

Intrapersonal Directive Speech Acts in Japanese Songs as a Tool for Self-Motivation

Diana Kartika., Lylian Widya Andrianti*, Syahrial., Oslan Amril

Japanese Literature, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang 25143, Indonesia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800046>

Received: 10 August 2026; Accepted: 17 August 2026; Published: 25 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of intrapersonal directive speech acts as an instrument of inner speech to build psychological resilience within Japanese song lyrics. Employing a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, this research integrates John R. Searle's Speech Act Theory and Lev Vygotsky's Inner Speech Theory to analyze four selected songs: *Homura* and *Gurenge* by LiSA, alongside *Unravel* and *Signal* by TK from Ling tosite sigure. The analysis of 37 utterance data reveals that the dynamics of this inner communication are predominantly characterized by the Self-Command function (45.9%), which is oriented towards behavioral activation and reinforcing determination, as well as the Self-Advice function (40.5%), which serves the purpose of cognitive restructuring. Furthermore, the study identifies Self-Prohibition speech acts (8.1%), acting as an ego defense mechanism during acute crises, and Self-Request (5.4%), which functions as a preliminary step for emotional validation. In conclusion, directive utterances in Japanese song lyrics transcend mere passive emotional expression; they effectively transform into a hierarchical and synergistic mechanism of intrapersonal communication (self-talk) utilized to convert trauma or sorrow into an internal motivational drive to overcome adversity.

Keywords: Intrapersonal Directive Speech Acts, Self-Talk, Inner Speech, Japanese Song Lyrics, Self-Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Language is used not only to convey information but also to perform actions. In communication, a person can use language to command, request, advise, forbid, encourage, or direct certain actions. This view aligns with the speech act theory that developed from the thoughts of J. L. Austin and was later systematically formulated by John R. Searle. In this framework, an utterance has an action dimension, so the meaning of an utterance cannot be separated from the speaker's intention and the context of its use.

Searle grouped illocutionary acts into five main categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Among these five categories, directives relate to the speaker's effort to get the interlocutor (or hearer) to perform an action. Commands, requests, invitations, and advice are common forms placed in this group. In interpersonal communication, the speaker and the interlocutor are two different individuals. However, language can also be used when a person talks to themselves. In such situations, the speaker simultaneously acts as the interlocutor.

Utterances directed at oneself can be understood through the concepts of self-talk and inner speech. Brinthaup explains self-talk as speech directed at oneself that can help regulate thoughts, emotions, motivation, and behavior. This concept is related to Lev Vygotsky's thoughts regarding inner speech as language for oneself that develops through an internalization process. Language that was originally present in social interaction can become a tool for thinking and self-regulation.

In this context, intrapersonal directive speech acts can be understood as a form of directive that is not directed at other individuals, but rather at one's own consciousness. Speakers can command themselves to act, advise

themselves to change their perspective, forbid themselves from giving up, or ask themselves to accept a certain situation. These forms have a close relationship with motivation because the ultimate goal is to direct an internal response to the problems being faced.

Song lyrics are one medium that allows this phenomenon to be seen linguistically. Japanese songs, especially J-Pop and anisong (anime songs), contain many themes of struggle, loss, inner conflict, determination, and the desire to rise back up. Lyrics in the form of commands, prohibitions, invitations, or advice can be read as an inner voice when the context of the utterance indicates that the speaker is directing the speech to themselves.

Research Gap

Research on speech acts in song lyrics generally focuses on the classification of illocutionary types, emotional meaning, stylistic features, or symbolism. Meanwhile, studies on self-talk are more commonly situated within the fields of psychology and psycholinguistics. The intersection of these two fields—particularly in explaining how directive forms serve as instruments of self-regulation in Japanese song lyrics—remains relatively limited. This study addresses this gap as a research focus.

Focus and Problem Statement

This study focuses on intrapersonal directive speech acts in four Japanese songs: “Homura” and “Gurenge” by LiSA, and “unravel” and “Signal” by TK from Ling tosite sigure. The units of analysis consist of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in the lyrics that can be interpreted as instructions, advice, prohibitions, or requests directed at oneself. This study does not analyze the melody, arrangement, tempo, choreography, or anime visuals; the focus is on the song lyrics and the pragmatic functions they represent.

