

Pragmatic Functions of Directive Speech Acts in a TEDx Talk

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the types, pragmatic functions, and persuasive contributions of directive speech acts found in the TEDx Talk video “How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired” by Rebecca Okamoto, released on September 17, 2025. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative method with a pragmatic approach. The research data was taken from the video transcript and consists of 20 statements containing directive speech acts. Data analysis is based on the types of directive speech acts, delivery strategies, and pragmatic roles employed by the speaker. The research indicates that there are five types of directive speech acts: commands, suggestions, advice, requests, and invitations. Among these five types, suggestions and invitations are the most dominant, each accounting for 30%. The study also identifies that directive speech acts serve several pragmatic functions: instructing, guiding, engaging, and persuading. The use of direct and indirect strategies also helps speakers build interactions, create emotional connections, and strengthen persuasive communication with the audience. The results indicate that directive speech acts in TEDx Talks are not only used to provide instructions but also function as persuasive strategies to influence attitudes and increase audience engagement. Thus, this study contributes to research in pragmatics, particularly.

Keywords: pragmatic functions, directive speech acts, speech acts, TEDx Talk, persuasive communication

INTRODUCTION

Language is the key instrument that humans employ to communicate and express their thoughts, emotions, and information at different levels of human activity. Language goes beyond being a means of communication in the sense that it allows speakers to accomplish certain social and communicative goals through communication processes Yule (2016). As noted by Leech (1983) the use of language has much to do with the contextual meaning of an utterance and the communicative intention, implying that the process of interpreting an utterance has much to do not only with language itself but also with context.

This contextual dimension is the main concern of pragmatics, which is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics that deals with the study of the way speakers and

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addressees understand meaning based on the communication situation. Pragmatics must take into account not only grammatical rules, but also the purpose of the communication, its social relationship, and context (Yule, 2016; Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams, 2009; Saifuddin, 2019). Similarly, Leech (1983) states that pragmatics is a field of linguistics that is interested in interpreting meaning not based on literal meanings, but in terms of communicative function and context. The more frequently the communication is used in education, professional, media, and digital contexts, the more interesting and valuable for pragmatics becomes the study of the ways language is used strategically to reach certain communicative goals (Hidayah et al., 2025; Dermawan and Afriana, 2026). In recent years, it has become evident that pragmatics is needed to understand how speakers infer meanings and use various communication strategies to reach their goals (Hågemark and Gärdenfors, 2025; Schoppa, 2025).

Among other essential ideas explored within pragmatics, one should consider speech act theory, according to which all utterances are not only aimed at conveying information but also at performing some actions as well (Searle, 1970). All utterances made by speakers have a communicative intention that may affect the reaction of listeners or their behaviour. Five types of speech acts are distinguished by Searle (1970): representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Among them, directive speech acts attract much attention due to the fact that they are supposed to motivate listeners to take some action. It has been proven that speech acts are important for forming interaction and engaging audiences in different communicative processes (Warsidi, Syakila, and Dahniar, 2023; Sabtina and Siregar, 2024). Therefore, speech act theory constitutes an appropriate framework for such analysis.

Directive speech acts refer to those speech acts whose main purpose is to inspire or direct the listener to undertake some action through command, request, advice, guide, invite, among others (Searle, 1970). Directive speech acts are different from other kinds of speech acts in the sense that, apart from communicating messages, they try to influence the listeners' actions or reactions. This is why directive speech acts have become one of the areas of interest in pragmatics, since their success depends to a greater extent on the communicative environment and the relationship between the speaker and the listener. In real-life situations, directive speech acts may be communicated using either a direct strategy or an indirect strategy. As explained by Searle (1970), the direct strategy is applied where the form of the statement matches the intended meaning by the speaker. In contrast, the indirect strategy is used where the intended meaning is not stated through the form of the statement. Leech (1983) points out that the selection of these two strategies helps in achieving the communication objectives in a polite manner and at the same time maintains personal relationships. Hence, the direct strategy is always employed to communicate statements clearly and directly, while the indirect strategy helps the speaker to communicate the intended meaning subtly and persuasively (Aini et al., 2023; Haq, Nasri, and Hafidz, 2025). Directive speech acts are frequently used in different types of communication, like education, media, movies, and textbooks. Directive speech acts in the context of education help to lead students to do certain things during the education process (Aini et al., 2023; Nisa & Abduh, 2022). In the context of media and public communication, however, directive

speech acts are used not only to give instructions but also to advise, recommend, motivate, and persuade audiences, whose attitudes and behaviors may be influenced by such messages. (Safitri, 2024; Sutriani & Winarta, 2022; Insyra & Supri, 2024). Consequently, directive speech acts are not only a tool to direct people's actions but also a way of persuasion that facilitates communication.

