



Interrogative Form of Indirect Speech Act in Brave (2012) Movie Script

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Abstract

This research discusses the interrogative form of indirect speech acts and their functions found in the *Brave* movie. Indirect speech acts are important phenomenon in pragmatics since they allow speakers to communicate beyond the literal meaning of their words. The research objective is to observe and analyze how interrogative forms are used indirectly and what pragmatic purposes they are intended to serve in the movie. The data found were gathered from dialogues using a descriptive qualitative method, containing interrogative structures that function indirectly. The analysis applied Searle's (1979) and Yule's (1996) frameworks to categorize the utterances by structural form and function. The findings reveal four functions of interrogative indirect speech acts in the movie: directives (4 data), commissives (2 data), assertives/representatives (1 data), and expressives (1 data). No data were found functioning as declaration. The results highlight how interrogative forms are frequently employed to maintain politeness, convey refusal, express emotions, or assert opinions without direct confrontation. This suggests that indirect interrogatives serve as a pragmatic strategy for negotiating power, politeness, and emotional expression within hierarchical and familial relationships depicted in the film. In conclusion, the study shows that interrogative indirect speech acts play a significant role in forming character interactions and social dynamics. The implication of this study is that the analysis can provide insights for both pragmatic research and language teaching, especially in showing learners how indirectness operates in authentic media discourse.

Keywords: Indirect Speech Act, Interrogative Form, Brave Movie

Introduction

When people make conversation, misunderstanding are sometimes part of it. It happens due to one or even both of the participants fail to understand the context. In linguistics, there is a branch of study that talks about context in human conversation, named pragmatics (Florensia & Putra, 2023). Since pragmatics deals with context, Leech in his book confirmed that meaning of a conversation depends on both the participants, whether the flow goes naturally or not, both participants also responsible for it. Additionally, Ashfiya & Degaf (2023) added more factors that support the accuracy of meaning are also the context, the participant's involvement, and the participant's understanding of the situation. All of the factors support the speaker conversing the conversation, making it not only produced or spoken, but also let it out along with certain actions. This kind of term in pragmatics, namely speech act.

In pragmatics, speech act has a meaning more than just a speech, but also refers to performing acts. Muharyanto (2013) stated that speech act is performing act along with the utterances. This highlights that when speaker in the middle of conversation, they are not only speaking but also performing acts through it. As Majeed (2022) in her work agreed that people tend to produce more than meaningful words with sentences built grammatically, in this case, they also performed them. Riski et al. (2023) also stated the same opinion that an utterance contains actions more than just words. For example when the speaker says "*I promise to meet you tomorrow*", he is not simply say those words, instead, he is performing the act of promising, which promise to meet the hearer the next day.

Speech act has two kinds of classification, namely direct and indirect speech acts. According to Izar et al. (2023) a direct speech act follows the situation when the form and the same sentence are used by the speaker. A direct speech act refers to the utterances that synchronized both of its form and function. Crystal (2008) marks that in this case, the utterances are produced straightforwardly without any grammatical shifts. Briefly, when the speaker produced an imperative form, it directly functions as command. In contrast, Searle (1979) explained that indirect speech acts produced to have multiple interpretations: for example, an utterance may take an interrogative form, but indirectly perform the function of a command.

The most common type of indirect speech act is an interrogative form. Yule (1996), in his book, giving the example similarly to the sentence "*Can you give me the sandwich?*". This sentence is obviously an interrogative form that literally asks about the ability of the hearer of giving the sandwich. However, the actual function is not asking of the speaker's ability, but rather a polite request for the hearer to give the sandwich. This type of speech acts occurs frequently to maintain politeness in daily communication. By indirectly expressing the intentions, the speaker generally aims to avoid offending the hearer.

Indirect speech acts not only occur in a real-life conversation, but also in written and visual media, including movies (Rizki & Golubovic, 2020). Syafradin et al. (2022) added that speech act occurs in both academic or non-academic situation. According to Jarudecharat & Worathumrong (2023) movies scripts are representing the real life human's conversation. In movies, this type of speech act figured within the conversation among characters. One example is Amalia's (2017) study titled *An Analysis of Indirect Speech Act in X-Men Film Series*, which examined the direct and indirect speech act's form and function. She used a qualitative method and identified the presence of declarative, interrogative, and imperative utterances, along with their functions.