Based on this focus, the research problem is formulated into two questions: (1) what are the forms and types of intrapersonal directive speech acts in the Japanese song lyrics under study; and (2) what are the illocutionary functions of these speech acts in representing motivational self-talk? These formulations serve as the basis for data categorization and the interpretation of psychological functions used in the discussion.

Research Objectives

This study aims to describe and analyze intrapersonal directive speech acts found in Japanese song lyrics. Specifically, this study aims to (1) identify the forms and types of intrapersonal directive speech acts found in the song lyrics that serve as the research data; and (2) analyze the illocutionary functions of intrapersonal directive speech acts in representing motivational self-talk, particularly in directing the speaker’s thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and actions toward themselves.

Research Benefits

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this study can contribute to the field of pragmatics, particularly regarding directive speech acts in intrapersonal communication. This study expands the understanding that directive speech acts are not only used to direct others but can also be directed at oneself as a form of self-talk. Furthermore, this study enriches the discussion on the relationship between speech acts, self-talk, and inner speech by drawing on Searle’s theory of speech acts and Vygotsky’s concept of inner speech. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for future research examining directive speech acts, intrapersonal communication, and the use of language as a means of self-regulation in song lyrics or other forms of discourse.

In practical terms, this study can benefit college students and Japanese language learners in understanding language usage based on its function and context. Through the analysis of Japanese song lyrics, learners can understand that imperative, advisory, prohibitive, and request forms are not always directed at others but can also be used as a form of self-communication. This study can also serve as a reference for teachers in using song lyrics as a medium for teaching Japanese pragmatics, particularly for introducing the contextual use of directive speech acts. For future researchers, the results of this study can serve as a reference for developing

research with more diverse subjects, song genres, and approaches in examining the relationship between language, mental states, and self-motivation.

Theoretical Review

Speech Acts

Austin distinguishes speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary acts relate to the grammatical production of utterances; illocutionary acts relate to the intention or function conveyed through utterances; while perlocutionary acts relate to the effects on the addressee. In this study, the primary focus is on the illocutionary dimension because the object of study is the directive function of speech acts.

Searle developed a classification of illocutionary acts into representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts. A directive act is a speech act oriented toward the action of the addressee. In an intrapersonal context, this concept must be understood by shifting the position of the addressee: the recipient of the directive is not another person, but the speaker themselves.

Intrapersonal Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts are a type of illocutionary act used by speakers to direct their addressees to perform a specific action. Searle classifies illocutionary acts into five categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. In this classification, directive speech acts relate to the speaker's intention to get the addressee to do something, such as commanding, requesting, advising, or prohibiting. In this study, Searle's concept of directive speech acts is used as the basis for identifying utterances that have the power to direct an action or attitude.

This concept is then linked to intrapersonal communication—that is, communication that occurs when a person uses language to speak to, direct, or regulate themselves. From Vygotsky's perspective, the use of language directed at oneself is related to inner speech—a form of language that has been internalized and functions in the processes of thinking and behavioral regulation. Thus, when an utterance with a directive function is directed not at another person but at the speaker themselves, such an utterance is understood in this study as an intrapersonal directive speech act. The integration of Searle's theory and Vygotsky's concept of inner speech forms the basis for examining how directive language can function as a form of self-talk in Japanese song lyrics.

However, it should be emphasized that the terms “Self-Command,” “Self-Advice,” “Self-Prohibition,” and “Self-Request” used in this study are not classifications explicitly proposed by either Searle or Vygotsky. These four terms are analytical or operational categories formulated by the researcher based on the characteristics of the data found. Searle provides a foundation regarding directive functions, while Vygotsky provides a foundation regarding the use of language directed at oneself. Subsequently, the researcher combined these two perspectives to classify forms of intrapersonal directives based on the direction and function of the utterances that appear in song lyrics.

