



Analysis of Imperative Utterances and Subtitle Translation in Devina Hermawan's YouTube Videos

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Received: 18/07/2026 | Accepted: 22/08/2026 | Publication: 05/09/2026

Abstract: This study aims to identify the illocutionary force of imperative utterances, the subtitling strategies used to translate them, and the translation accuracy of the English subtitles in Devina Hermawan's YouTube videos. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The data consisted of 108 Indonesian imperative utterances collected from five of the most-viewed videos in the Indonesian Cuisine playlist. The utterances were classified using Quirk et al.'s (1985) theory of the illocutionary force of imperatives, while Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies were applied to identify the strategies used to translate the subtitles. Translation accuracy was evaluated using Nababan et al.'s (2012) assessment model through Focus Group Discussion involving two raters. The findings reveal that Instruction is the dominant illocutionary force, followed by Advice or Recommendation and Suggestion. Eleven subtitling strategy patterns were identified, with Paraphrase and Transfer occurring most frequently. Furthermore, the subtitles achieved an average translation accuracy score of 2.9, indicating that most imperative utterances were translated accurately while preserving their communicative function. These findings indicate that the English subtitles generally preserve the intended meaning and communicative function of the source utterances, while the dominance of Instruction reflects the procedural characteristics of cooking tutorial videos and the predominance of Paraphrase demonstrates the translator's effort to produce natural and comprehensible subtitles for international audiences. This study contributes to audiovisual translation research by explaining the relationship between imperative functions, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy in YouTube instructional videos.

Keywords: Illocutionary Force, Imperative Utterances, Subtitling Strategies, Translation Accuracy



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How to Cite: Ramadina, A. V., & Sofa, N. (2026). Analysis of imperative utterances and subtitle translation in Devina Hermawan's YouTube videos. *Journal of Innovation Research and Knowledge*, 6(4), 2357–2366. <https://doi.org/10.53625/jirk.v6i4.13288>

INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital media has transformed YouTube into one of the world's largest platforms for information sharing, education, and entertainment. As video content increasingly reaches multilingual audiences, subtitles have become an essential component of audiovisual communication. Besides improving accessibility for viewers with hearing impairments, subtitles enable international audiences to understand content produced in different languages. Research by Al-Momani et al. (2025) involving 4,500 respondents indicates that more than half of YouTube users regularly use subtitles, particularly to improve comprehension of foreign-language content, clarify spoken dialogue, and facilitate

language learning. These findings indicate that subtitles have become an integral part of digital communication.

The growing use of English subtitles has also changed how Indonesian content creators communicate with global audiences. English subtitles allow instructional videos to reach viewers beyond Indonesia while maintaining the original educational value of the content. However, producing effective subtitles is not a straightforward translation process. Subtitle translators must convey the intended message within strict temporal and spatial constraints while ensuring that subtitles remain natural and synchronized with audiovisual elements. Consequently, the subtitle translators frequently modify linguistic structures through various subtitling strategies to achieve functional equivalence.

One communicative element that requires particular attention in subtitle translation is the imperative utterance. Imperatives are commonly used to direct listeners toward specific actions, but their communicative functions extend beyond commands. Depending on the interactional context, imperative utterances may express instructions, advice, suggestions, warnings, requests, invitations, or other directive meanings (Quirk et al., 1985). Preserving these functions in subtitle translation is essential because the effectiveness of instructional discourse also depends on maintaining the original illocutionary force.

This issue is especially relevant in cooking tutorial videos, where procedural instructions dominate spoken communication. Viewers rely on these instructions to complete cooking processes accurately; therefore, subtitles should preserve both procedural meaning and communicative intention. Changes introduced through subtitling strategies may simplify expressions to satisfy technical constraints, but excessive modification risks altering the original message and reducing translation accuracy. Consequently, examining the relationship between imperative functions, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy provides valuable insights into how instructional discourse is adapted for multilingual audiences.

Several previous studies have investigated subtitle translation from different perspectives. Wigrha and Puspani (2022) reported that Transfer was the dominant subtitling strategy in Zootopia, whereas Batmanathan et al. (2022) found that Transfer, Paraphrase, and Expansion contributed positively to subtitle accuracy in Ejen Ali: The Movie. Hudi et al. (2020) examined subtitle translation quality in The English Teacher and concluded that accurate translations were strongly associated with appropriate translation techniques. Studies focusing on imperative have likewise been conducted in movies and television series (Agustina et al., 2022; Murdiana et al., 2019; Juniarta, 2016). However, these studies primarily investigated cinematic dialogue rather than instructional discourse on digital platforms.

