



Investigating the Speech Functions Used in TheWizardLiz Youtube Videos and Its Implication in Speaking Skill Learning

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ABSTRACT

Digital platforms have significantly expanded access to authentic English input, yet the pedagogical potential of speech functions in YouTube motivational monologues remains underexplored. This study investigates the types and distribution of speech functions in TheWizardLiz's YouTube videos and examines their implications for speaking skill development in EFL contexts. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were drawn from three purposively selected videos and supplemented by semi-structured interviews with four English Education students. Speech functions were classified using Holmes' (2013) framework and cross-referenced with Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1979) speech act theory. A total of 166 utterances were identified across four functional categories: directive (81; 48.8%), referential (41; 24.7%), expressive (36; 21.7%), and phatic (8; 4.8%). Metalinguistic and poetic functions were absent. The dominance of directive functions reflects the motivational genre's rhetorical goal of behavioral change. Pedagogically, exposure to these speech functions supports learners' pragmatic awareness, public speaking development, and communicative confidence. The study proposes concrete classroom applications including speech function identification tasks, imitation practice, and role-play activities grounded in Genre-Based Approaches.

Keywords: speech functions, YouTube, speaking skill, EFL learners, directive function

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed language learning practices. Communication competence now extends beyond grammatical mastery to encompass the ability to use language appropriately across diverse social contexts (Hymes, 1974). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, speaking skills occupy a central role because they enable learners to express ideas, emotions, and intentions in authentic communicative situations. Nevertheless, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulty in speaking due to limited exposure to real-world language use and insufficient awareness of how language functions pragmatically in interaction (Leong & Ahmadi, 2016).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is inseparable from its social contexts. Speech functions, the ways in which language is used to perform social actions such as expressing emotions, issuing directives, conveying information, or maintaining interpersonal bonds, are central to meaningful communication (Holmes, 2013). A learner, who recognizes not only what is said, but why and how it achieves social effect, is better equipped for real communicative engagement. However, many EFL instructional settings remain heavily form-focused, producing learners capable of grammatical accuracy yet unable to communicate functionally (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

YouTube has emerged as a prominent resource for authentic language input in digital learning environments. Unlike traditional instructional materials, YouTube videos expose learners to natural speech patterns including intonation, rhythm, vocabulary, and discourse-level organization (Nofrika, 2019; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). Among the diverse video genres available, motivational monologues are particularly valuable for language learning because they present extended spoken discourse characterized by clear delivery, accessible vocabulary, and structured argument. Such content closely approximates the demands of academic presentations and public speaking tasks.

TheWizardLiz is a prominent English-language content creator whose videos focus on self-improvement, confidence building, and emotional empowerment. Her monologue-style delivery is linguistically rich: it combines directive speech to guide and inspire, expressive speech to model emotional register, and referential speech to support arguments with

personal experience. Despite this pedagogical potential, the use of motivational YouTube monologues as data for speech function analysis, and as resources for teaching speaking skills, has received limited academic attention.

Prior research on speech functions has predominantly examined classroom discourse, textbook dialogues, and brief written texts (Indari et al., 2021; Katrina, 2019; Yuliana, 2019). Studies focusing on digital monologue genres remain scarce, despite the increasing prevalence of this discourse type in both academic and professional communication. This gap motivates the present study.

This study aims to analyze the speech functions realized in TheWizardLiz's YouTube videos and to examine their implications for EFL speaking skill learning. Three research questions guide the inquiry. First, what types of speech functions are present in TheWizardLiz's YouTube videos? Second, which speech function type is most dominant, and what rhetorical and pragmatic factors account for its dominance? Third, how can exposure to these speech functions be pedagogically applied to support speaking skill development?