This categorization is necessary because directive speech acts in Searle's theory encompass various forms of action, such as commands, requests, and advice, but the theory does not specifically distinguish whether these actions are directed at others or at oneself. Similarly, Vygotsky's concept of inner speech explains the function of language in the processes of thinking and self-regulation, but does not provide a specific classification of the directive forms that appear in self-talk. Therefore, the categories used in this study are the result of operationalizing these concepts based on the characteristics of the research data.

Based on the results of the analysis, “Self-Command” is used to refer to directive utterances that express a command or strong urge to oneself to perform or maintain a certain action. This category arises when the utterance indicates the speaker's effort to directly direct their own behavior. “Self-Advice” is used to refer to utterances that serve to provide advice, considerations, or guidance to oneself when facing a situation. This

category arises when the speaker does not directly command themselves but offers thoughts or considerations that can help determine their course of action.

Next, “Self-Prohibition” refers to utterances that serve to prohibit or restrict oneself from performing a specific action. This category arises when the speaker attempts to control their response or behavior through a prohibition. Meanwhile, “Self-Request” refers to utterances that take the form of a request or plea directed at oneself. This category arises when the speaker directs themselves to achieve a certain understanding, acceptance, or state. Thus, these four categories are formed based on differences in directive functions that arise when the target of the utterance is the speaker themselves.

The emergence of these four categories can be understood as a linguistic response to the speaker’s circumstances. When the speaker needs encouragement to act, Self-Command emerges. When the speaker needs to reflect or change their perspective, Self-Advice emerges. When a speaker needs to restrict certain behaviors or responses, the Self-Prohibition form emerges. Meanwhile, when a speaker needs acceptance, understanding, or resolution of an inner conflict, the Self-Request form may emerge. Therefore, the differences among these four categories are based not only on grammatical form but also on the pragmatic functions and self-regulatory needs represented by the utterances.

In Japanese song lyrics, this function can be observed through the use of linguistic forms such as the $\sim\text{て}$ (-te) form, the $\sim\text{ないで}$ (-naide) form, the desire form $\sim\text{たい}$ (-tai), どうか (dōka), and other constructions. However, the presence of these forms does not automatically classify them as intrapersonal directives. Categorization is still determined by considering the context of the lyrics, the direction of the utterance, the speaker’s intent, and the relationship between the utterance and the inner state it represents. Thus, Self-Command, Self-Advice, Self-Prohibition, and Self-Request in this study are positioned as the researcher’s categorization to facilitate data analysis, while the primary theoretical foundation remains Searle’s theory of directive speech acts and Vygotsky’s concept of inner speech.

Intrapersonal Directive Categories

Based on the research data, four categories of intrapersonal directives were identified. These categories serve as operationalizations used to interpret the functions of speech acts in the lyrics.

Tabel 1 Categories

Categories	Operational Definitions	Key Functions
Self-Command	An order or command to oneself to perform or maintain an action.	Behavioral activation and executive control.
Self-Advice	Saran atau pertimbangan batin yang membantu diri mengubah cara pandang atau menentukan sikap.	Cognitive restructuring and acceptance of reality.
Self-Prohibition	Internal advice or reflection that helps a person change their perspective or determine their stance.	Self-defense and the preservation of identity.
Self-Request	A request or appeal to oneself to accept, maintain, or seek something.	Emotional validation and self-acceptance.

Self-Command is the most direct form. Its directive nature is evident when the speaker positions themselves as the one who must take action. Self-Advice is more suggestive in nature, as the speaker offers guidance to themselves. Self-Prohibition involves self-regulation through restrictions, while Self-Request takes the form of an internal appeal that tends to be more gentle and relates to emotional needs.

Self-Talk and Inner Speech

Vygotsky viewed language development as a process that moves from social use toward increasingly internalized forms. Inner speech becomes a tool for thinking that enables individuals to plan actions, solve problems, and regulate behavior. Within this framework, self-talk can be understood as the actualization of language directed toward oneself. Self-talk does not always involve positive expressions; it can also take the form of prohibitions, warnings, or acknowledgments of one's inner state.

