

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the opening section, titled Introduction. It is composed of several parts, namely: background of the problem, statement of problem, research objectives, research significance, and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Problem

The Queen's Gambit (2020) presents a series of interactions that reveal clear and consistent patterns of directive illocutionary speech acts. Throughout the series, the characters attempt to influence one another through requests, commands, suggestions, forbiddings, and invitations. These directive utterances appear in various emotional and social contexts, ranging from competitive chess tournaments to intimate personal conversations, making the series a rich source of pragmatic analysis. The complexity of these interactions provides an opportunity to examine not only the types of directive illocutionary acts used in the series, but also their communicative functions and the influence of context on their use.

Beth Harmon, the central character of the series, demonstrates a distinctive linguistic development through her use of directive utterances. During her childhood in the orphanage, Beth frequently employs cautious and indirect directives that reflect her vulnerable social position and emotional uncertainty. As she grows into a highly skilled and confident chess player, her directive speech becomes more direct, assertive, and strategic. This transformation reflects not only her personal growth but also changing power relations, emotional states, and communicative intentions throughout the narrative. These variations make Beth Harmon an ideal subject for investigating the types and functions of directive illocutionary speech acts as well as the contextual factors that influence their use.

In pragmatic studies, directive illocutionary speech acts are utterances intended to make the hearer perform a particular action. According to Searle (1979), directives include acts such as commanding, requesting, suggesting, advising,

warning, and inviting. The meaning and interpretation of these utterances are closely related to context, including social relationships, setting, emotional conditions, and communicative goals. Leech (1983) explains that speech acts perform different communicative functions depending on the speaker's intention and the relationship between linguistic goals and social goals. These functions help explain how speakers use language to influence others, maintain social interaction, achieve cooperation, or express opposition in particular contexts.

The researcher's interest in this topic emerged from personal engagement with *The Queen's Gambit* as the first chess-themed series ever watched. The strategic dialogue, emotional tension, and dynamic interpersonal relationships in the series attracted the researcher's attention, particularly the noticeable changes in Beth Harmon's directive utterances from childhood to adulthood. These observable shifts raised questions regarding the types of directive illocutionary speech acts used by Beth Harmon and the functions of those utterances in communication. Although several previous studies have discussed directive illocutionary speech acts in movies and television series, limited research specifically examines their contextual use in *The Queen's Gambit*.

Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the types, functions, and contextual influences of directive illocutionary speech acts used by Beth Harmon in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020). Several television series have been considered as potential objects of analysis for directive illocutionary speech acts, such as *Moon Knight*, *Wednesday*, and *One Piece Live Action*. Although these series contain directive expressions, each presents certain limitations for an in depth pragmatic analysis.

Moon Knight predominantly features internal monologues and conversations involving dissociative identities, which results in unstable speaker-hearer relationships. This condition limits the analysis of directive illocutionary speech acts because many utterances are not addressed to a clear interlocutor. Meanwhile, *Wednesday* frequently employs sarcasm and ironic speech, causing many directive

utterances to become indirect and ambiguous, which complicates their classification within pragmatic frameworks. On the other hand, *One Piece Live Action* contains numerous directive speech acts; however, most of them occur in fantastical and heroic contexts, where commands dominate and interpersonal variations of directives are limited.

In contrast, *The Queen's Gambit* (2020) offers a more realistic and stable social setting, allowing clearer identification of speaker-hearer interactions. The series focuses on a single main character whose social roles and psychological development evolve throughout the narrative. This enables the analysis of directive illocutionary speech acts across various interpersonal relationships, such as child-adult, student-mentor, and competitor-opponent relationships. Moreover, the series presents a wider range of directive functions, including requesting, suggesting, advising, and commanding, making it a richer and more appropriate object for pragmatic analysis.

Previous studies have widely discussed directive illocutionary speech acts in film discourse using qualitative approaches and various pragmatic frameworks. These studies indicate that directive speech acts play an important role in shaping character interaction, emotional tension, and narrative development.

Sanjaya, Utami, and Sosiowati (2025) examined directive illocutionary speech acts in the movie *Waves* using a descriptive qualitative method. Their study focused on identifying the types of directive utterances produced by the characters and interpreting their contextual meanings. The findings indicate that directive utterances frequently appear in emotionally intense and conflict-driven scenes, where they function to express authority, urgency, and interpersonal tension. However, the study analyzes directives across several characters and does not focus on the linguistic development of a single character over time.

Arini and Candra (2024) investigated directive illocutionary speech acts in *The Guilty* (2021) by focusing on the utterances of the main character. Using Searle's (1979) classification, they identified several types of directives such as

requesting, commanding, and advising. Their findings suggest that directive speech acts play a significant role in creating psychological tension in a single-setting film. Nevertheless, this study mainly emphasizes the identification of directive types and does not explore their pragmatic functions in detail.