Despite extensive research on subtitling and imperative, relatively little attention has been given to the interaction between the illocutionary force of imperative utterances, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy in YouTube instructional videos. Moreover, no previous study has specifically investigated these three aspects simultaneously in Devina Hermawan's YouTube channel, which consistently provides official English subtitles and contains a large number of procedural imperative utterances.

To address this research gap, the present study analyzes imperative utterances found

in five of the most-viewed cooking videos in the Indonesian Cuisine playlist on Devina Hermawan's YouTube channel. Specifically, the study aims to identify the types of illocutionary force of imperatives, examine the subtitling strategies employed in translating them into English, and evaluate the translation accuracy of the resulting subtitles. The findings are expected to contribute to audiovisual translation studies and provide practical guidance for subtitle translators and digital content creators seeking to reach international audiences.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the illocutionary force of imperative utterances, the subtitling strategies used in their English translations, and the translation accuracy of the subtitles. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on interpreting linguistic phenomena within their communicative context rather than testing hypotheses statistically.

The primary data consisted of imperative utterances produced in five selected videos from Devina Hermawan's Indonesian Cuisine playlist on YouTube. These videos were selected using purposive sampling because they met predetermined criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selection criteria included: (1) the videos contained official English subtitles provided by the content creator; (2) the videos belonged to the Indonesian Cuisine playlist; (3) they represented cooking tutorial videos with procedural discourse; and (4) they were among the most-viewed videos in the playlist. Based on these criteria, 108 imperative utterances were identified as the research data.

The data collection process involved several stages. First, the researcher repeatedly watched each selected video while examining both the Indonesian audio and the official English subtitles. Second, all imperative utterances were transcribed and paired with their corresponding English subtitles. Third, the researcher classified each utterance according to its illocutionary force using Quirk et al.'s (1985). After identifying the communicative function of each utterance, the corresponding subtitle was analyzed to determine the subtitling strategy employed based on Gottlieb's (1992) classification. Finally, the translation accuracy of each subtitle was evaluated using Nababan et al.'s (2012) Translation Accuracy Assessment model.

Translation accuracy was assessed through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving the researcher and two raters with backgrounds in translation and bilingual language proficiency. The raters independently evaluated each subtitle using Nababan et al.'s (2012) three-point accuracy scale, where a score of three represented an accurate translation, two indicated a less accurate translation, and one represented an inaccurate translation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied method and data source triangulation. Method triangulation was achieved by combining content analysis with translation accuracy assessment through FGD. Data source triangulation was conducted by analyzing both the Indonesian spoken utterances and their official English subtitles and a focus group discussion with raters. These procedures enhanced the credibility of the interpretation by allowing the researcher to examine the relationship between the source language, the translated subtitles, and the raters' evaluation.

The data analysis followed Spradley's analysis procedures, consisting of domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. During the domain analysis, imperative utterances were identified and categorized according to their illocutionary force. Taxonomy analysis was subsequently conducted to classify the subtitling strategies applied to each translated utterance. Componential analysis examined the relationship between imperative functions, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy. Finally, cultural theme analysis interpreted the overall patterns emerging from the data to explain how subtitling strategies contributed to preserving the communicative function of imperative utterances while maintaining translation accuracy. Frequency distributions and percentages were calculated to support the qualitative findings and to identify dominant patterns across the dataset.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

A total of 108 imperative utterances were identified from five selected videos in Devina Hermawan's Indonesian Cuisine playlist. The findings are presented according to the three research objectives: (1) identifying the illocutionary force of imperative utterances, (2) classifying the subtitling strategies employed in the English subtitles, and (3) evaluating the translation accuracy. The relationship among these three variables is subsequently discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of subtitle translation in instructional YouTube videos.

Illocutionary Force of Imperatives

Table 1. The Result of Illocutionary Force of Imperatives

Type of Illocutionary Force	Frequency	Percentage
Instruction	79	73.1%
Advice/Recommendation	24	22.2%
Suggestion	5	4.6%
Total	108	100%

Table 1 shows that Instruction is the dominant illocutionary force, accounting for 79 occurrences (73.1%). This finding indicates that procedural discourse constitutes the primary communicative purpose of cooking tutorial videos. Advice or Recommendation appears 24 times (22.2%), whereas Suggestion occurs only five times (4.6%).