The connection between this theory and song lyrics lies in the function of speech as a representation of inner voice. Lyrics containing commands or advice can be interpreted as internal dialogue when the speaker appears to be regulating their own response to a specific situation. Thus, speech act theory explains illocutionary force, while inner speech theory helps explain why the direction of speech can be intrapersonal.

Linguistic Features of the Japanese Language

Research data reveals a number of linguistic forms that support a directive interpretation, including the *-te* form, the *-naide* form, the desiderative *-tai* form, the adverb *dōka*, the comparative pattern *yori motto*, ellipsis, and repetition. In Japanese, subject omission is also significant because pronouns such as *watashi* or *anata* are not always expressed. This situation means that the direction of the utterance must be determined through context.

Repetition can increase pragmatic emphasis. In the utterance 忘れないで (*wasurenaide*), for example, the repetition of the prohibitive form strengthens the directive force and indicates internal urgency. Meanwhile, the use of どうか (*dōka*) in *Signal* indicates a softer form of request.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Types and Approaches to Research

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research data consists of language in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that must be interpreted based on their pragmatic functions and lyrical context. The study does not aim to test hypotheses through experiments but rather to describe phenomena and explain the relationship between linguistic forms, illocutionary force, and the function of self-talk.

The analysis was conducted textually by treating the lyrics as cases of inner communication. The researcher served as the primary instrument in the process of selection, categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The descriptive-analytical method allows the data to be not only counted based on frequency but also discussed based on grammatical features and pragmatic functions.

Data and Data Sources

The primary data source consists of Japanese-language lyrics from four songs: 炎 (*Homura*) and 紅蓮華 (*Gurenge*) by LiSA, and *Unravel* and *Signal* by TK from Ling tosite sigure. Based on the study, 113 lines of lyrics were examined, and 37 of them were identified as data relevant to intrapersonal directive speech acts. The secondary data consists of books, journals, and previous studies supporting theories of speech acts, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, self-talk, and inner speech.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using a literature review method, employing the “listen and take notes” technique. The researcher listened to and read the lyrics, noted lines that contained potential directives, and then reexamined their context and linguistic form. Data that did not indicate self-directed speech were excluded from the main corpus. This process yielded 37 data points, which were then numbered and grouped.

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis followed three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, data were selected based on intrapersonal directive criteria. In the data presentation stage, the data were grouped into four categories and described through three levels of analysis: grammatical/locutionary, pragmatic/illocutionary, and inner speech functions. The final stage involves synthesizing the findings to explain general patterns of motivational self-talk.

To ensure consistency, each data point is analyzed using the following questions: what linguistic forms are used, what actions are performed through the utterance, to whom the utterance is directed, and what self-regulatory functions emerge. Percentages are used to illustrate distribution, not as a substitute for qualitative analysis.

1. Research Findings

Based on the results of the pragmatic analysis, 37 instances of intrapersonal directive speech acts were identified that can be classified into four functions of self-regulation. Details of the data distribution can be seen in the following table.

Table 2 Results

Types of Intrapersonal Directive Speech Acts	Data Count	Percentage (%)	Psycholinguistic Functions
<i>Self-Command</i> (Perintah Diri)	17	45,9	Behavioral Activation & Executive Control
<i>Self-Advice</i> (Nasihat Diri)	15	40,5	Cognitive Reframing
<i>Self-Prohibition</i> (Larangan Diri)	3	8,1	Defense Mechanisms & Memory Fixation
<i>Self-Request</i> (Permintaan Diri)	2	5,4	Emotional Validation & Self-Acceptance

Self-Command (Perintah Diri)

“Self-Command” comprises 17 instances, or 45.9%. This category is characterized by a relatively strong sense of command. In Homura’s text, for example, the phrase 声の限り (koe no kagiri) in the line “さよなら ありがとう 声の限り” can be interpreted as an internal command to exert one’s abilities to the absolute limit. This form does not use an explicit imperative, but the context and the boundary construction generate an impulse for self-directed action.

