

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The Queen's Gambit is a popular series among teenagers who love chess that follows the life of Beth Harmon, a young chess pro player. The story of the series follows her development from being an orphan to becoming a strong and successful chess champion in a world dominated by males. The series does not only explore her talent in playing chess but also the amount of struggles and relationships she gets throughout the games. However, the series dialogue and Beth Harmon's character interactions reveal Beth's growth and covers themes such as ambition, confidence, gender dynamics, and power.

What is challenging in studying The Queen's Gambit is to analyze how Beth's language reflects her authority, emotions, and influence over others while confronting social barriers. The issue focuses on how her use of directive language, such as commands and requests, shifts throughout her life and impacts her relationships and progression of the story.

Language is one of an important tools used for communication that allows individuals to express thoughts, emotions, and intentions. One important aspect of language use is speech acts, which can shape conversations and interactions (Searle, 1969). There are different types of speech acts, as it shows here that directive speech acts stand out more, which is used by the speaker to get the listener to do something whether it is an action, like requesting, commanding, suggesting, or warning (Searle, 1976, 1979). These acts are common in many contexts, are used within formal like workplace to informal conversations among friends and family. The directives are communicated which can reflect a speaker's power, confidence, and social positions.

Dialogue plays an important role in the context of film series, this is because to develop the characters and support its story line. In character's language, especially their use of directive speech acts, gives an important insight within their personality, dominance, and relationships with others. However, as an example here is Beth Harmon, who is known as the main character in *The Queen's Gambit*. As a very independent chess player, Beth faces many challenges within the male-dominated world where she must prove her worth, not only through her chess skills but also through her use of speech. Her directive speech acts describes her intelligence, confidence, and strategic thinking, both on and off the chessboard.

This study tells the role of directive speech acts in *The Queen's Gambit*, specifically on how Beth Harmon's language reflects her personality. In way by analyzing her dialogue, the research aims to explore how directive speech acts shape a character's power, control, and emotional state throughout the series. Through this investigation, the study is to understand the impact of language in character development, focusing on how Beth's directives develop throughout her personal life and growth.

1.2. Research Questions

This study addresses three main research questions, which are outlined as follows:

1. What types of directive speech acts does Beth Harmon use in *The Queen's Gambit*?
2. How do these speech acts reflect her personality, social position, and relationships with others?
3. How do directive speech acts contribute to Beth Harmon's character development throughout the movie?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The main goal of this research is to analyze how Beth Harmon's use of directive speech acts shapes her character and affects her interactions with others in *The Queen's Gambit*. Directive speech acts are statements or requests made by a speaker with the intention of getting the listener to do something, and understanding how Beth uses them can reveal important details about her development as a character.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To classify Beth Harmon's directive speech acts using Searle's theory of speech acts.
2. To explore how Beth Harmon's directive speech acts reflect her personality, social position, and relationships with others.
3. To analyze how Beth's use of directives evolves throughout the movie, reflecting her growing confidence, authority, and personal struggles.

1.5. Scope of The Study

This research studies only the directive speech acts used by Beth Harmon, the main character in the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit*. The analysis covers only some parts of moments in the film where Beth gives instructions, makes requests, or suggests actions to others. These speech acts are taken from different parts of her life: when she was a child, teenager, and adult, to see how her use of directives develops as her character grows and changes overtime.

The study is guided by John Searle's Speech Act Theory, focusing on how directive speech acts are used in communication. Each example will be sorted into categories and examined based on what Beth is trying to achieve with her words and how those words fit the context of the

scene. The main aim is to understand how Beth uses directive language to influence others, express her authority, and shape her relationships, as well as how these speech acts support the story and show her character's development over time.

This research does not cover other types of speech acts, for instance to express feelings known as expressives, make promises as commissives, state facts in other words assertives, or being about changes just by saying something like declarative. Therefore, it also does not include non-verbal communication like gestures or facial expressions. The study is focused only on spoken directives. By keeping the topic specific to the type of speech act, the research stays clear and focused. It also helps make the work more manageable for an undergraduate thesis that will give meaningful insights into Beth Harmon's character and the way language is used in the film.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research holds an important part for the study of linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, especially in the context of media. By using the theory of Searle's speech act to the analysis of Beth Harmon's directive speech acts in *The Queen's Gambit*, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language can be used to reflect the character's personality, power, and social dynamics. It shows how a character's speech choices can mean something as motivation, assert control, and shape relationships with others. For individuals of linguistics, communication, as well as media studies, this study applies to be a valuable resource in understanding how language functions as both a social tool and how it can be used to show character development. Furthermore, this study contributes within the ongoing academic conversation on how female characters, particularly in male-dominated contexts, use language as a form of strength and empowerment. By exploring the ways in which Beth Harmon's speech

acts challenge the traditional gender stage, this research can then be expanded to understand how women are portrayed in film series, especially in competitive or traditionally male-dominated fields like chess.

This research provides a great study for audiences such as students, teachers, scriptwriters, and media producers. For students, especially for those who study English or media, this study can be used as useful tool for understanding how dialogue and language can shape character development, emotions, and relationships in films and TV shows. On the other hand, this study can be very useful in English classrooms where films can be used as teaching materials or incourses that focuses on character analysis and dialogue writing. Teachers can aswell use the findings of this research to guide discussions about how language can reflects a character's growth and emotional journey.

Additionally, for scriptwriters and content creators, the study can be used to demonstrate how speech acts can make characters feel more genuine, complex, and powerful. By understanding how to use speech acts to tell different angles of a character's personality, writers can strengthen their storytelling and create amore relatable, complex characters. Furthermore, this research can help mediacreator in develop characters that challenge stereotypes and present strong, straightforward characterizations of women, especially in professional and competitive contexts.