The primary theoretical framework for this study is Holmes' (2013) classification of speech functions, which identifies six categories based on the social purposes language serves in interaction. The expressive function conveys the speaker's emotions, attitudes, and personal evaluations. The directive function aims to influence the listener's behavior or mental state through commands, advice, encouragement, or requests. The referential function provides factual information, explanations, or descriptions of the external world. The metalinguistic function focuses on language itself, such as clarifications of meaning or discussions of form. The poetic function draws attention to the aesthetic or creative qualities of language. The phatic function maintains social contact and interpersonal warmth, including greetings and expressions of solidarity. Holmes situates these functions within a sociolinguistic framework, arguing that effective communicators must understand not only what language means but what it does in social interaction (Holmes, 2013).

Holmes' functional categories are meaningfully complemented by speech act theory, which provides a philosophical basis for understanding how utterances perform actions in the world. Austin (1962) introduced the foundational distinction between locutionary acts (the

literal meaning of an utterance), illocutionary acts (the communicative intention behind an utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect produced in the listener). Searle (1979) further systematized this taxonomy, classifying illocutionary acts into directives (attempts to get the listener to do something), expressive (expressions of psychological states), representatives (claims about the world), commissives (commitments to future actions), and declarations (utterances that alter reality by their very expression).

While speech function theory (Holmes) and speech act theory (Austin; Searle) share a concern with language use in context, they differ in focus. Speech act theory is primarily concerned with speaker intention and the illocutionary force of individual utterances, while speech function theory emphasizes the social roles and interactional purposes served by patterns of language use. In the present study, Holmes' (2013) classification provides the primary analytical framework, while Austin's and Searle's perspectives inform the interpretation of how directive and expressive utterances function rhetorically within motivational monologue discourse.

The integration of YouTube into EFL instruction has been supported by a growing body of research demonstrating its effectiveness in developing vocabulary, listening comprehension, and speaking skills (Albahlal, 2019; Nofrika, 2019; Riswandi, 2016). YouTube videos provide multimodal input, combining visual, auditory, and textual channels, that supports comprehension and retention (Alabsi, 2020). The availability of subtitles further strengthens the connection between spoken and written language (Zanon, 2006). In the context of speaking development, exposure to authentic monologue discourse is particularly valuable because it models extended speech production, argumentation, and discourse coherence, competencies that are central to academic and professional communication (Salahuddin, 2023).

Previous studies have applied speech function analysis to diverse contexts, including classroom interactions (Indari et al., 2021; Ngazizah, 2017), political speeches (Tarigan & Natsir, 2014), and film dialogue (Dewi, 2024; Syamsiah, 2018). Across these contexts, directive and expressive functions consistently emerge as prominent in persuasive and emotionally engaging discourse. The application of speech function analysis to YouTube motivational

monologues, however, remains an underexplored area. Frobenius (2014), notes that video blogs occupy a distinctive pragmatic space between public and private discourse, presenting characteristics of both monologue and interactive communication. Analyzing speech functions within this genre contributes both to sociolinguistic theory and to the practical development of digital pedagogical resources

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to explore and describe naturally occurring speech phenomena within authentic digital discourse rather than to measure statistical relationships between variables. The descriptive dimension ensures a systematic and comprehensive account of the functional categories identified in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The primary data were drawn from three videos on TheWizardLiz's YouTube channel: (1) This Video Will Make You Confident, (2) How to Create Success, and (3) How to Stop Being Lazy and Pathetic. These videos were selected purposively based on three criteria: (a) high viewership and audience engagement, indicating broad representativeness within the channel's content; (b) thematic alignment with motivational discourse, ensuring content richness for speech function analysis; and (c) appropriate duration for systematic utterance-level coding. Purposive sampling in qualitative research prioritizes information-richness over statistical representativeness, selecting cases that are most likely to yield insights relevant to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 1999).

In addition, four students from the English Education Department of Universitas Tidar were selected as interview participants through purposive sampling, based on their active experience watching English-language YouTube content and their enrollment in speaking courses. The small sample size is consistent with qualitative inquiry, in which depth of insight takes precedence over numerical breadth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The primary instrument was the researcher as the main analytical agent, consistent with the role of the human instrument in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Supporting instruments included: (1) documentation sheets for classifying utterances into

Holmes' six speech function categories; (2) semi-structured interview guidelines exploring participants' awareness of speech functions, their learning experiences, and their perceptions of the videos' pedagogical value; and (3) video recordings of the selected YouTube content, reviewed repeatedly to ensure accurate transcription and coding.