Another example from Homura, 温もりと痛みに関に合うように (nukumori to itami ni maniau you ni), features the -ように (you ni) pattern appearing as a dangling clause. In this study, this form is understood as the setting of an internal target: the speaker directs themselves to be prepared to face both warmth and pain. The directive force emerges through the target to be achieved, not through a blunt command.

In the data もう何一つだって失いたくない (mou nanihitotsu datte ushinaitakunai), the negative desiderative construction and the quantitative emphasis form an internal boundary. This utterance can be read as a self-directed resolve to avoid experiencing loss again. Thus, self-command is not always expressed by imperative verbs; an absolutely affirmed desire can also serve a commanding function in an intrapersonal context.

Self-Advice (Nasihat Diri)

“Self-Advice” comprises 15 instances, or 40.5%. This category differs only slightly from “Self-Command,” indicating that motivation in the lyrics is built not only through commands but also through thought processes

and self-assessment. Self-advice serves to provide a new perspective before or as the speaker makes a decision.

A clear example can be found in Homura's use of the phrase 悲しみよりもっと大事なこと (kanashimi yori motto daijina koto), which means "something more important than sadness." The comparative construction よりもっと (yori motto) presents an alternative value. The speaker does not dismiss sadness, but reminds themselves that there is something that needs to be prioritized over grief.

Psychologically, this mechanism can be understood as cognitive reframing. The focus of attention shifts from sadness to a more important value. From the perspective of inner speech, language becomes a tool for restructuring how one views an experience. Therefore, Self-Advice is more reflective in nature than Self-Command.

The phrase 胸の奥に熱いのに (mune no oku ni atsui noni) also illustrates a process of self-awareness. The suspended particle のに (noni) opens up space for reflection on the contrast between external circumstances and inner turmoil. This utterance can serve as a prompt for internal awareness, as the speaker reminds themselves that there is still "heat"—or passion—within them.

Meanwhile, 決意を餞に (ketsui o hanamuke ni) illustrates the process of building new values from the experience of parting. Determination is used as a source of strength to face the separation. In the context of self-talk, this utterance indicates a shift in perspective: loss is viewed not merely as an end, but as an experience that can give rise to a new commitment.

Self-Prohibition (Larangan Diri)

Self-Prohibition was found in only three data points, or 8.1%. Although the number is small, this category serves an important function because it provides self-direction through self-restraint. In a crisis, a person doesn't always need encouragement to take action; they also need a prohibition to keep them from sinking further into a negative state.

The data 壊れた僕なんてさ 息を止めて (kowareta boku nante sa iki o tomete) from Unravel uses the -te form in 息を止めて (iki o tomete). In the study, this form was interpreted as an extreme internal instruction to halt one's own response. This data illustrates a state of severe psychological distress and demonstrates that self-talk can take both protective and destructive forms. The phrase "Data 見つけなくて 僕のことを 見つめないで (mitsukenaide boku no koto o mitsumenaide)" uses the negative form -ないで (nai de) with two verbs. The repetition of the structures "don't find" and "don't stare" reinforces the boundary established by the speaker. In an intrapersonal reading, this prohibition can be directed toward self-awareness—a call not to continue focusing on the crisis.

This function relates to cognitive avoidance. The speaker attempts to limit the mind's exposure to painful experiences. Although semantically this prohibition appears negative, from a regulatory perspective it demonstrates an effort to maintain stability during times of high psychological stress. Thus, self-prohibition does not merely signify weakness but can serve as a temporary defense strategy.

The data 忘れないで 忘れないで 忘れないで 忘れないで (wasurenaide...) is the strongest example. The prohibition "don't forget" is repeated four times. Pragmatically, this repetition heightens the urgency and makes the internal message stand out prominently. Its primary function in this study is identity retention—that is, preserving core memories and one's sense of self so they are not lost when the speaker is experiencing a crisis.

When compared to Self-Command, Self-Prohibition appears to have the opposite orientation. Self-Command encourages action, whereas Self-Prohibition stops or restricts certain actions. However, both involve executive

control because the speaker consciously attempts to determine their own response.

