CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The Proposal (2009) is a movie that revolves around a workplace romance with an 'enemies-to-lovers' theme, directed by American director Anne Fletcher. The story follows the two main characters, Margaret Tate, played by Sandra Bullock, and Andrew Paxton, played by Ryan Reynolds. Margaret, an orphaned Canadian who serves as editor-in-chief at a prestigious publishing company, faces deportation from the United States due to an expired visa and consequently loses her job. To avoid this, Margaret forces Andrew to be her *fake fiancé* to escape being deported. Both main characters frequently use directive speech acts in their interactions, reflecting power relations and role shifts throughout the story. Such a portrayal on how power imbalance influences directive speech acts has rarely found in previous studies on speech acts in romantic comedy films. Therefore, this study aims to examine how directive speech acts reflect the shifting power relations between the two main characters in *The Proposal* (2009).

For this study, I chose directive speech acts, which are intended to get the hearer to perform a certain action in order to achieve the speaker's goal, as observed in the movie *The Proposal* (2009). In essence, no prior study has examined directive speech acts between Margaret and Andrew and how they

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are reflected through power relations. Searle (1976) provides several examples of directive speech acts, which include *ask, order, permit, advice, request, invite, beg, pray, command, and entreat*. The function of directive speech acts is to convey the message. In turn, the hearer needs to do something or take an action that the speaker intended, while the speaker tries to make the hearer understand the meaning of their utterance (Ayu et al., 2022). Consequently, this study aims to explore Margaret and Andrew's utterances toward one another and how their interactions reflect power relations.

A number of studies have explored directive speech across various aspects of linguistics and literature; however, most of them focus only on a single character and other social representations. This is seen in studies by Agustina (2025), Riztya & Rahmani (2022), Azmi & Hartono (2021), Soedjarwo (2020), and Sekarwulan (2011). Nevertheless, the combination of Searle's directive speech acts and Brown & Gilman's power relations theory, particularly as reflected through a romantic comedy film, has received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap.

1.2 Research Questions

There are two research questions addressed in this study, which are as follows:

1. What types of directive speech acts are used by the main characters in the movie *The Proposal* (2009)?

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2. How do directive speech acts reflect power relations between Margaret Tate and Andrew Paxton, the two main characters in the movie *The Proposal* (2009)?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study aims to analyze directive speech acts in *The Proposal* (2009), particularly to identify the types of directive speech acts used by Margaret and Andrew as the main characters. Furthermore, it aims to examine how power relations between the two characters are reflected through their use of directive speech acts.

1.4 Previous Studies

A number of studies have analyzed *The Proposal* (2009) through different perspectives. Agustina (2025) explored Andrew Paxton's character in directive illocutionary acts, while Riztya & Rahmani (2022) identified the five types of illocutionary acts in *The Proposal* movie. Azmi & Hartono (2021) examined politeness strategies and found that seek-agreement was one of the commonly used strategies. Besides, a previous study found that *The Proposal* movie is also focused on the persuasion act. As analyzed by Soedjarwo (2020) on persuasion acts and identified that the utterances used to persuade are indirect speech acts while violating the maxim of quality. Sekarwulan (2011), on the other hand, took a different approach by examining how the characters were portrayed as materialistic figures shaped by American culture.

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Several existing studies have examined directive speech acts across various works. Azzahraa & Dianita (2025) found that requesting is the most common directive illocutionary force in the *Enola Holmes* movie. Muhamad & Meilasari (2022) examined three types of directives in the *Hunger Games* movie and identified requests as the most commonly used speech acts. Similarly, Putri et al. (2022), Fitria (2023), and Arini & Candra (2024) found that commanding is a common directive speech acts in various works. Putri et al. (2022) examined commands in the *Jungle Cruise* movie, Fitria (2023) identified five types of directive speech acts in the animated series *Nussa*, and Arini & Candra (2024) identified four types of directives in *The Guilty* movie.

Other studies have also explored directive speech acts in different contexts. Keilly Kristani (2013) identified twenty types of directives, with ordering as the dominant one. Yuliarti et al. (2021) examined five types of directive speech acts and found that they fulfill the requirement of felicity conditions, particularly revealing that Winfrey's speech from *Learn from Every Mistake* was considered felicitous in essential conditions. Aryanto (2020) identified that directives can function as inviting mitigation in the context of COVID-19. In contrast, Aritonang & Ambalegin (2023) identified six types of directive speech acts in *Steve TV Shows* and found that advice can function as a directive to encourage listeners.

Besides, directive speech acts can also function as a tool to study power in human interaction. Several studies, including a study by Evelyna et al. (2026), identified that in the story of *Bridgerton*, gender considerably affects how

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directives are used and how it is correlated to the character's power. A study by Risnawati et al. (2025) discovered that when customers order something, they have power over the delivery drivers. On the other hand, a study by Aldhulaee (2024) identified that in some cultures, people are more likely to make a request directly when they feel they belong to the group. The closer people are to each other, the more straightforward they will be. Lastly, it is emphasized that requests for directives made by members of the group are considered friendly rather than being rude (Aldhulaee, 2024).

A study on directive speech acts in *The Proposal* movie has not been examined before, especially those that were used by Margaret and Andrew. I will focus on the directive speech acts that are found in the movie and examine Brown & Gilman's (1960) theory on how power and solidarity affect the way characters behave with each other.

1.5 Scope of the Study

To limit the study, I only observed the utterances that were used by Margaret Tate and Andrew Paxton. Taken from the beginning until the end of the movie, the utterances were divided based on a specific type of data according to Searle's theory of directive speech acts. Besides, I wanted to analyze how directive and power relations are linked, I used Brown & Gilman's theory to reassure the reader to understand this connection.

1.6 Writing Organizations

In this study, I divided the sections into the following five chapters:

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CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

Chapter I describes the purpose of the research, such as the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, previous studies, and organization of the writing.

CHAPTER II : THEORY AND METHOD

In this chapter, I demonstrate the theory and methods to analyze the data. First, the theory consists of the speech acts, illocutionary acts, and their classification, power and solidarity, Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), felicity conditions, and their types. Second, the methods contain types of research, research approach, data source, population, and sample, methods of collecting data, and methods of analyzing data.

CHAPTER III : RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the findings and discussion based on the data analysis. Chapter III discussed directive speech acts that were used by the main characters, also using IFIDs and felicity conditions to support the analysis.

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CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

Chapter IV shows the conclusion of the study based on the analysis and closing statement.

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

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