TEDx Talks is a form of public communication where individuals are given the platform to express their ideas, experiences, and knowledge to a wider audience. Apart from being a mode of information dissemination, TEDx Talks are also expected to inspire, motivate, and influence the audience through the effective use of language. Thus, TEDx Talks are closely related to persuasive communication, which is a process of communicating information with the intention of changing the audience's beliefs, attitudes, or behavior using planned communication strategies (Ramalingam et al., 2021; Priambada, Senowarsito, & Sodik, 2021; Pusfitasari, Yasmin, & Rohbiah, 2025; Bahrani et al., 2024). To realize this objective, speakers tend to utilize directive speech acts like suggesting, advising, motivating, recommending, or urging, among others, which can be communicated either directly or indirectly depending on the communication objective and the nature of the presentation. Thus, TEDx Talks will serve as a relevant scenario through which the practical use of directives in persuasive communication can be investigated. From different TEDx Talks, Rebecca Okamoto's talk "How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired" has been selected as the case for this research since the talk uses many examples of directive speech acts to guide, inspire, and persuade the audience with regard to self-improvement and professional communication. Thus, the talk will serve as relevant material for studying the use of directive speech acts in persuasive communication (Mohammed and Mayuuf, 2025).

Several related studies on speech acts in TED and TEDx Talks have been conducted from different viewpoints. Husnan, Kustanti, and Fauzi (2025) conducted research about directive speech acts in language learning videos in TED Talks, which focused on the use of commands and suggestions given by male and female speakers. On the other hand, Barokah and Areni (2025) explored illocutionary acts in TED Talks on the topic of English language learning, where they discovered that the most dominant speech acts were representative speech acts; however, directive speech acts were used to engage the audience and to deliver a persuasive message to them. Lastly, Noviyanti, Fadilah, and Linuwih (2025) researched illocutionary acts in TEDx Talks given by young Indonesian speakers. Despite the contribution of these studies towards the understanding of the application of speech acts in TED Talks and TEDx Talks, it is worth noting that most studies are based on the classification of speech act types, comparison of different directive speech acts, and description of various communicative functions.

The analysis of directive speech acts in relation to their pragmatic application for persuasion and audience engagement with particular reference to self-development and professional communication remains scanty. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, there is no existing study on Rebecca Okamoto's TEDx Talk on "How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired." Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of directive speech acts that are used in the TEDx Talks, analyze the pragmatic functions of the directive speech acts that are used, and analyze how directive speech acts function as persuasive strategies in building

audience engagement. The findings of the present study are expected to add to the field of pragmatics, especially regarding directive speech acts, and to offer practical benefits to teachers, students, public speakers, and communication practitioners on how to effectively utilize persuasive language strategies.

METHOD

A. Research design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis technique that emanated from a pragmatic approach, based on Moleong (2018). This approach was chosen due to the desire to thoroughly analyze how the speakers deliver their directives or commands in a TEDx Talk. The pragmatic approach helped to understand the utterance in consideration of the context in which it was made, the intention behind making it, and its potential influence on the audience. Therefore, the study not only looks into the types of speech acts but also how they work pragmatically and communicatively.

B. Sample/Participation

The data for this study is sourced from a TEDx Talk video entitled “How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired” by Rebecca Okamoto, published on September 17, 2025, during the TEDx NorthwesternU event, with the data analyzed in the form of speech that containing directive speech acts extracted from the video transcript, including instructions, recommendations, requests, and invitations used by the speaker to convey information to the audience, with a total of about 20 utterances selected according to the research objectives.

C. Research instrument

The researcher is used as an instrument in this study to identify, interpret, classify, and analyze the data. The researcher makes active meaning out of the language data using context and pragmatic interpretation in qualitative studies. The video transcripts will be used to classify the utterances according to pragmatic functions, delivery methods, and directive speech acts.