Self- Request (Permintaan Diri)

“Self-Request” is the smallest category, comprising two data points, or 5.4%. Nevertheless, this form is important because it reveals a non-imperative aspect of self-talk. Speakers may ask themselves to gain clarity or accept their emotional state.

The data 教えて 教えてよ その仕組みを (oshiete oshiete yo sono shikumi o) from unravel features the verb 教える (oshieru) in the -て form, repeated and reinforced by the particle よ (yo). The repetition creates an urgent request. In an intrapersonal context, the speaker seems to be asking their own cognitive capacity to explain a change they do not understand.

Its psychological function is the pursuit of cognitive clarity. The speaker does not stop at acknowledging their confusion but actively seeks an answer from within themselves. Thus, a “Self-Request” can serve as the initial stage in resolving internal conflict.

The data 僕は孤独さ どうかそのまま (boku wa kodoku-sa dō ka sonomamade) from Signal uses the adverb どうか (dōka), meaning “please/hopefully,” and the phrase そのまま (sono mama de), meaning “stay that way.” This form expresses a request that the state of loneliness be left as it is.

Pragmatically speaking, the request is not directed at another person. The speaker appeals to their own consciousness not to force a change in their emotional state. Within the framework of self-talk, this can be interpreted as emotional validation and acceptance of grief. Sadness is not immediately rejected, but acknowledged as part of an experience that needs to be processed.

The findings on self-requests expand our understanding of motivation. Motivation does not always emerge through strong words like “fight” or “move forward.” In the process of self-regulation, acceptance of vulnerability can be a crucial step before an individual is able to take action. Therefore, self-requests can serve as a gateway to more stable regulation.

Linguistic Features That Support Intrapersonality

One important characteristic of the data is subject ellipsis. In Japanese, the subject or personal pronouns may be omitted when the context is considered sufficiently clear. In song lyrics, this tendency is even more pronounced because poetic structures often rely on ellipsis. As a result, forms such as commands, prohibitions, or wishes do not always specify who the agent or recipient of the action is.

This omission makes intrapersonal interpretation possible when the context of the lyrics suggests self-reflection. For example, *wasurenaide* does not specify “watashi wa” as the subject receiving the prohibition, but the overall context may indicate that the prohibition is a message directed at oneself. Therefore, analysis must not stop at morphology; semantic and pragmatic contexts must be taken into account.

In addition to ellipsis, the forms -te, -naide, dōka, repetition, and desiderative constructions are important markers. However, not all of these forms automatically constitute intrapersonal directives. Linguistic forms serve only as preliminary evidence, while intrapersonal status is determined by the direction of the utterance and the function that emerges within the context.

Summary of Results

Overall, the 37 data points reveal a pattern in which the analyzed lyrics contain a multi-layered system of self-regulation. “Self-Request” opens up space for acceptance, “Self-Prohibition” limits responses deemed threatening to stability, “Self-Advice” reorganizes ways of thinking, and “Self-Command” leads to action. This

sequence does not always appear chronologically in every song, but it can be understood as a functional pattern in which the elements complement one another.

DISCUSSION

Self-Command and Action Orientation

The 45.9% dominance of “Self-Command” indicates that the action dimension is a key element in the motivational self-talk identified. Speakers not only acknowledge pain but also strive to shift their stance from passive to active. Self-commands serve as a tool to solidify decisions and prevent emotional states from taking complete control of behavior.

From Searle’s perspective, directives aim to guide the addressee to perform an action. When the speaker and the addressee are the same individual, that purpose shifts to self-regulation. The illocutionary force is not lost; what changes is the direction of its reception. The command continues to function as a command, but the object of the action is the self.

This self-direction also aligns with Vygotsky’s idea that inner speech helps individuals control their behavior. Self-Command can be viewed as a verbal form of executive control: the individual determines what to do or how to act. In the context of a song, this form is presented aesthetically but still carries a directive function.

Self-Advice as Cognitive Restructuring

The 40.5% rate of Self-Advice indicates that motivation does not depend solely on direct action. Before a person is able to act, they need to process their interpretation of their experiences. Homura’s data, which compares sadness to something more important, demonstrates how lyrics can shift cognitive focus.

