

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It discusses the background of the research, followed by the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter explains the significance of the study and outlines the scope and limitations of the research.

1.1. Background of Study

In modern linguistics, song lyrics are increasingly studied not only as forms of artistic expression but also as authentic linguistic data that reflect social interaction, human emotion, and communicative practices. Unlike formal written texts, song lyrics often employ language in creative and context-dependent ways, making them a valuable resource for exploring how language functions in real-life communicative settings. According to Norman Fairclough (1995), texts are not merely carriers of information; they function as social practices that both reflect and influence societal norms, relationships, and ideologies. From this perspective, song lyrics can be examined not only for their artistic value but also for how they mediate social interaction, convey attitudes, and guide listener responses.

Roman Jakobson (1960) further emphasizes the poetic function of language where meaning is constructed through stylistic and structural features. In song lyrics, this function is particularly visible, as language is manipulated to evoke emotion, create rhythm, and establish connections with the audience. Linguistic analysis of songs, therefore, goes beyond examining words and grammar in isolation; it involves understanding how linguistic forms operate to produce communicative effects, especially when singers use imperative sentences to interact with listeners.

Imperative sentences in song lyrics are especially interesting from a pragmatic perspective, because they are inherently action-oriented. Unlike declarative sentences that describe states or events, imperatives aim to influence the behaviour, attention, or emotional response of the listener. Imperatives can appear as commands, requests, suggestions, invitations, or warnings, often

layer-ed with stylistic and emotional nuances that affect interpretation (Searle, 1979). Analyzing these sentences pragmatically allows researchers to investigate not only their grammatical structure but also their communicative function, how singers use language to engage, persuade, encourage, or guide the listener.

Previous linguistic research on song lyrics has explored stylistic devices, figurative language, syntactic patterns, and semantic relations. For example, studies by Grensideng and Agung (2023) and Milana and Ardi (2021) identified multiple types of figurative expressions in popular songs, including hyperbole, metaphor, simile, and irony. Large-scale computational analyses, such as those by Bansal et al. (2025), reveal patterns in linguistic complexity and social trends across genres like hip-hop. However, despite the richness of these studies, the pragmatic analysis of imperatives in contemporary pop music remains limited. Few studies examine how these sentences function as tools of interpersonal influence, emotional expression, or listener engagement in songs, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of linguistic action in music.

Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album is an ideal subject for such an analysis. The album achieved global popularity, received commercial success, and won the Grammy Award for Best Pop Vocal Album in 2017, making its lyrics highly influential in contemporary culture. Its songs frequently employ imperative sentences that are directed at listeners, not just as grammatical constructs but as pragmatic instruments of communication. Studies showed that the album includes metaphors, imagery, and stylistic variation, making it linguistically valuable for analyzing meaning and emotion as research been done to this album before by Rahmawati (2021) about this album figurative. In addition, psycholinguistic research indicates that the sentence structures and word choices in *Divide* resonate emotionally with listeners, highlighting the cognitive and social impact of the lyrics (Putra & Sari, 2021). Together, these features demonstrate that *Divide* is not only commercially and culturally significant but also empirically rich, providing ample opportunities for studying imperative forms, syntactic patterns, and pragmatic functions in pop music. By studying

these imperatives, researchers can uncover how language choices in song lyrics are shaped by context, emotion, and intended listener response.

The focus on imperative sentences is grounded in their distinctive pragmatic function within language use. Unlike declarative or interrogative forms, imperative sentences are inherently action-oriented, as they are primarily used to express directive illocutionary acts such as commands, requests, suggestions, and invitations. This makes them particularly relevant for analysis using Searle's (1979) theory of directive speech acts, as the form of the sentence closely aligns with its communicative intention. In the context of song lyrics, imperative sentences serve as a direct means of engaging listeners, influencing their emotions, attitudes, or imagined actions. Therefore, examining imperative constructions allows for a more precise investigation of how locutionary forms are utilized to realize specific illocutionary forces. By focusing on these structures, the study can more clearly reveal the relationship between linguistic form and pragmatic function, making imperative sentences a strategically appropriate and theoretically relevant object of analysis.