D. Technique of data collection

Several steps were taken throughout the process of the research that began with viewing the TEDx Talk video to understand the communicative situation, intentions of the speaker, and context of the talk. The researcher manually transcribed the speech using certain transcription procedures, described by Stubbs (1983) stressing the importance of certain techniques to analyze the conversation. Then, speech acts were recognized and classified, taking into account their form and function in the TEDx Talk, such as commands, suggestions, advice, requests, and invitations.

E. Technique of data analysis

Based on Leech (1983), the pragmatics theory that stresses the relationship between language form and the communicative functions of the language, the researcher adopted a pragma-linguistic analysis to analyze the data. Every utterance in this study was analyzed using both the literal and communicative meanings to identify its pragmatic function, such as instruction, direction, invitation, and influence on the listener. The methodology involved

an understanding of how the meaning was constructed in use in interaction and not just in its form. This was because it adhered to Leech (1983) the view of pragma-linguistics. To understand how the pragmatic meaning and persuasive messages were effectively delivered in the TEDx Talk, the researcher analyzed whether the directive speech actions were delivered using direct or indirect means.

RESULTS

The objectives of this study are to examine types, strategies, and pragmatic functions of directive speech acts in a TEDx Talk video, “How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired” by Rebecca Okamoto (2025). The source of the data is the TEDx Talk video. The research data includes twenty utterances containing directive speech acts. The target audience of this study is learners of English as a foreign second language, teachers, and researchers in the area of pragmatics.

It is found that the speaker produces commands, advice, suggestions, requests, and invitations, which are examined based on type, timestamp, form, delivery strategy, and pragmatic function. In accordance with Leech (1983) pragma-linguistic approach, it is seen that the linguistic forms are used by the speaker for communicating his/her intention in context both directly and indirectly. Moreover, it is revealed that directive speech acts are used for guidance, involvement, and persuasion of the audience, and the findings help develop learners’ pragmatic competence in speaking, teachers in teaching speech acts, and further research in pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Table 1. Checklist Tabulation of Directive Speech Acts

No.	Utterance	Command	Advice	Suggestion	Request	Invitation	Direct	Indirect	Instructing	Guiding	Engaging	Persuading
1.	"Think sound bite."	✓					✓		✓			✓
2.	"Don't talk about yourself."	✓					✓		✓			✓
3.	"You're going to add the word 'without' to your introduction."	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓
4.	"Try them out."	✓					✓		✓		✓	✓
5.	"Can you hear the difference?"	✓						✓		✓	✓	
6.	"Instead, explain what you can do for them."		✓				✓		✓	✓		✓
7.	"Don't be surprised if you find yourself using more than one."		✓					✓		✓		✓
8.	"Let's go beyond offering a benefit."			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
9.	"In this case, you can use your passion, your mission, on your strength."			✓			✓		✓	✓		✓
10.	"I'm passionate about helping people in need and creating opportunities that change lives."			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
11.	"I'm known for my critical thinking turning and turning information into actionable insights."			✓			✓			✓		✓
12.	"I'm on a mission to bridge the health care divide and make a lasting difference for vulnerable communities."			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
13.	"How will my life be different?"			✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
14.	"Tell me about yourself."				✓		✓				✓	
15.	"Are you ready to introduce yourself in 20 words or less?"					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

No.	Utterance	Command	Advice	Suggestion	Request	Invitation	Direct	Indirect	Instructing	Guiding	Engaging	Persuading
16.	“Let me challenge you.”					✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
17.	“Does your introduction really make that big of a difference?”					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
18.	“Have doors been closed in your face?”					✓		✓			✓	✓
19.	“Do you struggle to be seen and heard?”					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
20.	“Does your inner critic tell you you’re not good enough for smart enough?”					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

The researcher analyzed utterances by timestamp, strategy, and pragmatic function, with details in a table

