

# Directive Speech Acts in Ariana Grande's 'Eternal Sunshine' Interview with Zach Sang

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of directive speech acts in Ariana Grande's Eternal Sunshine interview with Zach Sang, focusing on how commands, orders, requests, and suggestions shape conversational dynamics. Using George Yule's (1996) classification as the theory, this research examines how language functions to influence and guide behavior in a media setting. The data source is the publicly available interview, and the research employs a qualitative descriptive design to systematically identify directive speech acts. Data was collected through observational method with non-participatory technique, and analyzed using the pragmatic identity method with contextual analysis technique, based on Sudaryanto (2015). Results show that requests, with 20 instances, were the most common directive, suggesting a preference for politeness. Commands followed with 16 instance, and suggestions appeared 15 times, indicating subtle influence, while orders were least frequent with 9 instances, highlighting sparing use of direct authority. These findings underscore how directive speech acts contribute to interaction flow and social dynamics in high-profile media contexts.

**Keywords:** Directive Speech Acts; Pragmatics; Conversational; Contexts

## INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental tool in human communication, enabling individuals to convey thoughts, express emotions, and build social connections. As societies have evolved, so too has the complexity of linguistic interactions, with each utterance carrying multiple layers of meaning. Communication, therefore, is not merely about the words spoken but also involves understanding the intentions and social cues embedded within the language. Silaen et al. (2022) highlight that while language is essential for communication, it is not always sufficient to prevent misunderstandings or communication failures. Such failures occur when speakers cannot clearly convey their intentions or when listeners fail to interpret the intended meaning accurately. According to Halliday (1978), language functions in various social contexts, where each interaction fulfills a purpose that goes beyond literal meaning. Additionally, Jakobson (1960) highlights the multifunctionality of language in communication, identifying six functions that serve to express emotions, convey information, and establish social bonds, among others. These perspectives underscore the importance of analyzing language from different viewpoints, one of which is pragmatics. Pragmatics focuses on how context influences meaning, particularly examining what speakers intend to convey and how listeners interpret messages.

Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, delves into the implicit meanings in language and explores how individuals use language within specific contexts to achieve certain effects (Levinson, 1983). Unlike semantics, which deals with the literal meanings of words, pragmatics examines the speaker's intended meaning and how it may differ from the explicit content of their statements. One crucial concept within pragmatics is the speech act theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and later expanded by Searle (1979), which explores how utterances function as

actions. Directive speech acts form a specific category within this theory, encompassing utterances intended to influence the behavior of others. George Yule (1996) categorizes directive speech acts into commands, orders, requests, and suggestions, each varying in directness and authority. These directive forms are vital in interactions where one party seeks a response or action from another, making them essential in analyzing conversational exchanges like interviews.

In contemporary communication, directive speech acts are prevalent across various platforms, from casual conversations to structured interviews and public speeches. These speech acts enable individuals to assert influence, shape responses, or guide actions, playing a significant role in both personal and public discourse. For instance, in August 2024, Elon Musk directed employees at X (formerly Twitter) to submit a one-page summary of their contributions to qualify for stock grants, effectively urging them to justify their value to the company, “Please submit a one-page summary of your contributions by next week to ensure eligibility for stock options”. This directive speech act, an order requiring self-assessment, illustrates how influential figures use language to convey expectations and exercise authority in professional settings. Putra and Tressyalina (2024) explains that the act of telling involves the speaker issuing an order for the listener to perform an action as expressed in the speaker’s words. Tannen (1990) also points out that directive speech acts can be instrumental in reinforcing power structures and maintaining social cohesion, influencing the course of interactions in different scenarios. Musk’s directive exemplifies how leaders and public figures employ speech acts to motivate actions and establish dynamics that emphasize their authority. Such examples highlight the pervasive nature and significance of directive speech acts in shaping behavior within modern communication.