Self-Advice has an indirect nature. The speaker does not explicitly say “do X,” but rather constructs a line of reasoning that makes a certain choice seem more reasonable. In this case, the pragmatic function emerges through suggestion. The speaker builds an internal argument that is acceptable to themselves.

The connection to inner speech is evident in the process of reframing the meaning of trauma. Painful experiences are not simply erased; they are given a new framework so that they can become a source of determination. Thus, motivational self-talk in the data is not merely positive affirmation but also an interpretive process.

Self-Prohibition as a Defense Mechanism

Although it accounts for only 8.1%, Self-Prohibition serves a different function from the two dominant categories. Self-prohibition works by stopping or limiting a response. In crisis situations, this mechanism can function as a defense against emotional stress. Data from Unravel shows how self-prohibition may be linked to the desire to block access to experiences that are too painful.

The repetition of “wasurenaide” provides an example of how a form of prohibition can also be used to preserve identity. The speaker forbids themselves from forgetting, so the prohibition does not merely inhibit action but preserves something considered important. In other words, grammatical negation does not always imply functional negation.

Self-Request as a Validation Step

Self-Requests, at 5.4%, constitute the smallest category, but conceptually demonstrate that self-regulation can begin with acceptance. The request to “let it be” indicates that the speaker does not always force themselves to heal or change immediately. They allow space for their inner state to be acknowledged.

In the psychology of language, the validation of emotions can help individuals process experiences without denying them. In the research corpus, this function is represented through the form of a request. Pragmatically,

a request directed at oneself reflects a softer relationship between the speaker and their internal recipient compared to a command.

The Continuum of Self-Regulatory Functions

The four categories can be understood as a functional continuum. Self-Request relates to recognition and acceptance, Self-Prohibition to protection, Self-Advice to cognitive restructuring, and Self-Command to the activation of action. This continuum helps explain why different types of directives can coexist within a single motivational system.

The model is not intended as a mandatory sequence for every individual or every song. It is a synthesis of the functions found in the data. The four can reinforce one another: acceptance creates space for thinking, protection maintains stability, advice provides direction, and command drives action.

Comparison with Previous Research

Previous studies cited in this proposal indicate that research on speech acts in song lyrics has largely focused on the classification of illocutionary acts or emotional messages. For example, a study of the lyrics to “Tertawan Hati” identified expressive and assertive speech acts as the dominant forms. A study of “Bunda” by Potret also emphasized expressive and commissive speech acts. The distinction of this study lies in its specific focus on self-directed directives.

Research on the lyrics of “Gurenge,” using a semiotic approach, focused on the symbolic meaning of the lotus. Meanwhile, research on the metaphorical style in LiSA’s work identified metaphors as the primary object of study. Both approaches provide a basis for the conclusion that LiSA’s lyrics contain symbols of struggle; however, this study examines the phenomenon from a pragmatic and self-talk perspective.

Studies on psychopragmatics in novels also show that language can serve as a mirror of a character’s psychological state. This study shares an overlap with the relationship between language and inner states, but its object and focus differ. In this study, inner states are not determined through psychological diagnosis but are interpreted through directive functions and the concept of inner speech.

Thus, this study lies at the intersection of three areas of focus: directive speech acts, intrapersonal communication, and motivational self-talk in Japanese song lyrics. The novelty of this study lies in interpreting lyrics as representations of linguistic actions directed toward the self, rather than merely as expressions of emotion toward listeners or other characters.

Theoretical Implications

Research findings indicate that the directive concept can be applied to intrapersonal communication as long as the criteria for speech direction and illocutionary function can be accounted for. This broadens the scope of application of speech act theory, since the addressee does not necessarily have to be another individual. At the same time, the theory of inner speech provides an explanation for the process of language internalization, which enables speech to serve as a tool for self-regulation.