Table 2. Detailed Data Classification

No.	Time	Utterance	Types	Strategy	Function
1.	4:09	"Think sound bite."	Command	Direct	Giving clear instruction
2.	4:41	"Don't talk about yourself."	Command	Direct	Warning against ineffective strategy
3.	6:06	"You're going to add the word 'without' to your introduction."	Command	Direct	Giving specific Instruction
4.	8:05	"Try them out."	Command	Direct	Encouraging action
5.	5:08	"Can you hear the difference?"	Command	Direct	Checking audience understanding
6.	4:44	"Instead, explain what you can do for them."	Advice	Direct	Giving instruction
7.	8:09	"Don't be surprised if you find yourself using more than one."	Advice	Indirect	Softening expectation
8.	5:56	"Let's go beyond offering a benefit."	Suggestion	Direct	Encouraging improvement
9.	6:52	"In this case, you can use your passion, your mission, on your strength."	Suggestion	Direct	Providing options
10.	7:09	"I'm passionate about helping people in need and creating opportunities that change lives."	Suggestion	Direct	Suggesting structure
11.	7:30	"I'm known for my critical thinking, turning information into actionable insights."	Suggestion	Direct	Suggesting alternative
12.	7:49	"I'm on a mission to bridge the health care divide and make a lasting difference for vulnerable communities."	Suggestion	Direct	Offering framework
13.	5:51	"How will my life be different?"	Suggestion	Indirect	Guiding audience thinking
14.	0:14	"Tell me about yourself."	Request	Direct	Guiding audience thinking
15.	3:54	"Are you ready to introduce yourself in 20 words or less?"	Invitation	Indirect	Inviting participation
16.	8:58	"Let me challenge you."	Invitation	Direct	Inviting engagement
17.	0:29	"Does your introduce really make that big of a difference?"	Invitation	Indirect	Prompting reflection
18.	8:35	"Have doors been closed in your face?"	Invitation	Indirect	Building emotional connection
19.	8:39	"Do you struggle to be seen and heard?"	Invitation	Indirect	Encouraging self-reflection
20.	8:43	"Does your inner critic tell you you're not good enough for smart enough?"	Invitation	Indirect	Triggering reflection

The text discusses calculating the frequency and percentage of directive speech acts in a TEDx Talk.

Table 3. Types of Directive Speech Acts Found in TEDx Talk

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Command	5	25%
Advice	2	10%

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Suggestion	6	30%
Request	1	5%
Invitation	6	30%
Total	20	100%

The video features five types of speech acts: commands, advice, suggestions, requests, and invitations, totaling 20 instances. Suggestions and invitations were the most common, each occurring 6 times or 30%, showing a focus on persuasion. The speaker used direct commands for clear instructions in 5 instances (25%), offered subtle advice in 2 instances (10%), and made explicit requests only once (5%). Most speech acts are expressed directly as commands, suggestions, and advice for clarity. Invitations and some suggestions use indirect strategies like rhetorical questions to engage the audience's thoughts. The TEDx Talks speaking guidelines help teach and communicate effectively, engage the audience, and create emotional connections.

DISCUSSION

A. Types of directive speech acts

Based on the results of the data analysis, five categories of directive speech acts were identified in the TEDx Talk video "How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired" presented by Rebecca Okamoto (2025), namely commands, advice, suggestions, requests, and invitations. According to Searle (1970), directive speech acts are utterances intended to make the hearer perform an action. These directives are also to be understood in terms of how linguistic forms are employed to fulfill communicative and persuasive functions in context, in line with the pragma-linguistic perspective of Leech (1983).

Based on a frequency analysis of the data, suggestions and invitations emerged as the most frequently used types, each accounting for 30%. Next, commands accounted for 25%, advice for 10%, and requests for 5%. The dominance of suggestions and invitations indicates that speakers tend to choose a guiding and inviting communication approach rather than giving direct commands. This aligns with the characteristics of TEDx Talks as a persuasive public speaking platform (Ramalingam et al., 2021) and reflects a pragma-linguistic tendency toward indirect and polite directive strategies in line with Leech (1983).

1. *Command*

A total of 5 instances of the imperative form were identified in the TEDx Talk. This form is used by the speaker to deliver instructions or guidance directly to the audience. One example is "Think sound bite" at 4:09, which uses an imperative construction to encourage listeners to create a brief and effective self-introduction. According to Searle 1970, the imperative form is a key characteristic of directive speech acts aimed at directing the addressee's behavior.

Other examples include "Don't talk about yourself" at 4:41, which functions as a direct prohibition against ineffective self-introduction, and "Try them out" at 8:05, which encourages the audience to apply the strategies presented earlier. Most of these commands are delivered through a direct strategy, so the meaning can be clearly understood without

hidden intention. Yule (2016) states that direct strategies are used when the speaker expresses intentions explicitly to ensure communication goals are easily understood. From the pragma-linguistic perspective, this directness clearly relates linguistic form to communicative function in order to ensure instructional clarity Leech (1983).