In media interviews, directive speech acts often shape the interaction by allowing participants to influence each other’s responses and the overall conversation flow. According to Fairclough (2001), interviews represent a form of controlled dialogue where power dynamics subtly shift depending on the language used by both interviewer and interviewee. In celebrity interviews, these dynamics are especially relevant, as the public figure often seeks to maintain control over their image while engaging with the interviewer. Similarly, Dijk (2008) emphasizes that such exchanges can reveal underlying social structures, with directive speech acts reflecting attempts to guide or shape the narrative. This article analyzes the *Eternal Sunshine* interview between Ariana Grande and Zach Sang, available on YouTube, as a case study to explore how directive speech acts are utilized to maintain conversational balance, assert agency, and convey nuanced meanings within the interview setting.

One notable instance of a directive speech act in the *Eternal Sunshine* interview occurs when Ariana Grande requests Zach Sang to clarify a question about her creative process, asking, “Could you tell me more about what you mean by that?” This polite request directs Zach to provide additional context, allowing Ariana to ensure she fully understands the question before responding. According to Brown and Levinson’s theory (1987), requests framed politely help maintain social harmony by softening the directive, especially in public or formal settings like interviews. By phrasing her directive as a request, Ariana demonstrates respect and cooperation, subtly managing the flow of conversation without disrupting the rapport between them. Sitanggang and Afriana (2022) emphasizes that requests involve a speaker asking the hearer to perform an action, showcasing how this type of directive can shape the interaction to the speaker’s benefit. This instance illustrates how celebrities can use polite directive acts to balance openness with control, shaping the interview to suit their comfort and image.

Several previous studies have explored directive speech acts in various media contexts, with the first being Hakim and Mubarak’s (2024) research. The researchers conducted a pragmatic study to identify and analyze the types of directive speech acts in the movie *Captain Lightyear*. Their study aimed to classify these speech acts as used by the main characters, using Searle and

Vanderveken's (1985) theory. Through a descriptive qualitative method and observation, the researchers collected data by watching the movie, identifying relevant utterances, and categorizing them by type. The study identified five main types of directive speech acts: asking (8 instances), ordering (3 instances), advising (1 instance), requesting (2 instances), and begging (1 instance). The researchers concluded that the characters primarily used asking directives to seek information or responses, highlighting questioning as a dominant form of directive speech within the movie's dialogue.

Another study on directive speech acts was conducted by Safitri and Handayani (2024), focusing on the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon*. This research aimed to identify directive speech acts within the film, utilizing Kreidler's (1998) classification as a theoretical basis. The researchers employed a qualitative approach, analyzing the script and observing the characters' body language to understand the context of each utterance. Their findings revealed 15 instances of directive speech acts, including six commands, three requests, and additional instances of ordering. They concluded that directive speech acts were used extensively in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, particularly commands and requests, underscoring the characters' use of language to express authority and relational dynamics throughout the narrative.

While both previous studies have effectively examined directive speech acts within popular animated movies, there are notable differences in their scope and approach compared to the present study. Hakim and Mubarak's (2024) study focused on identifying various types of directive speech acts in *Captain Lightyear*, particularly emphasizing the character interactions and the types of directives used, while Safitri and Handayani's (2024) study provided a detailed breakdown of directive speech acts in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, with an emphasis on character dynamics through commands and requests. Unlike these studies, which focus primarily on scripted interactions within fictional narratives, the present study examines directive speech acts in a real-life interview setting, providing insight into the natural use of directives in spontaneous, unscripted communication between a celebrity and an interviewer. However, a key similarity across all three studies is the application of directive speech acts theory to understand how language is used to influence others, revealing underlying social and conversational dynamics.

The present study aims to analyze the use of directive speech acts in Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* interview with Zach Sang, focusing on how directives are used to manage conversation flow, assert control, and maintain rapport. This study applies George Yule's (1996) classification of directive speech acts, such as commands, orders, requests, and suggestions, as its theoretical framework. The data source for this analysis is the publicly available interview on YouTube, which provides a real-world context where directive speech acts are naturally embedded within a conversational exchange. Through this analysis, the study seeks to deepen our understanding of the role directive speech acts play in interviews, highlighting how public figures navigate and manage communication in media settings.