By understanding the power of speech act in shaping the narrative and character change, viewers can also gain a deeper knowledge on the role language plays in storytelling. This awareness can also boost the audience's understanding of how characters like Beth Harmon uses language to claim their power and challenge standards, making them more relatable and inspiring. While, this research highlights the practical functional use of linguistic theories in

media, offering a richer and wider understanding of how language can be used to characters and narratives.

1.7. Previous Studies

The first relevant study was conducted by Cornela and Sari (2024) who examined how directive speech acts in *Beauty and the Beast* and found that commands were often used by characters who held authority. The study also shows that directives often function to control others actions within social hierarchy. For example, Gaston gives an order “Bring me my horse”, which clearly expects immediate action from the villagers. The Beast directs Belle, “You will join me for dinner”, showing dominance through language. The researchers concluded that commands become dominant because power relations is strongly influenced on how the characters speaks to one another.

Another study was organized by Rizki et al. (2023) who analyzed directive speech acts in the short film *Ke Jogja*, focusing on everyday conversations between characters. However, this movie shows directives used in casual situations among friends. For instance, “Wait for me at the station”, which functions as a directive even though it sounds informal. Moreover, another example like “Please call me when you arrive.”, this shows a polite request rather than a command. The study here suggests that directives in daily day interactions are often expressed softly but still aim to influence the hearer's actions.

A further study from the movie *Up* (2009) by Widianingsih et al. (2025) studies that directive speech acts frequently pops up during moments that requires cooperation. The interactions between characters often shows urgency and responsibility. For instance, when Carl Fredricksen tell Russel, “ Stay inside the house”, this works as a command to protect him. The

study explains that directives help to build teamwork between characters and reveal their emotional relationship throughout the story.

Then, Sari et al. (2025) who studies directive speech acts in *The King's Speech* analyze that requests were mostly used than commands because the conversations require politeness and respect. As an example, Lionel Logue directs the king by saying, "Relax your shoulders," and politely requests, "Please read this passage aloud". The study shows that social status influences how the directive are expressed indirectly.

A related study was conducted by Putra and Ardiantari (2024) illustrate that directive speech acts in *Moana 2* mainly reflect leadership. Moana gives out directives such as "Follow me", and " We must sail now", to guide her crew. These examples show how commands are used to lead and organize group actions.

The next study, Febriany and Afriana (2025) examined directive in *Thunderbolt* and shows that they often appear during conflict scenes. For instance, the main hero shouts " Get out of here now!" while another character advises, " You should stay behind me". This study highlights that the directives become more direct in dangerous situations.

Putri et al.(2024) study that directive speech acts in *Encanto* are influenced by family roles. Abuela Alma commands Mirabel, "Do not interfere", while Julieta gently says, " Come and eat something", this indicates that authority and emotional closeness affect how directives are delivered.

Another study is from, Putra and Satwika (2025) who studies directive in *Next Gen* help characters cooperate. Mai requests," Help me fix this", and uses command like ," Run!" during danger. These directives support teamwork and problem solving between characters.

Muhartoyo and Kristani (2013) identified many directive speech acts in *Sleeping Beauty*, influencing mostly by royal authority. King Stefan orders, “Guard the princess carefully,” while Maleficent commands, “Touch the spindle”. This study shows how power can determine directive acts.

Lastly, Lee and Afriana (2020) found that commands dominate directive speech acts in *Cinderella* due to unequal power relations. Lady Tremaine directs Cinderella by saying, “Clean the floor”, and “Finish your chores before midnight”. These directives speech acts clearly reflect dominance and social inequality.

These previous studies has mainly analyzed directive speech acts by identifying their types and frequencies within the movie dialogues using Searle’s theory. However, most of them focused on classifying commands, request, or suggestions and explaining how directives function in conversations or reflect power relations between characters. However, these studies generally discusses directives in a broad way without focusing on the development of one character over time.

Whilst, my study focuses on Beth Harmon in *The Queen’s Gambit* and I have examines how her directive speech acts changes across her childhood, teenage years, and adulthood. However, I not only identify directive types but also connects them with character development and personal growth, making it different from previous studies.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This research is firstly broken down into five chapters to show a clear and well-structured discussion. Each chapter will then be focusing on a main point, tohelp build a detailed understanding of the topic.

The first chapter will be the Introduction. Introduction show an overview of the study, the background, research questions, objectives, scope, and significance of the research. Furthermore, including a short brief summary of the previous studies that is related to the topic. This chapter sets the stage by explaining the importance of the study and the specific areas that will be investigated throughout.

The second chapter is Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework. This chapter covers the main theories applied in the research, especially Searle's Speech Act Theory, on directive speech acts. It also introduces many more theories such as politeness theory and reviews relevant past research. This chapter establishes the theoretical base for the study and links it to previous scholarly work.

The third chapter covers the Research Methodology. It provides the research design and methodology used in the study. This also includes the data source (dialogue from The Queen's Gambit), how the data was collected, and the analysis. This chapter details answers to the research questions.

Last but not least, the fourth chapter is Data Analysis and Findings. This chapter presents the analysis of Beth Harmon's directive speech acts during different stages of her life: childhood, teenager, and adulthood. By describing the types of directives she uses, the context in which they occur, and how these speech acts reflect her development, personality, and relationships over time.

The final chapter is Conclusion. This chapter provides a summary of the key findings, offering concluding thoughts based on the analysis.