These findings support those of Husnan et al. (2025), who found that imperative forms in TEDx Talks are commonly used to guide audiences and emphasize the speaker's intentions, as well as those of Aini et al. (2023), who argued that directive speech acts in the form of commands are frequently employed to convey instructions effectively.

2. *Advice*

This type of advice was found in two instances and is used by the speaker to offer recommendations or guidance without applying pressure. One example is “Instead, explain what you can do for them” at 4:44, which functions as advice by recommending a more effective way of introducing oneself in a professional context.

Another example is “Don’t be surprised if you find yourself using more than one” at 8:09, which reflects an indirect and gentler form of advice. Rather than giving a direct command, the speaker encourages the audience to feel comfortable using more than one self-introduction strategy. According to Yule (2016), indirect strategies help speakers deliver messages in a more persuasive and friendly way, making the audience more receptive. This indicates the use of indirectness as a politeness strategy in pragma-linguistic communication. The speaker uses advice to connect positively with the audience. This finding supports Nofiyanti et al. (2025) that speech acts in TEDx Talks inspire and guide.

3. *Suggestion*

The suggestion type is the most prevalent, accounting for 6 instances or 30% of the data. This form is used to offer choices, alternatives, or recommendations in self-introduction, reflecting a helpful and persuasive approach rather than direct instruction. One example is “Let’s go beyond offering a benefit” at 5:56, where the collaborative word “let’s” encourages improvement without coercion.

Another example is “In this case, you can use your passion, your mission, or your strength” at 6:52–6:54, which provides alternative ways to introduce oneself. Statements such as “I’m passionate about helping people in need and creating opportunities that change lives” and “I’m on a mission to bridge the healthcare divide and make a lasting difference for vulnerable communities” also function as suggested models of self-introduction. According to Searle (1970), directive speech acts may appear as recommendations intended to influence behavior, making suggestions more flexible and persuasive than direct commands.

These findings are consistent with those of Barokah and Areni (2025), who found that speech acts in TED Talks help attract audience attention through communicative and motivational delivery, as well as those of Nofiyanti et al. (2025), who reported that motivational elements in TEDx Talks are often conveyed through guiding and engaging speech. TEDx speakers favor persuasive strategies that offer guidance and alternatives for effective communication. This shows how pragmatic meaning is negotiated.

4. *Request*

A total of 1 instance of this type of request was identified, accounting for 5% of the data. The statement “Tell me about yourself” at 0:14 falls under the category of requests because the speaker is asking the audience for information on how they would introduce themselves. This statement is delivered directly and serves to introduce the topic of discussion and engage the audience from the very beginning of the presentation.

According to Searle (1970) A request asks someone to perform a specific action. This function also highlights audience engagement as part of a persuasive discourse strategy. The speaker values guidance over feedback, but early requests enhance audience engagement in presentations.

5. *Invitation*

This type of invitation is also the most common, accounting for a total of 6 entries, or about 30%. Speakers use this style to engage the audience emotionally and mentally with the topic, mostly through reflective questions that encourage personal reflection. One example is “Are you ready to introduce yourself in 20 words or less?” at 3:54, which functions as an invitation by encouraging participation in the upcoming strategy, while “Let me challenge you” at 8:58 also serves as a direct invitation for active engagement.

Other statements such as “Have doors been closed in your face?”, “Do you struggle to be seen and heard?” and “Does your introduction really make that much of a difference?” are indirect invitations in the form of reflective questions. According to Yule (2016), indirect strategies are often used to create more polite and persuasive communication, making the message more acceptable to the audience. Through these forms, the speaker builds an emotional connection and encourages self-reflection, making the audience more engaged with the topic. This reflects indirect directive use that aligns with Leech (1983) that pragmatic-linguistic concept of polite persuasion.

These findings align with the findings of Nofiyanti et al. (2025), who reported that TEDx Talks frequently employ persuasive language strategies to connect with audiences. They also support the findings of Ramalingam et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of speech acts in promoting engaging communication in TEDx Talks. Speakers often use invitations and suggestions to persuade, focusing on guidance, emotional connection, and participation instead of direct instruction.

B. *Pragmatic functions of directive speech acts*

The TEDx Talk video uses directive speech acts to demonstrate types of speech acts and fulfill different communication purposes with the audience. According to Yule (2016), the function of speech is closely related to the speaker’s intention in a particular communicative context, while Searle (1970) explains that directive speech acts are used to influence the addressee’s actions or responses through commands, suggestions, requests, advice, and invitations. This pragmatic realization is consistent with Leech (1983) that views of meaning construction through form and function in context.