Building on this, the research's spotlight only focus on the interrogative form of indirect speech acts in a movie released by Walt Disney Pictures on June 22, 2012—*Brave*. The movie is about the story of Princess Merida of the ancient kingdom of DunBroch, who must save her mother, Queen Elinor, from a curse that turns her into a bear. Merida faces challenges and adventures to protect her mother's life. The author chose this movie out of the setting, which is a royal kingdom, with its strict hierarchy and rules, that support the use of indirect speech acts, as the characters often uphold politeness in their interactions.

Literature Review

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is one of the area in linguistics that discusses about language and meaning (Meyer, 2009; Trihanto, 2022). Hakim & Mubarak (2024) stated that pragmatics study about human spoken sentence and the hidden meaning laid behind them. According to Amalia (2017), pragmatics stands alongside other linguistic fields such as phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Pragmatics focuses on the aspects of meaning influenced by how language is expressed and how an utterance's meaning relates to its situational context. More specifically, this field deals with meanings that depend on context or situation. Yule (1996) further stated that meaning also depends on the speaker and the way the utterance is expressed.

In pragmatics, the speaker and hearer must negotiate meaning within a given context. The hearer needs to correctly interpret what the speaker has said. Once this meaning is recognized, communication can be considered successful. However, Griffiths (2006) points out several possible consequences:

1. The same utterance may carry different meanings depending on the context.
2. The hearer may infer more than what is directly said.
3. Misunderstandings may occur if both speaker and hearer share the utterances without proper knowledge of the context.

In conclusion, pragmatics is the study of utterance meaning in context. Meanings cannot be fully captured by dictionary definitions alone; they also depend on the situation in which conversation occurs. A branch of pragmatics that studies context more specifically is speech act theory.

Speech Act

One important branch of pragmatics is the theory of speech act (Yuniati, 2018). The theory was first presented in 1962 by a philosopher from Britain J. L. Austin at Harvard University. Later, Austin's student John Searle popularized the theory in his book *Speech Acts and Essays in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) (Akhmad, 2019).

According to Searle et al. (1980), human communication is not just simply about producing words to form sentences, but also about performing actions—such as making statements, asking questions, or giving commands. Speech acts are thus proposed to encourage the hearer to act or respond to something more than the words themselves. Omar & Razi (2022) also stated that speech act is the act that used to describe the information the speaker utters. According to Wea & Bram (2022) speech act is a study which is talking about the function and the sense of utterances.

Speech acts split into direct and indirect speech acts. A direct speech act is straightforward: the structure and function of the utterance align directly (Cutting in Tiara et al., 2021). Indirect speech acts, however, are performed differently, as explained below.

Indirect Speech Act

When the form of an utterance does not match its expected function, an indirect speech act happens. Kroeger (2022) and Rahayu et al. (2024) stated that speech act might be a simple utterance, but beyond it, there is another kind of intention that comes together. According to Widodo et al. (2022), the implication of an indirect speech act varies based on the situation, people sometimes face challenges when interpret it. Yule (1996) identified three structural forms of indirect speech acts: declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives.

1. **Declaratives.** Declaratives are typically statements in direct speech (Yule, 1996). They usually consist of a subject followed by an auxiliary, verb, or modal (Pratama & Amalia, 2021).
2. **Interrogatives.** Interrogatives are sentences that take the form of questions. They often begin with words such as *who, what, where, when, why, how, do, can*, etc., followed by the subject, and end with a question mark (Pratama & Amalia, 2021).
3. **Imperatives.** Imperatives are used to give commands (Yule, 1996). Pratama & Amalia (2021) also note that imperatives function to instruct or request action from the hearer.

In short, an indirect speech act happens when the structure and the function are not directly aligned (Yule, 1996). This results in utterances whose function differs from their form.

The Function of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

The functions of speech acts are generally explained through Searle's (1979) five classifications: declarations, assertives/representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives. These categories capture the variety of functions found in both direct and indirect speech acts. Yule (1996) also adopted and further developed this classification in his work.

1. **Declarations.** These acts happens to simply change something by the utterance. The speaker must hold a particular role to perform such acts—for example, declaring someone fired, baptizing, or pronouncing a punishment.
2. **Assertives/Representatives.** These tend to saying something is believable or giving hte speaker informations, like stating, describing, or predicting.
3. **Expressives.** These express the speaker's emotions or feelings toward something, such as congratulating, apologizing, or regretting.
4. **Directives.** These aim of getting someone to act to the utterances. Examples include requesting, ordering, or advising.
5. **Commissives.** These commit the speaker to an action in the future, such as promising, refusing, or volunteering.