Another relevant study was conducted by Ernayanti, Santika, and Suastini (2022), who analyzed the functions of directive illocutionary speech acts in the animated film *UP* using Leech's (1983) communicative function framework. The study identified various directive functions, including requesting, commanding, inviting, and prohibiting, and demonstrated how these functions contribute to character development and emotional dynamics within the story. Although this study examines directive functions, it focuses on interactions among several characters and does not treat one character as a bounded case.

Another relevant study was conducted by Widyawanti, Aisyah, and Prasetyo (2024), who analyzed the types and functions of illocutionary speech acts in the short movie *The Translator*. Using Searle's (1979) classification and Leech's (1983) theory of illocutionary functions, the researchers identified five types of illocutionary speech acts and four communicative functions, namely competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive. Their findings demonstrate that the functions of illocutionary speech acts contribute to the interactions among the characters and support the development of the film's narrative. However, the study examines all types of illocutionary speech acts produced by multiple characters rather than focusing specifically on directive illocutionary speech acts or on the communicative behavior of a single main character. Therefore, it does not provide an in-depth analysis of the functions of directive illocutionary speech acts performed by one protagonist, which is the main focus of the present study.

In addition, Puranjani and Rajeg (2022) examined directive illocutionary speech acts in the movie *The Desperate Hour* using a descriptive qualitative approach. Their findings show that directive utterances are dominantly used to build tension and direct actions in situations requiring immediate responses. However,

this study is limited to a fast-paced thriller context and does not analyze the relationship between directive types and their communicative functions in character development.

Wiliastini, Suastini, and Juniarta (2021) also studied directive illocutionary speech acts in the movie *Moana*. Their research focused on identifying the types of directives used by the characters. Although the study provides insight into directive forms in an animated film, it does not systematically relate directive types to their pragmatic functions, nor does it focus on a single main character as the central object of analysis.

Based on the review above, it can be concluded that previous studies generally focus on identifying directive types or directive functions separately, or on analyzing directive speech acts produced by multiple characters. There has been limited attention given to examining how a single main character employs levels of directness in directive illocutionary acts to achieve communicative goals within different social interactions. In addition, few studies have explored the relationship between directive speech acts, communicative strategies, and character development in a television series.

Therefore, the present study aims to fill this research gap by conducting a qualitative case study on Beth Harmon as the main character in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020). By combining Searle's (1979) classification of directive illocutionary speech acts, Leech's (1983) theory of communicative functions, this study examines the types, functions of directive speech acts used by Beth Harmon.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The statement of problem are formulated as follows:

1. What types of directive illocutionary speech acts are used by Beth Harmon in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020)?
2. How does Beth Harmon in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020) use directive illocutionary speech acts to achieve communicative functions?

1.3 Research Objectives

This section presents the objective of this research according to the research questions formulated earlier. This research aims to:

1. To describe the types of directive illocutionary speech acts used by Beth Harmon in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020).
2. To identify the communicative functions of directive illocutionary speech acts performed by Beth Harmon in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020).

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of pragmatics, particularly the study of speech acts. By analyzing directive illocutionary speech acts in *The Queen's Gambit* (2020), this research supports Searle's (1979) theory of directive speech acts, Leech's (1983) theory of communicative functions. Furthermore, the research offers insight into the relationship between linguistic choices, interpersonal communication, and character development throughout the series.

Practically, this study helps readers understand how language reflects human interaction, emotion, and social relations. It may serve as a reference for future researchers interested in other types of speech acts or in applying pragmatic theories to various media, including films, novels, and everyday communication. Additionally, the findings can be beneficial for language learners by enhancing their awareness of how meaning is conveyed not only through lexical choices but also through actions performed in speech, improving both their communicative and interpretive competence.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- 1) **Illocutionary:** According to Austin (1962) illocutionary refers to the intended function performed by a speaker through an utterance, such as stating, requesting, or ordering.

- 2) **Acts:** According to Austin (1962) Act refers to an action performed through language use in communication. In pragmatics, acts cannot be fully explained only through the major branches of grammar such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, or through a general theory of action.
- 3) **Directive Illocutionary Acts:** Directive illocutionary acts refer to speech acts intended to make the hearer perform a certain action. In Searle's typology, directives include acts such as requesting, commanding, suggesting, inviting, or forbidding.
- 4) **Communicative Functions:** According to Leech (1983) Communicative functions refer to the pragmatic purposes of a speech act according to Geoffrey Leech, such as competitive, collaborative, convivial, or conflictive functions. These functions help explain how a directive is used to achieve social goals in a particular interactional context.
- 5) **The Queen's Gambit:** The Queen's Gambit is a Netflix drama miniseries directed by Scott Frank and Allan Scott, focusing on the life and development of Beth Harmon as a chess prodigy.

