

## Assertive and Directive Illocutionary Acts and Politeness Strategies in Reacher Season 1: A Pragmatic Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates how authority and dominance are linguistically constructed through illocutionary acts in Reacher Season 1. Focusing exclusively on the main character's utterances, the research examines the use of Assertive and Directive speech acts alongside politeness strategies in high-pressure contexts such as interrogations, threats, and negotiations. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in Searle's classification of illocutionary acts and Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, the study analyzes 252 utterances extracted from the official subtitles of all eight episodes. The findings reveal a clear dominance of Assertive acts (183 occurrences) over Directives (69 occurrences), indicating that Reacher primarily exerts authority by controlling information rather than by issuing commands. Informing and Stating emerge as the most frequent subtypes, reinforcing his role as a strategist who shapes events through reasoning and factual control. Although Directives appear less frequently, Commanding functions as a decisive tool in urgent situations. Across both categories, Bald on Record strategy overwhelmingly dominates, reflecting efficiency and urgency in high-stakes interactions. However, the selective use of Positive and Negative Politeness demonstrates situational adaptability. The study argues that Reacher's authority is constructed not merely through overt dominance but through calculated communicative choices that balance assertiveness, efficiency, and contextual sensitivity.

**Keywords:** *illocutionary acts, politeness strategies, assertive acts, directive acts, character communication.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is not only used to convey information but also to perform actions within social interactions. In everyday communication, speakers use language to request,

command, assert, promise, or express attitudes toward particular situations. This idea is central to pragmatics, a field of linguistics that examines how meaning is constructed through context and speaker intention (Levinson, 1983). One of the key concepts within pragmatics is speech act theory, which explains how utterances function as actions performed during communication. Austin (1962) proposed that when people speak, they perform three acts simultaneously: locutionary acts, which refer to the literal utterance; illocutionary acts, which reflect the speaker's intended communicative force; and perlocutionary acts, which concern the effect of the utterance on the hearer. The application of these concepts to fictional texts has developed within literary pragmatics. As noted by Chapman and Clark (2019), fictional discourse can be approached as a communicative event in which linguistic analysis helps explain how character intention, interaction, and narrative function are constructed through language. In this sense, the analysis of speech acts provides a useful framework for understanding how character identity is shaped within a story world.

Among Austin's categories, illocutionary acts are especially important because they reveal what speakers intend to accomplish through their utterances. Searle (1979) later developed this framework by classifying illocutionary acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Assertive acts are used to convey information or express belief, while directive acts are intended to influence the hearer's actions. These two categories are particularly relevant in communicative situations involving authority, persuasion, control, and negotiation. In addition to performing speech acts, speakers often employ politeness strategies to manage interpersonal relationships and reduce potential threats to the hearer's face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are especially significant when speakers perform potentially face-threatening acts, such as commands, requests, or disagreement. Taken together, speech act theory and politeness theory offer a useful framework for examining how speakers perform authority while still managing social interaction.

In modern media, particularly film and television, language functions beyond storytelling; it reflects the dynamics of social interaction. Analyzing speech acts and politeness strategies in these settings allows for a deeper exploration of how characters

assert power, manage relationships, and fulfill their narrative roles within fictional yet socially meaningful contexts. Nani (2024) highlights how language in modern media reflects and shapes social and cultural evolution, playing a significant role in shaping the dynamics of digital communication in the modern era. However, applying politeness theory to film dialogue requires attention to the fact that fictional conversations do not function in the same way as everyday interaction. Locher and Jucker (2021) explain that dialogue in film operates on two levels: as communication between characters within the story and as a means of shaping how audiences understand those characters. In this sense, Jack Reacher's direct and often bald-on-record utterances do more than manage interaction with other characters. They also help construct his image for the viewer as efficient, controlled, and relatively unconcerned with unnecessary interpersonal softening. As Bednarek (2018) argues, although film dialogue is scripted, it is typically designed to resemble recognizable patterns of real-life communication. This makes pragmatic analysis particularly relevant for examining how character identity and interpersonal meaning are constructed through language in television discourse.