The Purpose of Indirect Speech Acts

According to Leech (1983), the more communication relies on indirect speech acts, the more polite it becomes. He argued that indirectness helps (i) make utterances sound more polite, (ii) increase the optionality of responses, and (iii) soften the force of the utterance. In other words, one key reason for using indirect speech acts is politeness.

Thomas (1995) agreed but added that politeness is not the only motivation. Other reasons include (i) making communication sound more engaging, (ii) strengthening the speaker's rhetorical force, and (iii) managing competing goals in conversation.

The use of indirect speech act, according to Thomas, is to make the communication sounds more interesting. In which the speaker of the utterance might like to use more interesting ways of communication using indirect speech acts. The speaker intends to expect the utterance to be interesting to hear and that the hearer will be interested in the utterance. The following utterance will give an example, "*Could you hold your tongue?*". The example is an interrogative structure of indirect speech act in utterance, that functions as a directive, which is ordering. Nevertheless, what makes it interesting is the words "*hold your tongue*" that describe "*keep silent*" indirectly. The speaker used the utterance to make it sounds more interesting. Thus, the purpose is to get the hearer's interest about the speaker's utterance and to pay attention to it.

Furthermore, another reason is to increase the utterance's force of the speaker. Unlikely politeness, which diminishes the force of utterance, the indirect speech also improves the force of the utterance to make the hearer pay more attention to what the speaker says. Last, to compete for the goals. Thomas stated an example of competing goals using indirect speech, such as when a teacher has to tell the student that he has his work does not pass the standard; the student may receive the truth of his work from the teacher and the teacher may conflict with the impulse not to make the student's

discourage or hurting his feeling. Thus, the indirect speech act is used for the previous reasons.

However, indirect speech acts are sometimes tricky in some situations. Hence, to understand indirect speech, both the participants have to know the context when the utterances have been uttered since the meaning of sentences differs from what is uttered.

Context in Movie

Context is the detailed information that can be gained about a certain thing, which will affect how humans see things and how humans think about things depending on how those things are being appeared. People may understand the conversation using context. In other words, the context is possible to give meaning besides another meaning. It means that using a different context will give another meaning of interpretation, although the same utterances are used. Parveen (2016) provides an example of the context in pragmatics through the sentence, "*It is cold in here.*". The sentence may have different meanings if the context is uttered differently. Hence, the utterance might either give information or ask for something. Related to it, a simple statement is a direct speech because there is a period mark at the end of the sentence. However, the request is indirect speech because there is no expression of asking or requesting something, such as a question mark, but the hearer is able to interpret it by knowing the context first.

Context occurs in reality and is included in all situations, including movies. Movies show scenes and conversations in it in which the conversation will not be able to interpret the meaning without knowing the context of its situation. The utterances in conversation might have a structure with different functions called indirect speech.

Indirect speech and context in movies are related, which means that the utterances in indirect speech will only be figured out by knowing the context of what the speaker and the hearer have been through in the movie. To examine how sentence form and speech act function relate indirectly, both the speaker and the hearer must have known the context before—the context, such as time, place, topic, and participants in the movie.

Research Methods

Type of Research

This study is finished using qualitative research method, specifically a descriptive qualitative approach. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research emphasizes the analysis of textual and visual data through unique procedures and diverse designs. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2016) highlight that descriptive qualitative research is based on written or spoken language as well as observable human behavior. Manalu et al. (2023) also agreed that descriptive qualitative is a method that specifically evaluates life events. This approach was preferred because it allows the researcher to take action in exploring indirect speech acts in depth and describe their structural forms and functions without relying on statistical analysis.

Research Design

The design of this research was descriptive qualitative. This design was appropriate because the aim was to describe and analyze indirect speech acts that appeared in the conversations of the movie *Brave* (2012). The data consisted of conversations containing interrogative forms of indirect speech acts, which were collected and analyzed using linguistic theories.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised all the dialogues in the film *Brave* by Walt Disney Pictures produced on June 22nd, 2012. The story centers on Princess Merida of DunBroch and her family's adventures. The sample was selected purposively, consisting only of dialogues that contained interrogative forms of indirect speech acts. These utterances served as the main data for analysis, while dialogues without indirect speech acts were excluded.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected using a note-taking technique, which involved:

1. Repeatedly watching *Brave* to ensure comprehensive data collection.
2. Identifying and selecting conversations that contained indirect speech acts.
3. Recording the context of each selected conversation, including details of the scene and situation, to avoid misinterpretation.