Implications for Japanese Language Learning

For learners of Japanese, research data highlights the importance of understanding the pragmatic functions of grammatical forms. Forms such as -te, -naide, dōka, and other patterns cannot be adequately conveyed through literal translation. In song lyrics, these forms can convey motivation, prohibition, acceptance, or reflection. Therefore, learning Japanese through songs can be focused on understanding context and the function of speech.

ong-by-Song Analysis

In Homura's case, the data reveal a strong tendency toward themes of loss, separation, acceptance of pain, and determination. Self-Command manifests as a drive to persevere and mobilize one's abilities, while Self-Advice emerges through constructions that help the speaker reframe their perspective on grief. Thus, the function of Homura's self-talk largely shifts from grief processing toward acceptance and determination.

In Gurenge, the orientation toward struggle and the experience of facing defeat serve as an important backdrop. Data related to understanding the meaning of defeat indicates a restructuring of experience. Defeat is not merely a painful fact, but becomes a source of understanding and fuel to continue the struggle. Self-Advice in this context functions as self-evaluation.

In "Unravel," the directive form more strongly reveals inner conflict and an identity crisis. Prohibitions such as "Don't find it" and "Don't forget" indicate an effort to limit attention and preserve something still considered the core of the self. Self-requests through "Tell me, tell me" also reveal a search for answers when the speaker experiences disorientation.

In Signal, the self-request is expressed as "Please stay as you are." This request reflects an acceptance of loneliness. Compared to commands that force action, this form of request is gentler and serves to protect one's psychological state from further distress. Thus, Signal demonstrates that self-talk can be accepting, not merely coercive.

Synthesis of Motivation Functions

If the four songs are considered as a single corpus, the motivation they represent is not always synonymous with positive feelings. Motivation emerges through a complex process: acknowledging pain, protecting oneself, reevaluating experiences, and then determining a course of action. This explains why "Self-Advice" and "Self-Command" dominate, yet "Self-Prohibition" and "Self-Request" remain necessary.

The lyrics also show that motivation is not always conveyed directly. Ellipsis, metaphors, the desiderative form, and repetition allow motivational messages to be conveyed implicitly. In intrapersonal communication, indirect forms can be effective because individuals do not always need explicit commands; they can guide themselves through reflection or symbols.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on an analysis of 37 data points from 113 lines of lyrics in four Japanese songs, the study identified four forms of intrapersonal directive speech acts: Self-Command, Self-Advice, Self-Prohibition, and Self-Request. Self-Command was the dominant form with 17 data points (45.9%), followed by Self-Advice with 15 data points (40.5%), Self-Prohibition with 3 data points (8.1%), and Self-Request with 2 data points (5.4%). This distribution indicates that motivational self-talk in the corpus is more oriented toward action activation and cognitive restructuring.

Self-Command serves as an impetus to direct oneself toward action and solidify resolve. Self-Advice serves to shift one's perspective on experiences, particularly through cognitive reframing and acceptance of reality. Self-Prohibition functions as a mechanism of restriction and defense, including the preservation of identity. Self-Request serves as emotional validation and acceptance of one's inner state.

Overall, the findings support the understanding that directive speech acts are not only relevant in interpersonal communication. In song lyrics, speech acts can be represented as intrapersonal communication when the speaker directs actions, thoughts, or attitudes toward themselves. Vygotsky's concept of inner speech helps explain the function of language as a tool for self-regulation, while Searle's theory explains its directive illocutionary force.

Characteristics of the Japanese language, particularly subject omission, also support productive ambiguity between interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. Imperatives, prohibitions, or requests can appear without explicitly naming the addressee. Therefore, context plays a crucial role in determining the direction of the utterance. Lyrics can ultimately be understood not merely as an aesthetic expression, but as a representation of an internal communication system that connects emotions, thoughts, and actions.

Recommendations

Future research could broaden the scope by including other Japanese genres such as Enka, City Pop, or non-anison popular songs to examine whether the same intrapersonal directive patterns emerge in different musical contexts. Research could also expand the categories by examining commissive and expressive speech acts related to self-promise, self-expression, and emotional regulation.

In addition to text analysis, future research could employ a sociopragmatic approach or examine listener responses to determine how Japanese language learners and native speakers interpret directive utterances in lyrics. In this way, research can move from the representation of self-talk in the text to its actual processing by listeners.

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