In pragmatics, understanding language requires more than interpreting words at face value; it involves grasping the intentions behind those words and how they are shaped by context. Pragmatics examines how meaning is constructed not only through language but also through situational cues and social relationships (Levinson, 1983). Context, as highlighted by Widdowson (2004), is essential in this process, as it encompasses the external factors, such as setting, speaker-listener relationships, and cultural norms, that influence how language is perceived. Context enables speakers to convey subtle meanings and listeners to interpret them accurately, bridging the gap between literal language and intended meaning. This understanding of context is especially vital for analyzing directive speech acts, where the effectiveness and appropriateness of directives depend largely on the situational and relational dynamics at play. Directive speech acts are a crucial element in pragmatics, as they illustrate how language can be used to influence the actions and behavior of others. Searle and Vanderveken (1985) argue

that directives are not merely about conveying information; rather, they function as a means for speakers to express intentions and prompt responses from listeners. Directives, according to this view, are purposeful speech acts intended to elicit compliance or cooperation, depending on the social context and relational dynamics. Kreidler (1998) expands on this understanding by emphasizing the role of social relationships in determining the intensity and appropriateness of directive language. Kreidler suggests that directives vary in formality and force, adapting to the situational and relational context of the interaction. Together, these perspectives underline that directive speech acts are multifaceted tools for achieving social coordination, influenced heavily by both the speaker's intent and the contextual factors at play.

Directive speech acts, as defined by Yule (1996), are a fundamental means of influencing others within communication, reflecting the speaker's intent to guide or affect the listener's actions. Yule's theory serves as the foundation for this research, providing a structured approach to analyzing how directives are used in real-world conversational exchanges. Yule identifies four main types of directive speech acts, each characterized by varying degrees of directness and social implications:

*Commands* are direct and authoritative directives that leave little room for negotiation, often reflecting a clear power dynamic in which the speaker expects immediate compliance. Commands convey a strong sense of urgency or necessity, typically using firm language to assert authority. For example, in an instance noted by Suryanti and Afriana (2020), the command "Now, listen here" illustrates the speaker's demand for attention and immediate action, showing no flexibility in the directive. Such language reinforces the authority of the speaker and the expectation that the listener will comply without hesitation.

*Orders*, while authoritative like commands, often carry an expectation that they will be followed but may allow for some flexibility in compliance. Orders imply a level of insistence or encouragement from the speaker, often used to prompt immediate action. For instance, as noted by Juliano et al. (2022), the phrase "Throw your ill-tempered weapons to the ground... and hear the sentence of your angry prince," this order calls on the listener to comply with a directive that conveys both authority and a sense of urgency. This example illustrates how orders can assert dominance while invoking an emotional appeal, encouraging compliance through a mix of command and dramatic persuasion.

*Requests* are generally more polite or indirect than commands, allowing the listener some degree of freedom to comply or refuse. Requests often aim to maintain social harmony by softening the directive, especially when the speaker is not in a position to enforce compliance directly. In an example cited by Hakim and Mubarak's (2024), the utterance "At least let me do it" reflects a request from the speaker, seeking permission rather than imposing an action. Here, the speaker expresses a desire to handle a task personally, appealing to the listener's sense of consideration rather than authority. Requests like this are commonly used to balance politeness with the need to influence the listener's actions subtly. These directives are the most indirect form of guidance, often framed as advice or recommendations rather than direct demands. Suggestions allow the speaker to influence the listener's actions without imposing a sense of obligation. For instance, as noted by Anggraini and Afriana (2023), the phrase "I don't think this is a good idea" serves as a suggestion. By phrasing the concern this way, the speaker expresses doubt and subtly discourages the listener from proceeding, while leaving the final decision up to them. This approach reflects how suggestions can convey caution or opinion gently, offering guidance without exerting direct authority over the listener.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, focusing on the detailed analysis of directive speech acts within a real-life conversational context. A qualitative approach is particularly

suitable for language studies, as it allows researchers to explore language use and meaning in-depth. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017), qualitative research seeks to capture the complexity of human interaction, making it ideal for analyzing spontaneous dialogue. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize that qualitative methods provide a “rich, thick description” that is crucial for interpreting nuanced aspects of communication. Additionally, Creswell (2009) highlights that qualitative research is valuable for exploring participants' perspectives and understanding how meaning is constructed in social contexts. By employing a descriptive method, this study systematically identifies and categorizes directive speech acts to understand their function and role in the conversation. This design, therefore, allows for a comprehensive examination of how directives are utilized in the *Eternal Sunshine* interview, offering insights into their contextual and pragmatic applications.