Current pragmatic scholarship has examined speech act usage across a range of communicative contexts, including pedagogical interaction (Sudarmawan et al., 2022), cinematic social dynamics (Restuadi & Ardi, 2021), and antagonistic characterization through impoliteness (Mukhallad & Wibowo, 2022). More recently, Peloušková (2024) has shown how speech acts can function as mechanisms of manipulation and power negotiation in antagonist discourse. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that speech act theory and politeness theory remain highly productive for analyzing how fictional dialogue reflects social meaning, interpersonal control, and character construction. However, most of this scholarship tends to focus on either socially expressive interaction or characters whose communicative behavior is relatively expansive. As a result, the pragmatic construction of authority through minimal, restrained, and highly controlled speech remains underexplored. This gap is important because masculine authority in fictional discourse is often conveyed not only through what characters say, but through how consistently they say it. Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla (2017) argue that character identity is shaped through recurring

pragmatic patterns, while Kiesling (2018) suggests that linguistic choices can index particular social identities, including competence, detachment, and control. In the case of military-trained or hyper-masculine figures, these patterns may appear in the preference for directness, reduced verbal elaboration, and strategic interpersonal restraint. Examining these tendencies through the categories of illocutionary acts and politeness strategies allows this study to move beyond surface-level assumptions of “toughness” and toward a more precise understanding of how pragmatic authority is constructed in high-pressure interaction.

These pragmatic phenomena can be clearly observed in media discourse, particularly in television series where dialogue plays a central role in shaping character relationships and narrative tension. One example is Jack Reacher in *Reacher* Season 1, portrayed by Alan Ritchson. Reacher is characterized by a calm, direct, and highly controlled communication style, and he frequently engages in interactions involving interrogation, negotiation, suspicion, and conflict. Despite his minimal and straightforward speech, his utterances often carry strong illocutionary force while still maintaining elements of politeness. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the use of assertive and directive illocutionary acts produced by the character Reacher in *Reacher* Season 1. It also examines the politeness strategies used in delivering these speech acts, particularly in high-stakes interactions. By applying Searle’s (1979) classification of illocutionary acts and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, this research seeks to explain how Reacher’s communication style demonstrates the strategic use of language in situations involving pressure, authority, and interpersonal control.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design within a pragmatic approach. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study aims to interpret meaning, language use, and contextual interaction rather than measure variables statistically. More specifically, the analysis focuses on how meaning is conveyed through utterances in context, particularly through the use of assertive and directive illocutionary acts and the politeness strategies accompanying them. This analytical narrowing was applied deliberately in order

to maintain a clear alignment between the research objectives, the theoretical framework, and the nature of the data. Although Searle (1979) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories, this study focuses specifically on assertive and directive acts because they are the two categories most directly associated with the construction of authority, control, and situational management in high-pressure interaction. Within the discourse of Reacher Season 1, these functions are particularly relevant in scenes involving interrogation, tactical reasoning, warning, instruction, confrontation, and conflict resolution, where Reacher's utterances are primarily used either to define and interpret reality or to influence the actions of others. Initial contextual review of the complete dataset indicated that commissive, expressive, and declarative acts were comparatively less central to the recurring interactional patterns examined in this study. Therefore, the exclusion of these categories should not be understood as a denial of their possible presence, but as a methodological delimitation intended to preserve analytical depth, relevance, and consistency with the central research problem. A pragmatic approach was therefore selected because it allows the analysis to concentrate on speaker intention, contextual meaning, and the interpersonal function of language in interaction. This is consistent with Creswell and Poth (2017), who argue that qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring how meaning is constructed in specific settings. In addition, Krippendorff (2018) emphasizes that textual analysis can be used to produce valid inferences about the context in which communication occurs. In this study, the dialogue is treated not merely as text, but as situated interaction that reflects social meaning and communicative intention.