The researcher served as the primary instrument in this study, responsible for identifying, selecting, and categorizing the data.

Measurement and Operational Definition of Variables

This study focused on the variable of interrogative form of indirect speech acts as they appeared in the film dialogues. Operationally, indirect speech acts were defined as utterances where the intended meaning differed from the literal form, following the frameworks of Yule (1996) and Searle (1979).

1. Structural form: interrogative form
2. Communicative function: classified into declaration, assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive.
- 3.

Data Analysis Procedures

The process of analyzing the data was qualitatively and descriptively, using words rather than numbers. The analysis followed these steps:

1. Functional categorization: Interrogative indirect speech acts were identified and classified according to Searle's (1979) framework, as expanded by Yule (1996).
2. Contextual alignment: Each utterance was interpreted in light of its situational context in the film to ensure accurate meaning and avoid misrepresentation.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section aims to describe the result of data analysis by providing explanations from the collected data. The data collected below is the interrogative form of indirect speech acts that have different functions such as declaration, directives, commissives, assertives/representatives, and expressives.

Table 1: The interrogative form of indirect speech act in Brave movie

Form	Function	Amount
Interrogative form	Declaration	-

Directives	4
Commissives	2
Assertives/Representatives	1
Expressives	1

The table above shows that the interrogative form found in the movie *Brave* has four different functions, namely assertives/representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives. However, there were no utterances in interrogative form of indirect speech act that functioned as declaration.

In the process of analyzing and measuring the functions of interrogative form of indirect speech act, the author considered the situation during the conversation, the dialogues before and after, as well as the sentence structure. Based on the table above, directive is the most frequent finding with 4 data found, followed by commissive with 2 data, while assertive/representative and expressive each appear only once. For further analysis of the interrogative form of indirect speech act, the following examples can be seen:

1. *Interrogative as Directive*

Data number: 1 (00.10.39 – 00.10.45)

Context : During lunch, King Fergus took a large portion of fried chicken for himself, while Princess Merida's plate was still empty. As a reaction to King Fergus' behavior, Queen Elinor spoke.

Queen Elinor : *"Hungry, aren't we?"*

Princess Merida : *"Mum!"*

Queen Elinor : ***"Oh, Fergus. Will you look at your daughter's plate?"***

King Fergus : *"You'll get dreadful collywobbles."*

The utterance is an interrogative structure because it starts with the word *will* and ends with a question mark, indicating that the queen is asking King Fergus to look at Princess Merida's plate. However, in this context, the utterance is not really a question but more of a command. The queen is indirectly commanding her husband to notice that Merida's plate is still empty, while his own plate is already full.

2. *Interrogative as Commissive*

Data number: 5 (00.12.21 – 00.12.29)

Context: While the royal family was having lunch, a maid brought the queen letters from the clans. The queen then announced that preparations were being made for Princess Merida's marriage with suitors from each clan.

Queen Elinor : *"Honestly Merida, I don't know why you are reacting this way. This year, each clan will present the suitor to compete in the game for your hand."*

Princess Merida : ***"I suppose a princess just does what she's told?"***

Queen Elinor : *"A princess does not raise her voice."*

Princess Merida's utterance is an interrogative structure that functions as commissive, specifically refusing. It is interrogative because she asks her mother about what a princess should do, and it ends with a question mark. However, the function is not to genuinely ask but to refuse. Merida rejects the idea of being a

princess who is constantly told what to do and refuses to be controlled by her mother.

3. *Interrogative as Assertives/Representatives*

Data number: 7 (00.27.37 – 00.27.49)

Context: When the competition began, Princess Merida intentionally shot an arrow and won the game, ensuring that no prince would become her husband.

*Merida: "You're never there for me. This whole marriage is what you want! **Do you ever bother to ask me what I want?** No! You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do, trying to make me feel like you. Well, I'm not going to be like you!"*

Merida's utterance is interrogative in form, functioning as representative, which is to tell. It is interrogative because it starts with *do*, indicating a question directed at Queen Elinor. However, the function is not to ask for an answer but to assert her feelings. By saying this, Merida is telling her mother that she has never cared about what Merida wants, instead always controlling her life.

4. *Interrogative as Expressive*

Data number: 8 (00.28.20 – 00.28.42)

Context: After an argument, Merida tore a tapestry her mother made. Furiously, the queen threw Merida's arrow into the fireplace. It made Merida leave the room, feeling all disappointed of her mother, while the queen remained alone with guilt.