Video transcripts were analyzed following the qualitative data analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, utterances were identified, segmented, and coded according to Holmes' (2013) speech function categories. Each utterance was assigned to one primary category based on its dominant communicative function. The coded data were then organized into tables for display. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied to the interview data, proceeding through familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Findings from transcript analysis and interviews were triangulated to strengthen analytical credibility. Investigator triangulation was achieved by involving a second coder to validate a random sample of categorized utterances, while data triangulation was ensured through the use of multiple data sources.

Result and Discussion

This study presents the analysis of speech functions used by TheWizardLiz in her YouTube video entitled This Video Will Make You Confident, How to Create Success, and How to Stop Being Lazy and Pathetic. From the results of this study, a total of 166 utterances were identified and classified into four of the six speech functions categories proposed by Holmes (2013). Specifically, 36 utterances were categorized as expressive, 81 directive, 41 referential, and 8 as phatic. Meanwhile, metalinguistic and poetic functions were not identified in any of the analyzed video. The complete frequency distribution by video is presented in Table 1, and the overall distribution across all videos is presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Speech Functions in TheWizardLiz's Videos by Video Title

Video Title	Speech Function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
This Video Will Make You Confident	Expressive	17	
	Directive	27	
	Referential	19	

How to Create Success	Phatic	3	
	Metalinguistic	0	
	Poetic	0	
	Subtotal	66	39.76
	Expressive	11	
	Directive	37	
	Referential	10	
How to Stop Being Lazy and Pathetic	Phatic	4	
	Metalinguistic	0	
	Poetic	0	
	Subtotal	62	37.35
	Expressive	8	
	Directive	17	
	Referential	12	
	Phatic	1	
	Metalinguistic	0	
	Poetic	0	
	Subtotal	38	22.89
	TOTAL	166	100

Across the three videos, directive utterances consistently dominated. In the first video, 27 directive utterances were identified; in the second video, 37; and in the third video, 17. These utterances were realized in the form of commands, encouragements, and advice aimed at influencing the audience's actions. The predominance of directive function reflects the motivational nature of the videos, where the speaker positions herself as a guide who encourages behavioral and mindset changes.

Referential functions appeared through statements providing information, explanations, and personal experiences. The first video contained 19 referential utterances, the second video 10, and the third video, 12. These utterances functioned to convey factual or experiential information supporting the motivational messages delivered in the videos. Expressive functions were identified in 36 utterances. The first video contained 17 expressive utterances, the second video 11, and the third video 8. These utterances expressed feelings, attitudes, and personal evaluations, contributing to emotional engagement between the speaker and the audience.

Phatic functions appeared least frequently, with 3 occurrences in the first video, 4 in the second, and 1 in the third. These were realized in greetings, appreciation, and solidarity-building expressions aimed at maintaining interpersonal connection with viewers.

The absence of metalinguistic and poetic functions indicates that the videos did not emphasize language explanation or aesthetic language features such as wordplay or stylistic ornamentation. The distribution of speech functions demonstrates that the communication style in the analyzed videos primarily focused on influencing actions (directive), providing supporting information (referential), and expressing personal stance (expressive), with limited emphasis on maintaining social contact (phatic).

Table 2

Overall Distribution of Speech Functions across All Videos

Speech Function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Expressive	36	21.7
Directive	81	48.8
Referential	41	24.7
Phatic	8	4.8
Metalinguistic	0	0
Poetic	0	0
Total	166	100

As previously showed in the table, the predominance of directive functions is consistent with the motivational features of TheWizardLiz's content. This function appears in the form of commands, invitations, and emotional encouragement such as "*Listen to me*", "*Write it down*", and "*Do it again*". While expressive functions provide emotional nuances in message delivery, referential functions play a role in providing information that supports arguments, and phatic functions maintain interpersonal relationships between speakers and listeners.