This approach was chosen because the data consist of spoken utterances produced by a fictional character in a television series. Rather than examining language quantitatively, the study seeks to interpret how speech acts are performed and how politeness strategies are used in high-pressure communicative situations. Through this approach, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how Jack Reacher's utterances reflect authority, dominance, control, and social positioning within the narrative. Although the analysis focuses exclusively on Jack Reacher's utterances as the primary object of study, these utterances are not interpreted in isolation. Their pragmatic functions are analyzed in

relation to the interactional context in which they occur, including the nature of the situation, the communicative goal of the exchange, and Reacher's relationship to his interlocutors. This is particularly important because speech acts and politeness strategies do not carry fixed meanings independent of context, but derive their force from the social and situational conditions in which they are produced. Therefore, the study adopts a character-centered but context-sensitive design; it does not aim to compare Reacher's speech style systematically with all other characters in the series, but rather to examine how his communicative authority is constructed through repeated pragmatic choices across different interactional environments.

The use of fictional dialogue as linguistic data has been recognized in contemporary pragmatic studies. Hoffmann and Kirner-Ludwig (2020) argue that television dialogue provides a controlled environment in which pragmatic patterns can be observed clearly and systematically. Similarly, Locher and Jucker (2021) explain that although fictional dialogue is scripted, it is typically constructed to remain pragmatically recognizable and socially interpretable to audiences. In other words, fictional discourse does not function as a direct reproduction of naturally occurring conversation, but as a stylized representation of communicative behavior shaped by narrative, characterization, and audience expectation. For this reason, television discourse offers a relevant and analytically valuable site for pragmatic investigation, particularly when the aim is not to generalize universally to real-world interaction, but to examine how authority, control, and interpersonal meaning are linguistically constructed within a fictional narrative.

The object of this research is the dialogue of Jack Reacher, the main character in *Reacher* Season 1, released in 2022. The analysis focuses exclusively on Reacher's utterances across all eight episodes of the season. The primary source of data was the official subtitles available on the Prime Video platform, which were used as the basis for transcription and analysis. *Reacher* Season 1 was selected because it presents a consistent pattern of high-stakes interaction involving interrogation, conflict, negotiation, and threat, all of which provide a relevant context for examining assertive and directive illocutionary acts. In addition, Reacher's communicative style is marked by directness, restraint, and strategic

control, making the series a particularly suitable object for pragmatic analysis. By including all eight episodes, the study also seeks to ensure sufficient breadth of data and recurring interactional patterns, in line with the principle of data saturation described by Saunders et al. (2018).

The data collection process was conducted systematically. First, all eight episodes of *Reacher* Season 1 were selected for analysis to capture the full range of the main character's interactions without limiting the study to sampled scenes or selected episodes. The official subtitles from Prime Video were then manually transcribed into a data table prepared for analysis. To ensure transcription accuracy, each episode was repeatedly watched and compared with the subtitle text so that the written data remained aligned with the spoken dialogue in the series. After the transcription process was completed, all utterances spoken by Jack Reacher were identified and extracted from the full transcript. Each utterance was then documented along with supporting contextual information, including episode number and timestamp, to facilitate tracing and interpretation during the analytical stage.

The data analysis was conducted through a process of classification and interpretation. All extracted utterances were examined to identify those containing illocutionary force relevant to the scope of the study. The unit of analysis in this research was the individual utterance produced by Jack Reacher. Each relevant utterance was then classified according to Searle's (1979) categories of illocutionary acts, with the analysis focusing specifically on assertive and directive acts. After this classification, the selected utterances were further analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory to identify the politeness strategy employed in each case. In this study, politeness theory was not applied on the assumption that all utterances were intended to maintain social harmony or minimize face threat in a conventional sense. Rather, the framework was used to examine how interpersonal force was managed in context, including whether face concerns were softened, bypassed, or strategically subordinated to urgency, control, or dominance. This is particularly relevant in high-pressure interactions such as interrogation, confrontation, and intimidation, where directness may function not as a failure of politeness but as a pragmatically appropriate response to situational demands.

The coding and interpretation process was carried out iteratively through repeated review of the data and its surrounding context to maintain consistency and analytical accuracy across the dataset. An utterance was categorized as assertive or directive based on its dominant illocutionary force in context rather than its grammatical form alone. Because a single utterance may contain more than one communicative function, classification was based on the dominant illocutionary force most clearly realized in the immediate interactional context. Meanwhile, the identification of politeness strategies was likewise conducted contextually by examining how the utterance managed interpersonal distance, urgency, imposition, and power relations within the interaction. In scenes involving interrogation, intimidation, or tactical confrontation, directness was not automatically interpreted as impoliteness, but was analyzed in relation to the situational demands and communicative objectives of the speaker. In ambiguous cases, classification priority was given to the communicative outcome most explicitly acknowledged or responded to by the interlocutor within the subsequent interaction.

## DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study concerning the use of Assertive and Directive illocutionary acts, as well as the politeness strategies employed by Jack Reacher in *Reacher* Season 1. The discussion is organized based on the distribution of the identified speech acts, their communicative functions, the politeness strategies accompanying them, and their broader pragmatic significance in constructing authority and interactional dominance. By examining these patterns, this section aims to explain not only what types of utterances are most frequently used but also how they contribute to the portrayal of Reacher's communicative style in high-stakes situations.

### ***Distribution of Assertive and Directive Illocutionary Acts***

This study identified a total of 252 illocutionary acts produced by Jack Reacher in *Reacher* Season 1, consisting of 183 Assertive acts and 69 Directive acts. The numerical distribution indicates that Assertive acts are substantially more dominant than Directive acts throughout the series. At the most basic level, this finding shows that Reacher's verbal behavior is more frequently directed toward conveying information, stating conclusions, and

presenting interpretations than toward instructing others to act. However, the significance of this pattern lies not merely in the difference in frequency, but in what it reveals about the pragmatic construction of Reacher’s communicative authority. To provide a clearer overview of the internal distribution of these two categories, the frequency of Assertive and Directive illocutionary act subtypes is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1.** Assertive Illocutionary Act and Politeness Strategy used by Jack Reacher

No	Assertive Illocutionary act	Frequency	Politeness Strategy	The Dominant Frequency
1.	Inform	52	Bald on Record	36
2.	State	36	Bald on Record	26
3.	Deny	26	Bald on Record	23
4.	Conjecture	26	Bald on Record	21
5.	Report	14	Bald on Record	9
6.	Assure	8	Bald on Record	4
7.	Claim	7	Bald on Record	7
8.	Praise	6	Positive Politeness	6
9.	Affirm	5	Bald on Record	4
10.	Insist	3	Bald on Record	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>183</b>		<b>139</b>

As shown in Table 1, Informing appears as the most dominant Assertive subtype, followed by State, Deny, and Conjecture. This distribution suggests that Reacher’s speech is strongly oriented toward explaining, clarifying, correcting, and interpreting situations, reinforcing his role as an analytically dominant character.

**Table 2.** Directive Illocutionary Act and Politeness Strategy used by Jack Reacher

No	Directive Illocutionary act	Frequency	Politeness Strategy	The Dominant Frequency
1.	Command	30	Bald on Record	28
2.	Suggest	13	Bald on Record	7
3.	Request	12	Negative Politeness	6
4.	Advice	9	Bald on Record	4
5.	Warn	5	Bald on Record	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>		<b>48</b>

As shown in Table 2, Command emerges as the most frequent Directive subtype, followed by Suggest and Request, indicating that Reacher tends to influence others' actions most directly in situations requiring efficiency, urgency, or tactical control.

The predominance of Assertive acts suggests that Reacher's authority is primarily built through informational control rather than constant verbal imposition. In many interactions, he does not need to establish dominance by repeatedly issuing commands. Instead, he shapes the interaction by defining what is true, what is relevant, and what should be understood by others in the situation. In pragmatic terms, this pattern indicates that Reacher often controls discourse by positioning himself as the one who can most accurately interpret the circumstances surrounding an event, a threat, or an ongoing investigation. This pattern indicates a systematic organization of interaction where authority is derived from the distribution of information. A useful contrast can be seen when this pattern is compared with findings from other character-based pragmatic studies. In their analysis of women-centric films, Ashfiya and Degaf (2023) found that the dominant speech-act tendency was not informational assertion, but future-oriented commitment, with promises emerging as the most frequent commissive form among the main characters. Their study further shows that these utterances often functioned to build trust, reassurance, and supportive interpersonal bonds between characters. Additionally, speech acts in their data were largely literal and direct, yet that directness mainly served relational and commitment-based purposes. In Reacher's case, however, directness more often operates as a marker of cognitive authority and tactical confidence. This difference supports the interpretation that speech-act distribution is not merely a stylistic feature, but a meaningful indicator of how particular character types are pragmatically constructed within their narrative environments.