The predominance of Instruction reflects the nature of cooking tutorials, in which the speaker sequentially guides viewers through each stage of food preparation. Most imperative utterances function to explain actions that should be performed to complete the recipe successfully. Meanwhile, Advice or Recommendation appears when the speaker provides cooking tips intended to improve the final result or prevent mistakes. Suggestion occurs least frequently because optional actions are relatively uncommon in procedural discourse.

Subtitling Strategy

Table 2. The Result of Subtitling Strategy

Type of Subtitling Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Expansion	10	9.2%
Paraphrase	34	31.4%
Transfer	32	29.6%
Condensation	12	11.1%



Decimation	9	8.3%
Deletion	2	1.8%
Paraphrase & Condensation	4	3.7%
Condensation & Expansion	2	1.8%
Decimation & Imitation	1	0.9%
Paraphrase & Deletion	1	0.9%
Paraphrase & Imitation	1	0.9%
Total	108	100%

The analysis identified eleven translation patterns consisting of six single subtitling strategies and five combinations of strategies. As shown in Table 2, Paraphrase is the most frequently employed strategy, representing 31.4% of the total data. Transfer ranks second with 29.6%, followed by Condensation with 11.1%. Combination strategies account for 8.3% of the dataset, indicating that subtitle translator occasionally combined more than one strategy to address linguistic and technical constraints.

The predominance of Paraphrase suggests that subtitle translation prioritizes naturalness over literal equivalence. Instead of reproducing the Indonesian sentence structure directly, the translator frequently reformulates the utterance into expressions that sound more natural in English while preserving the intended meaning.

Translation Accuracy

Table 3. The Result of Translation Accuracy

Translation Accuracy	Score (S)	Frequency (N)	(N x S)	Percentage
Accurate	3	100	300	92.5%
Less Accurate	2	7	14	6.4%
Inaccurate	1	1	1	0.9%
Total		108	315	100%
Average			2.9	

Table 3 indicates that subtitle translation is generally accurate. Of the 108 imperative utterances, 100 (92.5%) are categorized as Accurate, seven (6.4%) as Less Accurate, and only one (0.9%) as Inaccurate. The average score of 2.9 demonstrates that the subtitles successfully preserve the meaning and communicative function of most imperative utterances.

Most translation inaccuracies are associated with information reduction.

The dominance of Instruction corresponds with the procedural characteristics of cooking tutorials, where speakers continuously guide viewers through sequential actions. This discourse pattern influences the subtitle translator's choice of subtitling strategy. Because procedural instructions must remain concise and easily understood, Paraphrase becomes the most appropriate strategy for expressing natural English while preserving the intended meaning.

Furthermore, the predominance of accurate translations demonstrates that the selected subtitling strategies successfully maintain the illocutionary force of the original imperative utterances. This finding indicates that subtitle translators not only transfer lexical meaning but also preserve the communicative purpose of instructional discourse.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the communicative characteristics of instructional discourse strongly influence the distribution of imperative functions in Devina Hermawan's

YouTube videos. Among the fifteen categories of illocutionary force proposed by Quirk et al. (1985), only three categories were identified in the dataset: Instruction, Advice or Recommendation, and Suggestion. This indicates that imperative utterances in cooking tutorial videos primarily function to guide viewers through a sequence of procedural actions rather than to exercise interpersonal authority.

The predominance of Instruction is consistent with the communicative purpose of cooking tutorials. Unlike conversations in movies or television dramas, instructional videos are designed to transfer procedural knowledge. Consequently, imperative utterances are predominantly used to explain each stage of food preparation in chronological order. Sequential expressions such as then, next, after that, and finally frequently accompany these utterances, reinforcing their instructional function.

The relatively high occurrence of Advice or Recommendation also reflects the characteristics of cooking discourse. In addition to explaining procedural steps, Devina Hermawan frequently provides practical cooking tips intended to improve the quality of the final dish. Such utterances encourage viewers to adopt recommended techniques rather than requiring strict compliance. Examples include suggestions for controlling cooking temperature, adjusting ingredient proportions, or preventing common mistakes during food preparation. These utterances therefore function as recommendations rather than mandatory procedural instructions.

Meanwhile, Suggestion appears only occasionally because optional actions occupy a relatively small proportion of cooking tutorials. Suggestions generally occur when the speaker offers alternative ingredients or optional modifications based on viewers' preferences, such as adjusting the level of spiciness or replacing certain ingredients. Since cooking tutorials primarily emphasize standardized procedures, optional recommendations naturally appear less frequently than mandatory instructional steps.

