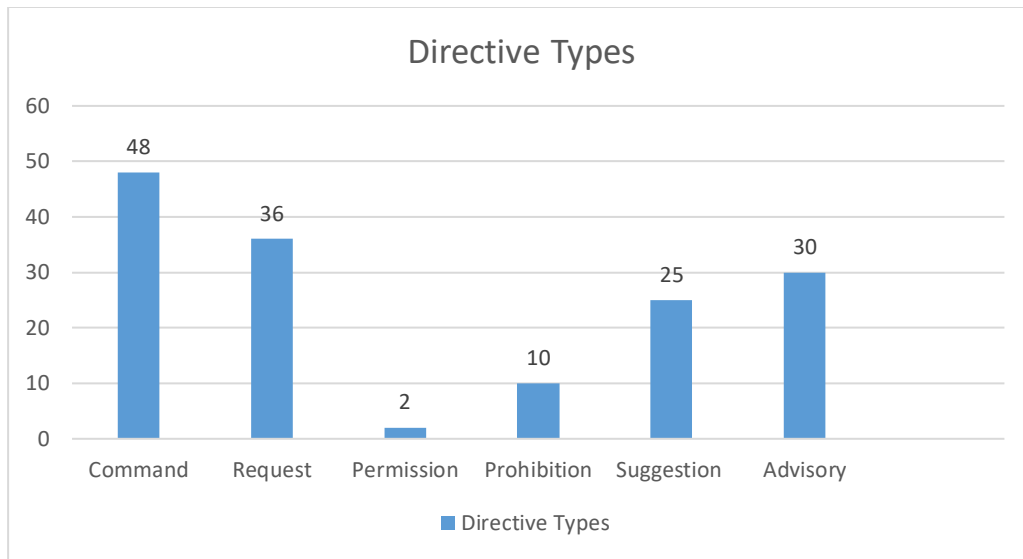
Example analysis Table:

Utterance	Type	Context	Pragmatic Function
“Kids, go on out and play”	Command	Ainz to subordinates Aura/Mare; resolves hesitation by reassigning task.	Asserts authority while mitigating with care, fostering compliance and harmony
“I don’t recommend it”	Advisory	Ainz to Blueberry; softens prohibition with rationale.	Guides behavior indirectly, preserving face via benevolence.

The analysis used Searle’s (1979) classification of directive speech acts to determine both form and intent, supported by Yule (1996) for pragmatic interpretation. Contextual meaning was analyzed through examining the relationship between speaker and hearer, social status, and conversational goals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings



Social Roles Table (Speaker Ranks):

Rank	Command	Request	Advisories	Suggestions	Prohibitions	Permissions
High (e.g., Ainz)	35	10	15	8	5	1
Mid (e.g., Elves)	10	20	10	12	3	1
Low (e.g., Subordinates)	3	6	5	5	2	0

- Commanding: Dominant in high-rank speakers, using direct imperatives for authority.
- Requesting: Common in mid/low ranks, mitigated for politeness.
- Advising/Suggesting: Balanced, often indirect to negotiate power.
- Prohibiting/Permitting: Rare, tied to restrictions or approvals in hierarchies.

B. Discussions

This section analyzes patterns across the 151 directives, focusing on linguistic forms, mitigation levels, and functions per Brown & Levinson (1987). All data were examined, with representative examples discussed.

Linguistic Patterns:

- Syntactic Structures: 60% imperatives (commands), 25% declaratives (requests/advisories), 15% conditionals (prohibitions/suggestions).
- Direct vs. Indirect: 55% direct (high-rank commands), 45% indirect (mitigated for politeness in lower ranks).
- Mitigation: Non-mitigated (e.g., imperatives) in authority contexts; mitigated (e.g., "I'd rather") in cooperative ones.

Authority-Based Commands:

Commands (48 instances) assert dominance, e.g., "Kids, go on out and play" (Ainz to Aura/Mare). Function: Reinforces hierarchy while mitigating via humor, aligning with Leech (1983) for harmony in asymmetrical relations. Pattern: High-rank speakers use 73% of commands, blending with supportive moves (Fatma et al., 2020).

Mitigated Requests:

Requests (36) employ indirectness, e.g., "For now, I'd rather join the children in their lodgings" (Ainz). Function: Secures cooperation via negative politeness, preserving hearer autonomy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Pattern: Mid/low ranks favor modals ("would," "could") to reduce imposition, common in hierarchical negotiations (Khairina, 2020).

Advisory Politeness Strategies:

Advisories (30) guide via softened forms, e.g., "I don't recommend it" (Ainz to Blueberry). Function: Reframes authority as benevolence, minimizing face threats. Pattern: Integrated with rationales in 70% cases, enhancing persuasion (Husnan et al., 2021).

Prohibitions and Suggestions:

Prohibitions (10) use conditionals, e.g., "If you turn it into a book..." Function: Deters via reputational threat. Suggestions (25) promote ideas indirectly. Both tie to Overlord's military/political hierarchies, where directives negotiate power.

Overall, directives reflect the novel's social ranks: High ranks favor direct forms for control; lower use indirect for deference. This integrates Searle with Brown & Levinson, showing pragmatics in fantasy as social mirrors (Levinson, 1983).

Summary of Pragmatic Functions:

Function	Examples	Prevalence
Asserting Authority	Commands	High (60%)

Showing Politeness	Requests/Advisories	Medium (40%)
Maintaining Cooperation	Suggestions	Medium
Negotiating Power	Prohibitions	Low

CONCLUSION

This study identified five directive types in 151 utterances from Overlord Volume 16, with commanding dominant, reflecting hierarchical dynamics. Pragmatic functions encompass authority expression, politeness, cooperation, and power negotiation, shaped by context and ranks.

Implications include advancing pragmatic literary analysis in fantasy, linking directives to social structures.

Limitations: Analysis limited to first 100 pages and English translation, potentially altering original Japanese pragmatics. Future research could compare volumes, translations, or incorporate Culpeper's literary pragmatics and Archer & Aijmer's historical approaches.

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