Consequently, this distribution also reflects the narrative demands of the action-thriller genre. While Ashfiya and Degaf (2023) highlight how genre-specific social structures shape character speech in drama and mystery, Reacher is consistently placed in situations involving criminal investigation, interpersonal suspicion, hidden motives, and tactical uncertainty. In such contexts, the ability to observe, infer, and articulate information becomes central to both narrative progression and character construction. Therefore, the

higher occurrence of Assertive acts is not incidental, but closely related to Reacher's function as a problem-solver and dominant interpretive presence within the story. The lower number of Directive acts does not diminish their importance, but rather indicates that they are used more selectively and strategically within high-pressure interactions.

### ***The Function of Assertive Acts in Constructing Authority***

The dominance of Assertive acts becomes more meaningful when examined through its internal distribution. Among the Assertive subtypes, Informing appears as the most frequent, followed by State, Deny, and Conjecture. This pattern demonstrates that Reacher's communicative style is strongly oriented toward explanation, clarification, contradiction, and inference. These functions align closely with his role as an observant and analytically driven protagonist whose verbal contributions often shape how other characters understand unfolding events. The prominence of Informing indicates that Reacher frequently uses language to explain evidence, present observations, or clarify situations to others.

This stands in stark contrast to traditional instructional settings, such as the online classroom in Sudarmawan et al. (2022), where Representative acts (Assertives) may only account for a small fraction (9.2%) of total interactions. While a lecturer primarily uses Representatives to convey facts or "narrative text" rules, Reacher employs them as a primary tool for situational dominance. In many interactions, Reacher does not merely respond to what is being said, but actively reframes the situation by introducing facts or deductions that alter the direction of the conversation. This suggests that his speech functions not only as participation in dialogue, but also as a mechanism for establishing interpretive control.

By informing others, Reacher positions himself as a reliable source of knowledge, which in turn strengthens his authority without requiring overt coercion. Unlike the English lecturer who possesses a "natural atmosphere" of authority over students, Reacher often enters high-stakes environments with no institutional power. Therefore, his reliance on Assertive acts "sharpens" our understanding of epistemic authority; he creates power where none exists by being the most informed person in the room. Similarly, the frequent occurrence of State, Deny, and Conjecture reflects a communication style built on precision

and evaluative judgment. Through statements, Reacher often delivers concise conclusions or factual assertions. Through denial, he rejects assumptions or corrects misinformation. Through conjecture, he projects possible explanations based on available evidence.

Together, these subtypes reveal that his authority is constructed through the performance of certainty, reasoning, and situational awareness. In this sense, Assertive acts are not simply a dominant category in quantitative terms, but a central pragmatic resource through which Reacher's identity as a competent and dominant figure is linguistically maintained. Reacher's language demonstrates that social dominance is not always enacted through forceful directives or aggressive verbal behavior. Instead, it can be constructed through the consistent presentation of credible, organized, and contextually powerful information. As a result, Assertive acts in this study function not only as speech act categories but also as indicators of how knowledge and authority become intertwined in high-stakes communication.

### ***The Role of Directive Acts in High-Pressure Interaction***

The dominance of Command in Reacher's discourse suggests that his Directive speech is strongly associated with urgency and situational efficiency. This aligns with findings in the analysis of the movie *Green Book*, where the character Tony Lip primarily employs 'Bald-on-Record' strategies in directive acts to handle situations that need immediate attention (Restuadi & Ardi, 2021). In high-risk interactions, Reacher frequently relies on concise utterances designed to produce immediate compliance. However, while Tony Lip's directness often stems from a 'close relationship' with his interlocutor, Reacher's use of commands appears more strictly functional. This supports the interpretation that his Directives are reserved for moments where precision and speed are interactionally necessary.