Data for this research was collected using the observational method, a common approach in qualitative research for recording language in its authentic setting. This study employed Sudaryanto's (2015) non-participatory observation technique, where the researchers observe without directly engaging in the interaction, ensuring an objective record of the data. The collection process involved multiple steps: first, the interview was watched repeatedly to capture each instance of directive speech acts accurately. Next, key parts of the dialogue were transcribed verbatim, focusing specifically on utterances containing directive language. The transcriptions were then reviewed and refined to ensure each directive met the criteria outlined in Yule's (1996) theory, resulting in a well-organized data set for analysis.

The data analysis in this study utilized the pragmatic identity method, as proposed by Sudaryanto (2015) which examines the meaning and function of language based on the context of its use. For the analysis technique, Sudaryanto's contextual analysis technique was applied, which focuses on interpreting language within the framework of situational and social context. The analysis began with categorizing each directive utterance according to Yule's (1996) classification of directive speech acts, such as commands, orders, requests, and suggestions. Each directive was then examined for its pragmatic function, considering factors such as tone, intent, and the relational dynamics between the speakers. This structured approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of how directive speech acts contribute to the flow and influence of conversation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The analysis of directive speech acts in the *Eternal Sunshine* interview identified a total of 60 instances across four categories. The findings revealed that requests were the most frequently used directive, with 20 instances, indicating a tendency toward polite and indirect language in the conversation. Commands followed with 16 instances, demonstrating moments where stronger authority or emphasis was expressed. Suggestions accounted for 15 instances, reflecting a subtler form of guidance or advice throughout the interview. Finally, orders were the least common, with 9 instances, showing that direct, authoritative language was used sparingly. These findings highlight the varying degrees of directness and social consideration embedded in the use of directive speech acts within this conversational context.

To provide a clearer understanding of the distribution and specific instances of each type of directive speech act, a detailed table is presented below. This table outlines the frequency and examples of commands, orders, requests, and suggestions identified in the *Eternal Sunshine* interview.

**Table 1.** Frequency of Directive Speech Acts in Ariana Grande’s Eternal Sunshine Interview with Zach Sang

Directive Speech Acts	Frequency
Commands	16
Orders	9
Requests	20
Suggestions	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**Discussion**

The following discussion delves into the significance of the identified directive speech acts within Ariana Grande’s Eternal Sunshine interview with Zach Sang. By analyzing the frequency and types of directives, such as commands, orders, requests, and suggestions, this section explores how each speech act contributes to the interactional dynamics between Ariana and Zach. This discussion not only examines how these directives shape the flow and tone of the conversation but also considers the implications of their use in a high-profile media setting, where language choices often reflect underlying social roles, authority, and rapport. Through this analysis, insights are provided into the nuanced ways directive speech acts serve as tools for influence and engagement within the interview context.

**Commands**

**Data 1**

Zach : “Explain the tender love and care that goes into just a single product.”  
(00:25:14)

In this instance, Zach asks Ariana to elaborate on her work within her beauty brand. His prompt is set in a casual but inquisitive tone, designed to help the audience understand the behind-the-scenes effort of her product line. The conversation unfolds as Zach shows appreciation for her dedication, nudging her to open up about the process in detail. This is a command due to its direct and explicit wording. Zach’s phrasing, “Explain,” indicates a clear expectation for Ariana to provide insight, rather than posing it as a question. The command sets an immediate tone, pressing for Ariana’s response without ambiguity. Zach’s directive works effectively in an interview context, where a more assertive prompt can help focus the dialogue and keep the exchange flowing.