Queen Elinor : "Merida, you are a princess and I expect you to act like one!"

Princess Merida : "Mum!"

*Queen Elinor : "Oh. Merida! Oh, dear. Oh, no. **What have I done?**"*

This utterance is interrogative because it contains the question word *what*. Its function is expressive, showing regret. The Queen regrets her action of throwing Merida's bow into the fire. She does not need an answer because she already realizes her mistake. The utterance indirectly expresses regret, as if saying: *"Oh, no. I regret doing this,"* since she knows how much Merida loved her bow.

Discussion

This section presents the discussion based on the findings and supported theories. This research only spotlighted to the interrogative form of indirect speech acts in *Brave* movie. Based on Yule's (1996) structure and Searle's (1979) functions, the interrogative form swas found to perform four functions: directives, commissives, assertives/representatives, and expressives. However, there was no interrogative functioning as a declaration.

The findings showed that interrogative structures were mostly chosen because they sounded more polite than other structures, which fits the background of the movie as kingdom life that prioritized manners. The characters use interrogative form of indirect speech act intentionally for specific reasons, like to maintain politeness. For example, Queen Elinor's utterance *"Will you look at your daughter's plate?"* was not a real question, but an indirect directive. The use of interrogative form here also reflects the position, as the queen must talk respectfully to her husband, King Fergus. Moreover, interrogatives were also used to express refusal with force, as in Merida's *"I suppose a Princess just does what she's told?"*. These examples show that interrogatives were not only used for politeness, but also to force or make utterances more engaging. It shows a

strong refusal, but in more polite way. Instead of directly and aggressively saying, the princess use interrogative here to also show her respect to the queen at the same time.

On the other hand, the absence of interrogative declarations can be explained by the nature of declaration itself. As Yule (1996, p. 55) states, declarations require a specific role and situation. Sharifah & Shofiyuddin (2024) stated that the statement of declarations only be made by someone who has privileges to utter. The use of declaration in the interrogative structure had not found because the situation was inappropriate for the characters to use it. In *Brave*, when characters had to make decisions, they used direct speech acts instead of interrogatives.

A related study is Amalia's (2017) research on *X-Men Film Series*. The similarity between Amalia's study and the current research lies in the attention to how indirect speech acts function beyond their literal meaning. Both studies confirm that indirect speech acts are crucial in understanding how characters negotiate relationships and convey meaning in a subtler way than direct expressions. Moreover, both studies recognize that context plays a vital role in determining whether an utterance functions as a directive, commissive, assertive/representative, or expressive.

The difference lies in the focus. While Amalia studied all three forms broadly, this research focuses only on the interrogative form. By narrowing the scope, this study shows more clearly how interrogatives can serve multiple functions; directive, commissive, assertive/representative, and expressive, beyond just asking questions. This focus highlights the flexibility of interrogatives that often assumed to be limited to questioning, can operate as powerful tools of politeness, refusal, assertion, and emotional expression, something that was not explored in detail in Amalia's study.

In conclusion, interrogative forms in *Brave* were found with almost complete functions except declarations, and their usage was strongly related to politeness, refusal, and strategies to make utterances more effective within the royal family's communication.

Conclusion

This research analyzed the interrogative form of indirect speech acts in *Brave* movie. The findings showed that interrogatives functioned as directives, commissives, assertives/representatives, and expressives, but no data was found functioning as a declaration. The use of interrogative forms appeared to be strongly tied to the context of royal life, where politeness, refusal, and indirect expression were needed to balance power and maintain relationships.

This study contributes to pragmatic analysis by highlighting how interrogatives can be multifunctional in cinematic discourse, showing their role in managing politeness and emotional expression in communication. In a broader sense, the findings also demonstrate that movies, as a form of modern storytelling, often use indirect speech acts to reflect real-life communication, where people rarely speak in purely direct forms. This makes the study not only relevant for linguistic theory but also meaningful for understanding how language operates in everyday interaction, especially in contexts where social roles and cultural expectations shape the way people speak.

The study has limitations, as it only focused on one movie and one structural form, which may not represent wider usage in other films or contexts. Future research could expand the scope by comparing interrogative forms with other structures, or by analysing indirect speech acts across different genres and cultural backgrounds. Such studies would provide a deeper understanding of how indirectness functions in diverse settings and

how it contributes to both language learning and the study of communication strategies in media.

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