Furthermore, the presence of Suggest, Request, and Advice in Reacher's speech indicates a capacity for more measured influence. Unlike the '*Green Book*' findings where requesting is often a sign of social deference, Reacher's use of these softer directives suggests a tactical flexibility, choosing the most effective pragmatic tool to ensure coordination in high-stakes environments. Rather than using elaborate or softened formulations, Reacher

frequently relies on concise and unambiguous utterances that are designed to produce immediate compliance. This supports the interpretation that his Directives are not used casually, but are reserved for moments in which precision and speed are interactionally necessary.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the Directive acts as a situational tool of action in Reacher's discourse. If Assertive acts allow him to dominate through interpretation, Directive acts allow him to intervene more directly when circumstances demand movement, compliance, or immediate decision-making. This distinction is important because it shows that Reacher's communicative power does not rely on constant command. Instead, his use of directives appears highly selective, making them more impactful precisely because they are not overused.

### ***Politeness Strategies in Reacher's High-Stakes Communication***

The analysis of politeness strategies reveals that Bald on Record is the most dominant strategy in both Assertive and Directive acts. This finding is highly consistent with the interactional environments in which Reacher operates. Throughout the series, he is frequently involved in situations marked by danger, suspicion, confrontation, and urgency. In such contexts, directness becomes a pragmatic necessity, as the primary communicative goal is often clarity and efficiency rather than interpersonal cushioning. A comparable pattern appears in Narayana et al. (2024), whose analysis of *Peaky Blinders* also found Bald on Record as the most dominant politeness strategy. This similarity suggests that in crime-oriented and high-pressure television narratives, directness often functions as an interactional norm rather than as a purely individual personality trait.

The prevalence of the Bald on Record strategy suggests that Reacher prioritizes communicative effectiveness over social softening. His utterances are often delivered with minimal mitigation, allowing him to communicate information or instructions in a manner that is immediate and difficult to misinterpret. This is particularly important in high-stakes environments, where ambiguity can produce confusion, delay, or even physical danger. Narayana et al. (2024) similarly note that Bald on Record tends to emerge in situations where "efficiency is needed" and where speakers are under pressure to communicate as

clearly and rapidly as possible. In this light, Reacher's directness should not be interpreted merely as personal bluntness, but as a contextually appropriate pragmatic choice shaped by situational urgency.

This pattern also aligns with Reacher's characterization as a former military police officer. Military and tactical communication often values brevity, directness, and operational clarity, especially under pressure. The dominance of Bald on Record strategy in this study, therefore, reflects not only the demands of the situation, but also the communicative norms associated with Reacher's institutional and psychological background. His speech reflects a discourse style shaped by environments in which efficient action is prioritized over interpersonal elaboration. This interpretation is reinforced by Narayana et al. (2024), who found that direct politeness strategies in *Peaky Blinders* were especially frequent in interactions shaped by occupational hierarchy and unequal social power. In Reacher's case, such directness similarly functions as a marker of situational authority, even when that authority is not formally institutionalized within the interaction.

However, the findings also show that Reacher does not rely exclusively on directness. Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness are also present in selected interactions. Positive Politeness appears when he seeks to maintain solidarity, support allies, or reduce interpersonal distance. Negative Politeness appears when he softens imposition, particularly in contexts where the autonomy of the hearer is interactionally relevant. The presence of these strategies indicates that Reacher's communication style is not socially inflexible. Instead, he demonstrates the capacity to adapt his linguistic choices according to the demands of the relationship and the situation.

This variation is important because it complicates a simplistic reading of Reacher as merely blunt or socially detached. While directness remains his dominant pragmatic style, he is capable of using politeness strategically when relational management becomes necessary. In this way, politeness strategies in this study function not only as markers of interpersonal attitude but also as evidence of pragmatic competence within high-pressure communication.