**Data 2**

Ariana : “Let’s do it.” (00:41:03)

Here, Ariana expresses a shared commitment to take action, likely in response to a mutual plan or suggestion made by Zach. This statement reflects a moment of agreement, conveying her willingness to engage actively in the shared goal or activity. This is a command with a collaborative tone. While the phrase is inclusive, beginning with “Let’s,” it remains assertive in its intent to initiate action. The use of “Let’s” softens the directive by including both speaker and listener, creating an invitation rather than an order. This kind of inclusive command highlights Ariana’s ability to lead while fostering a sense of teamwork, making the directive agreeable.

**Data 3**

Ariana : “Stop saying that.” (00:24:46)

In this exchange, Ariana responds directly to something Zach has repeatedly mentioned, possibly humorously, that she finds worth addressing. The tone here hints at a playful yet firm tone where Ariana asserts control over the conversation’s direction. This is a direct command aimed at curbing a specific behavior. “Stop saying that” reflects immediacy and conveys a

strong intention to redirect Zach's words or behavior. Commands like these, especially when issued firmly, set boundaries within a conversation and are often used to reinforce respect or personal comfort. This interaction shows Ariana's assertive communication style, creating balance by using direct speech when necessary.

## Orders

### Data 1

Ariana : "Make it a little less cold in here." (00:31:53)

This order arises in a professional setting where Ariana, possibly as part of her preparation, requests a change in the environment for her comfort. As a performer, adjusting temperature is a reasonable need, so this directive, though small, serves a practical function. This is an order that remains polite yet clear. Phrasing the command as "Make it a little less cold" uses subtle language to convey respect while still expecting the request to be fulfilled. Orders that relate to comfort or physical needs, especially in work contexts, are often necessary for performers, and Ariana's phrasing shows a tactful way to maintain authority without sounding demanding.

### Data 2

Ariana : "Take up space unapologetically." (00:12:26)

This statement reflects Ariana's advice, possibly inspired by her character Glinda, encouraging others to be confident and assertive. She emphasizes the importance of fully embracing one's presence, whether on stage or in life, suggesting that one should not feel the need to shrink or apologize. This is an order with an empowering tone. By instructing the listener to "take up space unapologetically," Ariana offers a command that focuses on self-confidence and self-worth. Orders like this, which aim to boost self-assurance, are often effective in reinforcing positive behavior, especially in personal or motivational contexts. This directive encourages individuals to be fully present and self-assured, framing confidence as a vital component of personal expression.

## Requests

### Data 1

Zach : "Is there anything you wish people knew?" (00:39:06)

Zach's question is open-ended, encouraging Ariana to share any personal thoughts or feelings that she may want to convey to her fans or the public. This request serves as an invitation for Ariana to offer her perspective in a way that feels natural to her. This is a request that invites personal reflection. The phrase "Is there anything" creates a space for Ariana to voluntarily share, framing the request in a way that respects her choice of response. This kind of open-ended request is effective in fostering meaningful dialogue, as it allows the interviewee the freedom to introduce topics of personal importance.

### Data 2

Zach : "You let the dogs out." (00:13:37)

This is a light-hearted, informal request made in a casual setting. Zach's tone likely reflects the easy rapport between him and Ariana, with the question adding a playful touch to the conversation. This request uses humor to maintain a relaxed conversational tone. Although a simple task is being requested, the playful nature of the phrase "let the dogs out" introduces humor, which can reinforce camaraderie and establish a comfortable environment. Casual requests like this foster a sense of ease and approachability in social interactions.

### Data 3

Zach : "Are you going to tour this album?" (00:17:30)

When discussing Ariana's upcoming projects and potential live performances, Zach asks, "Are you going to tour this album?" His question encourages Ariana to share any plans or thoughts she may have about touring, a topic of interest for her fans and the audience. Zach's question serves as a direct but gentle request for Ariana to discuss her future plans, specifically regarding a tour. By asking openly, he signals genuine curiosity while giving her the freedom to answer

as she wishes. This approach respects Ariana's autonomy in revealing only what she's comfortable sharing, and it helps maintain a conversational, easygoing atmosphere. This type of request emphasizes Zach's role as an engaged interviewer, balancing public interest with sensitivity to Ariana's readiness to disclose details.