Previous research on imperative sentences has been conducted in various discourse contexts, such as television programs and films. For example, Fransiska, Hadiati, and Muttaqin (2022) examined the form and function of imperatives in the Netflix cooking program *Nadiya Bakes*, showing that imperatives can provide instructions and also foster interpersonal closeness with the audience. Similarly, Hasyim et al. (2024) analyzed imperative sentence translation techniques in the 2020 film *Mulan*, emphasizing the importance of considering contextual and pragmatic functions to preserve meaning in translation. These studies indicate that imperatives have been explored in different media, but they often focus on classification or translation rather than examining the pragmatic meaning of imperatives as the central object. Research on imperatives in song lyrics, particularly in popular music albums, is still limited. Until now, there has been no study appears to have focused specifically on the use of imperatives in Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album. This suggests a research gap, as lyrics often rely on implied meaning and listener interpretation,

providing a suitable context for pragmatic analysis. The present study trying to address this gap by examining both the functions of imperatives to know the inferred meaning focusing on *Divide* to allow for a contextual and focused analysis of imperative sentences in contemporary popular music.

1.2. Research Question

Based on the background of the study that have been stated previously, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What functions do imperatives serve in Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album?
2. What factors contribute to the dominant use of imperatives in Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album?

1.3. Objective of The Study

Based on the questions raised above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the functions of imperative in the Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album.
2. To determine the factor of most frequently occurring functions of imperative in *Divide* album lyrics.

1.4. Significance of The Study

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical significance in the field of linguistics, particularly in pragmatics, by analyzing the use of imperative sentences in Ed Sheeran's *Divide* album. The contributions of this research can be described as follows:

a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of pragmatics, particularly in the analysis of imperative sentences as directive speech acts. By classifying imperatives according to their pragmatic function, such as commands, requests, advice, warnings, and invitations because this study shows how the same grammatical form can convey different meanings depending on context, intention, and audience. Furthermore, by applying pragmatic theory to song lyrics, which represent authentic and artistic language use, this study

provides a conceptual contribution to the understanding of how language functions in expressive and communicative contexts.

b. Practical Significance

This research is expected to provide several practical benefits for different groups. For students of linguistics and English literature, the study can help improve their ability to identify and analyze imperative sentences in real texts, as well as deepen their understanding of how meaning is shaped by context and speaker intention. It can also support them in applying pragmatic theory in assignments, classroom discussions, and text analysis activities.

For teachers of English, this study may serve as an alternative teaching resource by using song lyrics to illustrate how imperative sentences function in real communication. This approach can make the explanation of pragmatic concepts more engaging and easier for students to understand. For future researchers, this study can be used as a reference for those interested in pragmatic analysis, particularly on imperative sentences or other speech acts in songs and media texts. It may also provide guidance in selecting appropriate methods, organizing data, and analyzing pragmatic meanings in similar studies. Finally, for general readers, this research can enhance their understanding of how imperative sentences are used in songs to influence, persuade, or express emotions, thereby helping them interpret lyrical meanings more critically and accurately.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study's pragmatic analysis of imperative sentences in the lyrics of *Divide* by Ed Sheeran. This study specifically focuses on the illocutionary force of directive speech acts, based on Searle's (1979) classification, in order to examine how imperative forms function as commands, requests, suggestions, or invitations within the lyrics. The analysis emphasizes the relationship between the locutionary form (imperative sentence structure) and its illocutionary function (the speaker's intended act), rather than discussing speech acts in general. Therefore, the study aims to identify the specific functions of

directive illocutionary acts found through imperative sentences and determine which function is most frequently used in the album.

The limitation of this study lies in its focus on imperative sentences found exclusively in the song lyrics of *Divide* by Ed Sheeran. The analysis focuses on the illocutionary force of imperative sentences as directive speech acts based on Searle's (1979) framework, to keep the analysis more focused and avoid broader communicative contexts such as interaction or listener interpretation. This limitation allows the study to concentrate on the relationship between the locutionary structure of imperative sentences and their specific illocutionary functions, such as commands, requests, or suggestions within the textual context of the album.