### ***Pragmatic Construction of Masculine Authority in Reacher***

When the findings on illocutionary acts and politeness strategies are considered together, they reveal a broader pattern regarding the pragmatic construction of masculine authority in *Reacher* Season 1. This construction differs significantly from other masculine "hero" archetypes, such as Thor, whose speech acts are often used to reflect an "arrogant characteristic" (Lestari & Hartati, 2020). While Thor's authority is initially tied to his status as a candidate for king, leading to a diverse range of direct and indirect speech acts, Reacher's authority is constructed through a highly controlled communicative style. Additionally, unlike Thor, who may use interrogative forms to express requests indirectly (Lestari & Hartati, 2020), Reacher prefers linguistic economy. He speaks in ways that define events, expose hidden meanings, and reorganize what others understand about a situation. This positions him as someone who not only acts effectively, but also sees more clearly than those around him. Meanwhile, the selective use of Directive acts demonstrates that when he does attempt to control action directly, he does so efficiently and purposefully rather than excessively.

The dominance of Reacher's 183 Assertives is a form of communicative precision. In this sense, Reacher's discourse aligns more closely with forms of masculinity associated with military-coded discipline. According to Arafah and Kristianto (2020) in the study of masculinity construction in a film entitled *The Yellow Birds*, authority is often linked to self-control, emotional restraint, and behavioral efficiency rather than overt verbal display. As shown in *The Yellow Birds*, military masculinity is frequently associated with stoicism, self-sufficiency, and emotional detachment, all of which are treated as signs of capability and masculine competence. However, the representations of military or combat-oriented masculinity in screen narratives have often been shaped through exaggerated images of toughness and hypermasculine behavior. Chapin et al. (2017), for example, note that Hollywood war films have frequently portrayed soldiers through simplified and dramatized masculine stereotypes, often emphasizing excessive toughness, aggression, and emotional detachment. In contrast, Reacher's authority is not primarily performed through

exaggerated verbal aggression but through restraint, certainty, and communicative precision.

Together, these patterns produce a discourse style that reflects discipline, certainty, and tactical intelligence. This is significant because it suggests that masculine authority in action-thriller narratives is not always performed through loudness or the "arrogance" seen in Thor's character arc. In Reacher's case, authority is often quieter but more strategically effective. This creates a model of masculinity that is pragmatically disciplined rather than merely physically dominant. From a broader analytical perspective, this finding contributes to the understanding of how fictional characters are constructed through language. While Lestari and Hartati (2020) argue that speech acts represent "real-life" problems in learning, in Reacher, they function as a specific narrative mechanism. The combination of Assertive dominance, selective Directives, and dominant Bald on Record strategy creates a coherent communicative persona that reinforces his role as a calm, competent, and socially commanding figure.

In conclusion, the pragmatic profile of Jack Reacher suggests that masculine authority in high-stakes narratives is constructed through a 'less-is-more' communicative philosophy. By prioritizing Assertive acts over Directives and employing Bald on Record strategies not as an act of aggression, but as a tool for situational efficiency, Reacher redefines the 'tough guy' archetype from one of physical intimidation to one of epistemic and tactical discipline. This study contributes to the broader field of pragmatics by demonstrating that 'politeness' is not a fixed set of social rules, but a dynamic strategic choice that adapts to the demands of danger and power. Ultimately, Reacher's discourse proves that the most commanding presence in a room is often not the one who speaks the loudest, but the one who most effectively controls the flow of information and the interpretation of reality.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study set out to explore how a masculine, military-coded character maintains politeness while performing assertive and directive illocutionary acts in high-stakes environments. The analysis reveals that Jack Reacher's authority is not constructed through aggressive verbal dominance, but through a 'pragmatically disciplined' style. By utilizing

Assertive acts to control the interpretation of facts and employing Bald on Record strategies for situational efficiency, Reacher demonstrates that directness is a functional necessity in danger-driven discourse rather than a lack of social awareness.

This study shows that, in high-stakes fictional interaction, politeness can also function as a tactical communicative resource rather than only as interpersonal softening. In the context of action-thriller narratives, politeness strategies function as tactical instruments. For researchers and students of pragmatics, this suggests that 'linguistic economy,' as the act of being brief and direct, should be recognized as a sophisticated form of pragmatic competence when stakes are high and time is limited.

While this study focused on the masculine authority of a single protagonist, future research could examine how these pragmatic patterns change in female-led action narratives or in ensemble casts where power is more distributed. Additionally, further studies could compare the pragmatic construction of 'heroic' authority versus 'villainous' authority to see if the reliance on Assertive informational control remains a consistent marker of power.

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