#### **Data 4**

Zach : "Do you remember about your first day in Oz?" (00:34:04)

As they talk about Ariana's role in *Wicked*, Zach asks, "Do you remember about your first day in Oz?" This question invites Ariana to reflect and share her initial experience on set, prompting her to revisit a personal milestone in her career journey. Zach's question functions as a request for Ariana to open up about an important memory, encouraging her to recount a meaningful experience. His phrasing shows genuine interest and is framed as a gentle invitation, which allows her the space to decide the level of detail she wants to provide. This approach emphasizes Zach's sensitivity as an interviewer, promoting an environment that respects Ariana's comfort and readiness to share personal stories.

#### **Suggestions**

##### **Data 1**

Zach : "I'll pay you more to put it away like to get it back," (00:23:31)

When discussing Ariana's recent work with Max Martin, Zach playfully suggests that she should keep some of her song ideas private, especially given the leaks she experienced. He says, "I'll pay you more to put it away like to get it back," suggesting she secure her work to prevent further unauthorized releases. Zach's suggestion reflects a lighthearted approach to a serious issue, as he encourages Ariana to take extra care with her music projects. This humorous, indirect suggestion allows him to express concern while keeping the tone casual, ensuring the conversation remains relaxed. His suggestion emphasizes camaraderie and shared understanding, as he subtly implies the importance of protecting her creative work without making it a formal or serious directive.

##### **Data 2**

Zach : "Leave space for humanness and nuance." (00:38:46)

When they discuss the public's tendency to make assumptions about celebrities, Zach suggests that people should "leave space for humanness and nuance" when viewing public figures. This suggestion aims at encouraging a more compassionate approach to understanding individuals in the spotlight. Zach's suggestion reflects a thoughtful reminder to both the audience and himself to approach public figures with empathy and understanding. By phrasing it as a general statement, he tactfully avoids placing responsibility solely on Ariana or the audience. This indirect suggestion shows his awareness of media culture and emphasizes the value of compassion, encouraging a more humanized perspective on fame and celebrity.

##### **Data 3**

Ariana : "That's also kind of why I don't want to put out a second single before the album because I would like for it to be heard in one piece." (00:19:45)

Ariana explains her preference for releasing the album without a second single, saying, "That's also kind of why I don't want to put out a second single before the album because I would like for it to be heard in one piece." She expresses her desire for listeners to experience the album as a cohesive story, with each song contributing to the overall narrative. Ariana's comment indirectly serves as a suggestion to her fans and the public, encouraging them to listen to the album in its entirety rather than focusing on individual tracks. By choosing to hold back additional singles, she implies that a full, uninterrupted listening experience will allow the audience to appreciate the depth and thematic unity of her work. This approach reflects her dedication to storytelling and suggests that the album's message is best understood as a complete, immersive experience.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of directive speech acts in Ariana Grande's Eternal Sunshine interview with Zach Sang reveals a diverse range of commands, orders, requests, and suggestions, each playing a distinct role in the conversation. Requests, with 20 instances, were the most frequently used, suggesting a preference for polite, indirect language that helps maintain rapport and invites cooperation. Commands, seen 16 times, indicate moments where a stronger assertion was necessary, while 15 suggestions reflect a gentler approach to influencing the conversation. Orders, being the least frequent with only 9 instances, show that direct authoritative language was sparingly applied, balancing directness with subtlety. These findings underscore the significant role of directive speech acts in managing conversational flow and establishing social dynamics between interviewer and interviewee.

These results contribute to a broader understanding of how directive speech acts function within high-profile media interactions, where language serves as both a tool of influence and a means to uphold public image. By analyzing how directives are used strategically in this interview, the study highlights the nuanced interplay between power, politeness, and engagement in media settings. This research not only offers insight into Ariana Grande's conversational style but also provides a basis for exploring directive speech acts across similar contexts, illuminating how language shapes relationships, expectations, and authority in public discourse.

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