This study found four main functions of directive speech acts: instructing, guiding, engaging, and persuading in TEDx Talks. These functions also reflect pragmatic meaning construction in discourse. The findings are consistent with Haq et al. (2025), Amalia and

Prayitno (2025), and Hidayah et al. (2025), who state that directive speech acts not only direct behavior but also build social influence and audience engagement.

1. *Instructing function*

The instructive function appears when the speaker provides clear guidance or instructions to the audience through direct strategies. One example is “Think sound bite” at 4:09, which guides the audience to create a brief and effective self-introduction, while “You’re going to add the word ‘without’ to your introduction” at 6:06 gives a concrete step that listeners can apply directly.

According to Searle (1970) Imperative forms in directive speech acts show the speaker’s effort to direct actions. The TEDx Talk uses instructive functions to clarify communication strategies clearly. It shows a form-function alignment in pragma-linguistic terms of Leech (1983). This finding is consistent with Yule (2016), who states that direct strategies are used when speakers want to convey intentions clearly and efficiently, and with Hidayah et al. (2025), who found that directive speech acts are often used to provide guidance and instruction in educational and public communication contexts.

2. *Guiding function*

The guiding function appears when the speaker not only gives instructions but also helps the audience understand certain ideas or perspectives. This function is commonly found in suggestions, where the speaker offers alternatives without pressuring the audience. One example is “In this case, you can utilize your passion, your mission, or your strength” at 6:52–6:54, which guides listeners to choose the most suitable way to introduce themselves.

Another example is “How will my life be different?” at 5:51, which encourages the audience to reflect on the impact of a particular action. According to Yule (2016), indirect strategies allow speakers to deliver messages more subtly and persuasively. In this TEDx Talk, the guiding function helps the audience engage more deeply with the speaker’s ideas rather than simply receiving direct instructions.

The speaker uses a persuasive style that increases audience awareness rather than being authoritarian. This finding supports Amalia and Prayitno (2025), who state that directive speech acts can shape the audience’s mindset and influence behavior through persuasive communication. This reflects pragmatic indirectness used to maintain politeness.

3. *Engaging function*

Speakers engage audiences in TEDx Talks through interaction. Another example is the statement “Are you prepared to introduce yourself in 20 words or less?” at the 3:54 mark. This statement serves to engage the audience mentally with the topic to be discussed. Additionally, questions such as “Have doors been closed in your face?” and “Do you struggle to be seen and heard?” also demonstrate the engaging function, as the speaker encourages the audience to connect the presentation material with their personal experiences.

Yule (2016) Reflective questions in indirect strategies promote polite communication and audience comfort. The speaker uses directive speech acts to build emotional connections and a close communication atmosphere. This represents indirect directive use in pragma-linguistic communication.

These findings are consistent with the study by Ramalingam et al. (2021), which notes that TED Talks employ various speech strategies to maintain the audience's attention and create engaging communication. Research by Nofiyanti et al. (2025) also reveals that audience participation in TEDx Talks is often fostered through the use of motivational and interactive statements.

4. *Persuading function*

The persuasive function is the most dominant in this TEDx Talk, as the speaker aims to influence the audience's mindset and convince them of the importance of effective self-introduction strategies. One example is "Let me challenge you" at 8:58, which motivates the audience to rethink and apply the new strategies presented, while "Instead, explain what you can do for them" at 4:44 persuades listeners to adopt a more effective way of introducing themselves.

According to Searle (1970), directive speech acts aim to change the behavior or response of the listener. In TEDx Talks, they encourage action and shape audience attitudes. Persuasive language helps speakers build trust, motivate listeners, and enhance their message delivery. This indicates pragmatic influence on audience attitudes and beliefs.

These findings are consistent with those of Haq et al. (2025) and Amalia and Prayitno (2025), who found that directive speech acts in TEDx Talks possess persuasive power. They serve to instruct, guide, engage, and persuade audiences, making communication interactive and audience-centered. This confirms pragmatic meaning construction based on the Leech's (1983) framework.

C. Persuasive goals of directive speech acts

The TEDx Talk "How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired" uses directive speech acts to give instructions and inspire action. These acts help the speaker persuade the audience, influence their thinking, and build emotional connections (Ramalingam et al., 2021).