The distribution shows that TheWizardLiz's communication style focuses heavily on building emotional engagement and encouraging listeners to take action, which is very much in line with Holmes' (2013) theory on speech functions.

The dominance of directive speech functions in motivational discourse can be explained based on the theory of language action and pedagogical communication. Austin

(1962) and Searle (1979) emphasize that directives are not just commands, but actions that aim to change the listener's behavior or way of thinking. However, it also aligns with Holmes' (2013) explanation that directive functions often dominate in persuasive or motivational discourse. This finding is consistent with the nature of TheWizardLiz's content since the frequent use of imperative forms such as "*Do it again*" or "*Focus on yourself*" reflects the action orientation inherent in the motivational content. In contrast to dialog, monologues rely more on directive statements to maintain attention and present the speaker as an authoritative figure where the primary goal is to influence the audience's behavior and mindset.

From a pedagogical point of view, this style corresponds to Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) concept of motivating teaching practices, where language is used consciously to encourage learners to make sustained effort and self-regulation. The predominance of instruction is not accidental, but rather reflects the rhetorical and pedagogical goals of the genre.

To summarize, 166 utterances analyzed, the directive function is used most frequently, which found in 81 utterances about (48.8%). It is followed by the referential function with 41 utterances (24.7%), the expressive function with 36 utterances (21.7%), and the phatic function with only 8 utterances, which is about (4.8%).

However, there are several implications that can be applied in teaching speaking skills. The use of digital content, especially from social media such as YouTube, can provide a more contextual, authentic, and relevant learning experience for students' daily lives. From the results on the analysis of speech functions, to find the implication were also reinforced by interviews conducted with four students from English Education Department. Several relevant findings and statements from respondents are explained as follows:

The analysis of the data reveals that Thewizardliz's videos provide several pedagogical implications for speaking skill learning. These implications can be seen across four interconnected domains: speech functions, public speaking practice, and the enhancement of motivation and confidence. What emerges is a comprehensive picture of how authentic digital content not only serves as linguistic input but also addresses affective needs that are essential in oral communication.

According to Holmes (2013), speech functions serve not only as linguistic devices but also as social actions that shape meaning, construct relationships, and influence audiences. When learners are exposed to these functions through authentic digital monologues, such as those produced by Thewizardliz, they gain access to real examples of how language operates within communicative contexts. This exposure becomes a rich input that supports the development of speaking competence.

One of the most influential aspects identified in the videos is the strong presence of directive utterances, which provide learners with models of how intention, persuasion, and encouragement can be expressed effectively, since the dominance of directive function in motivational monologues equips learners with strategies for giving advice, making suggestions, and urging others' skills central to communicative speaking. Interview responses confirm this impact. Respondent 2, for instance, referred to Liz's statement, *"Do it again and again until you become great,"* explaining that such lines motivated perseverance and *"really help increase our confidence."* This indicates that directive speech functions provide learners with verbal patterns useful for constructing purposeful and motivational speech in English. Moreover, Respondent 1 observed,

"I've noticed The Wizard Liz often uses expressive and directive speech, motivating listeners to act. From this, I've learned to express opinions and emotions more strongly."

Similarly, Respondent 3 stated,

"I noticed she uses them a lot. Like, she's really expressive when she shares her feelings or stories, and she's also directive when she's motivating to take action like that. I've tried using both, like adding more emotion when I talk, or giving clear, direct advice when I want people to really listen to me."

Expressive functions, in addition to directives, play a significant role in the learning process. Holmes (2013), notes that expressive utterances reflect feelings, attitudes, and personal stances. Respondent 2 commented,

"Actually, she often expresses her feelings. And I think it is more like expressive and it is also a type of speech that I often use every day. eee there is also one sentence that I remember, mmm 'I feel so proud of myself.' I think that she expresses how she is proud of herself and that shows about self-love, it's very helpful for me and hopefully anyone who watches to appreciate and love themselves more."

These responses indicate that learners perceive expressive and directive speech as valuable for developing both linguistic competence and emotional communication skills.