These findings differ from previous studies that investigated imperative utterances in movies and television series. Agustina et al. (2022), for example, reported that commands were the dominant imperative function in Grey's Anatomy, while Murdiana et al. (2019) likewise found commands to be the most frequent function in Suicide Squad. Those findings are understandable because cinematic dialogue frequently depicts hierarchical interpersonal relationships, conflicts, and interactions requiring authority. In contrast, the present study examines instructional discourse in which the speaker's primary objective is knowledge transfer rather than interpersonal control. Therefore, Instruction, rather than Command, emerges as the dominant illocutionary force.

The analysis of subtitling strategies also reveals several interesting patterns. Paraphrase is the most frequently employed strategy, followed by Transfer. This distribution indicates that subtitle translators prioritize communicative naturalness rather than literal equivalence. Although procedural instructions require semantic precision, literal translation does not always produce subtitles that sound natural in English. Consequently, the translator often restructures Indonesian expressions while preserving their communicative function.

This finding supports Gottlieb's (1992) argument that paraphrase is an effective subtitling strategy when literal translation would result in unnatural or awkward target-language expressions. Cooking tutorials contain numerous conversational expressions,

discourse markers, and culturally specific linguistic patterns that require reformulation in English. Through paraphrasing, these expressions become more concise, fluent, and understandable for international audiences without substantially changing their intended meaning.

Compared with previous research, the present findings partially support those reported by Batmanathan et al. (2022), who found that Transfer, Paraphrase, and Expansion were associated with accurate subtitle translations. Similarly, Wigrha and Puspani (2022) identified Transfer as the dominant strategy in Zootopia. However, unlike film dialogue, the instructional discourse examined in this study demonstrates a greater reliance on Paraphrase. This difference may result from the communicative characteristics of cooking tutorials, where spoken Indonesian frequently contains explanatory expressions that require reformulation to produce concise and natural English subtitles.

Another important finding concerns translation accuracy. The average accuracy score of 2.9 indicates that the subtitles successfully preserve communicative intention in nearly all imperative utterances. More than ninety percent of the data are categorized as Accurate, demonstrating that the English subtitles effectively transfer procedural information for international audiences.

An important contribution of this study lies in its integrated analysis of illocutionary force, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy. Previous studies have generally examined these variables separately, focusing either on imperatives, subtitle translation strategies, or translation quality assessment. By investigating the interaction among these three aspects simultaneously, the present study demonstrates that the choice of subtitling strategy is closely influenced by the communicative function of the source utterance and ultimately affects translation accuracy.

Furthermore, the study extends the application of Quirk et al.'s (1985) theory beyond conventional spoken interaction by demonstrating its relevance to digital instructional discourse. The findings also enrich audiovisual translation research by providing empirical evidence from Indonesian YouTube content. As instructional videos continue to attract global audiences, understanding how imperative utterances are translated becomes increasingly important for both translation practitioners and digital content creators.

Overall, the findings suggest that successful subtitle translation depends not only on lexical equivalence but also on preserving the communicative purpose of each utterance. The predominance of Instruction, the frequent use of Paraphrase, and the high level of translation accuracy collectively indicate that the subtitles effectively convey procedural information while remaining natural and accessible for international viewers.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that Instruction is the dominant illocutionary force of imperatives in Devina Hermawan's YouTube videos, reflecting the procedural nature of cooking tutorials, while Advice/Recommendation and Suggestion provide additional cooking guidance and flexibility for viewers. Meanwhile, Paraphrase and Transfer are the most frequently employed subtitling strategies, demonstrating the translator's effort to produce natural English subtitles while preserving the original meaning and communicative function. Overall,

the English subtitles successfully maintain the meaning and illocutionary force of most imperative utterances, allowing international audiences to understand the cooking instructions effectively. Although a small number of translations lose some information due to subtitle constraints, these cases have minimal impact on the overall translation accuracy.

Suggestion

This study contributes to audiovisual translation research by integrating the analysis of illocutionary force, subtitling strategies, and translation accuracy, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how communicative functions are maintained in multilingual instructional videos. Future research may expand the scope by investigating different kind of audiovisual content. In addition, future studies could examine other dimensions of translation quality, such as acceptability and readability, to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of subtitle quality across diverse audiovisual contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this research. Special thanks to the the author's supervisors for her valuable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the research process. The author is grateful to family and friends for their support throughout the completion of this research.

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HALAMAN INI SENGAJA DIKOSONGKAN