According to Yule (2016), the communicative context and the speaker's intent influence the pragmatic meaning of an utterance. Searle (1970) explains that directive speech acts are used to encourage the addressee to perform an action or provide a specific response. In this TEDx Talk, the use of directive speech acts suggests that the speaker intentionally employs linguistic strategies to capture the listeners' attention, establish interpersonal connections, and persuasively influence the audience. This persuasive function reflects pragmatic meaning construction in Leech (1983).

1. Attracting the audience's attention

One persuasive goal is to capture the audience's attention at the start of the TEDx Talk. Engaging listeners early is crucial for message success. This demonstrates how directive forms are strategically used to achieve pragmatic engagement. One example is "Tell me about yourself" at 0:14, which connects the topic to familiar experiences such as job interviews or professional situations.

Another example is "Does your introduction really make that big of a difference?" at 0:29, which is used to attract the audience's curiosity about the topic being discussed. These reflective questions function as persuasive strategies that encourage the audience to think

actively about their own experiences and perspectives. According to Yule (2016), rhetorical or reflective questions are pragmatic strategies that create mental engagement without requiring direct answers. This reflects indirectness as a politeness strategy in pragma-linguistic communication.

These findings support Ramalingam et al. (2021), who state that TED Talks use various speech strategies to maintain audience attention and create engaging communication. Similarly, Nofiyanti et al. (2025) found that interactive speech in TEDx Talks helps speakers build more dynamic and persuasive communication.

2. *Building an emotional connection*

Using directive language in a TEDx Talk not only grabs the audience's attention but also helps build an emotional connection, making the message more persuasive. This shows pragmatic alignment between linguistic form and emotional effect. Examples of this function appear in the statements "Have doors been closed in your face?" and "Do you struggle to be seen and heard?" at 8:35–8:39. These statements are not merely ordinary questions; they also invite the audience to reflect on their personal experiences with rejection, a lack of self-confidence, or challenges in introducing themselves. This functions as an indirect directive that enhances audience involvement.

3. *Influencing and persuading the audience*

The primary persuasive goal of this TEDx Talk is to encourage the audience to change the way they present themselves in professional settings. The speaker uses directive speech acts to persuade listeners about strategies. One example is "Instead, explain what you can do for them" at 4:44, which aims to shift the audience's perspective on effective self-introduction, while "Try them out" at 8:05 encourages listeners to apply the suggested strategies. This reflects pragmatic persuasion through indirect directive strategies.

The speaker favors suggestions and invitations over direct instructions, as they make the message sound flexible and less forceful, helping the audience accept ideas more easily. This indicates Leech's (1983) concept of politeness is in a persuasive discourse. According to Searle (1970), directive speech acts can influence the addressee's behavior both directly and indirectly.

TEDx Talks use interactive language to inspire and influence audiences effectively. These findings align with the findings of Barokah and Areni (2025), who reported that speech acts in TED Talks foster inspiring communication and positively influence audiences. They also support the findings of Nofiyanti et al. (2025), who found that motivational functions in TEDx Talks are frequently expressed through persuasive, supportive, and interactive speech. Directive speech acts attract attention, build connections, and enhance persuasion. These findings confirm that persuasive meaning is constructed through pragma-linguistic interaction between form and function.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Rebecca Okamoto's TEDx Talk "How to Introduce Yourself and Get Hired" shows five types of directive speech acts: command, advice, suggestion, request, and invitation. Of the 20 data points, suggestion and invitation were the most common at 30%

each, with command at 25%, advice at 10%, and request at 5%. This shows that the speaker encourages audience engagement rather than giving direct orders.

This study identifies several key functions of directive speech acts: instructing, guiding, engaging, and persuading. Instructing provides direction, guiding helps understanding, engaging fosters involvement, and persuading influences mindset. These findings highlight that directive speech acts serve as effective tools for communication and relationship-building with the audience. Furthermore, directive speech acts are crucial in TEDx Talks for persuasive goals. Suggestions, invitations, questions, and instructions help grab attention, create emotional ties, and influence audiences without force. This strategy makes messages more relatable and engaging for listeners.

The implications of the above findings imply that studying directive speech acts enhances the pragmatic proficiency of one's English language communication, especially when one is speaking and persuading. The above findings can be valuable to English language learners, to help them develop better ways of communicating, valuable to teachers, who can use them in writing materials on pragmatics and speech acts, and to researchers as a point of reference.

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