The videos also include referential utterances, which, although less frequent, still contribute significantly to speaking development. These utterances provide structured examples of how information can be delivered clearly and cohesively, supporting skills needed for academic presentations and public speaking. Given that the analyzed videos are monologues, a discourse genre requiring coherence and extended delivery, learners gain valuable exposure to organized speech. This was explained by Respondent 2, who observed that the monologue format helped her maintain focus on the message and improved her public speaking skills. Such examples align with Holmes's description of referential functions as essential tools for conveying information effectively.

Another meaningful element is the presence of phatic expressions, which model how speakers maintain social connection with their listeners. In Thewizardliz's videos, greetings, empathetic remarks, and audience-inclusive statements demonstrate how a speaker can maintain relational warmth while still delivering a message. Respondent 4 described the videos as feeling like talking to a friend, noting that Liz's relational style helped him understand how to sound more natural and engaging in English. This suggests that even the less frequent phatic expressions contribute to learners' understanding of audience engagement strategies.

Taken together, these speech functions create an authentic linguistic environment that enhances speaking skills across several dimensions. Interview data show improvements in pronunciation, intonation, clarity, and confidence as components of speaking ability. Respondent 1 expressed that *"the videos greatly influenced the way I speak in English,"* particularly in shaping intonation and expressing opinions, while Respondent 4 noted that Liz's speaking style helped him make effective use of pauses and stress. These experiences illustrate how digital monologues can be one of media for enhancing speaking skill among learners.

Furthermore, the combination of clear pronunciation and subtitle support in the videos strengthens learners' ability to connect spoken and written English. This multimodal input

reinforces communicative competence, consistent with Holmes's (2013) assertion that understanding language in its social context enhances the speaker's ability to use it effectively. Respondents 2 and 3 mentioned that subtitles facilitated comprehension and helped them retain vocabulary, indicating that repeated exposure to accurate pronunciation and written forms supports ongoing speaking development.

Pedagogically, the findings imply that motivational YouTube videos can be integrated into speaking classes to raise learners' awareness of the use of speech functions. Moreover, teachers can design activities where students identify directive and expressive utterances in video and then practice in a role-play or motivational speech talks to encourage students' speaking skill, this not only improves speaking skill but also builds students confidence in delivering persuasive messages in English.

Generally, these findings demonstrate that the implications of using Thewizardliz's videos are not limited to the linguistic domain but extend to the psychological and functional aspects of communication. Learners benefit from improved pronunciation and fluency, greater awareness of expressive and directive speech functions, exposure to authentic models of public speaking, and an increase in motivation and confidence that encourages active participation. As suggested by Brown (2007) and Krashen (1985), effective speaking instruction is multidimensional, requiring both accurate linguistic input and supportive affective conditions. By integrating authentic, motivational digital materials into language teaching, educators can bridge theoretical principles with practical classroom practice, ultimately creating better environment for speaking skill development. Therefore, the implications drawn from both learners' responses and theoretical perspectives provide a solid basis for drawing broader conclusions and proposing practical suggestions.

Conclusion

This study investigated the speech functions present in three TheWizardLiz YouTube videos and their implications for EFL speaking skill development. Analysis of 166 utterances, classified using Holmes' (2013) framework and interpreted through Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1979) speech act theory, identified four functional categories: directive (48.8%), referential (24.7%), expressive (21.7%), and phatic (4.8%). Metalinguistic and poetic functions

were absent. The dominance of directive functions reflects the genre's rhetorical purpose of motivating behavioral change, while the presence of expressive and referential functions enriches learners' exposure to emotionally engaged and informationally structured English discourse.

Pedagogically, these findings demonstrate that motivational YouTube monologues offer authentic, affectively engaging language input that supports pragmatic awareness, public speaking development, and communicative confidence. Concrete Genre-Based classroom activities, including speech function identification, imitation practice, and motivational monologue production, provide structured pathways for translating this exposure into active speaking competence.

This study is limited by its focus on a single content creator and three video texts. Future research should expand the corpus to include diverse motivational speakers, compare speech function distributions across YouTube genres, and employ experimental designs to measure the effectiveness of speech function-based instructional activities on speaking outcomes.

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