An Analysis of Errors Made by EFL College Students in Using Speech Act of Directives

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ABSTRACT

The study deals with English speech act of directives. It aims at (1) identifying and classifying the errors made by the EFL College students in using speech act of directives (2)   Finding whether there are significant differences in students' performance between the two areas of the test .To achieve these aims, a diagnostic test has been conducted on forty students from the fourth stage at the College of Education for Humanities - University of Tikrit for the academic year 2017/2016. In order to ensure the face validity, the test is exposed to a jury of specialists in the fields of linguistics and methodology of teaching EFL who agreed upon its validity and suitability. Twenty students are randomly chosen for the pilot study which revealed that the time needed to complete the test items is 50 minutes. As for the clarity of the items, it is noticed that most of the items are clear and the students find no difficulty in answering the test items. As for reliability, the items are divided into two halves (odd and even). Using the Pearson correlation formula, it is found out that the test reliability is 0.76 . After applying the Spearman Brown formula, it is found out the test reliability is 0.86 . This shows that the test is quite reliable and acceptable. The results of this study show that EFL College students make errors of different sources of the test . It is also clear that EFL College students encounter more and complex errors at the first part of the test (Intended Speech Act) and that their performance is inefficient in this area .The study ends up with a number of recommendations and suggestions for further work in future .

1. *Speech Act Theory*

Speech acts theory has been started as a response to many prior linguistic theories which ignored language as an action. This theory had its birthplace in the British philosophy. It was started as a theory of thinking by the British scholar J.L. Austin (1911-1960). It has been adjusted over the span of time to be known as "speech act theory", and later embraced and further created by the American philosopher Searle (1969) in his famous book entitled Speech Act. (See Mey, 1993:109-10)

Speech act theory was adopted by Austin in a series of lectures published posthumously in1962 which entitled "How to Do Things with Words" . Austin's theory has been developed which attracted many contemporary scholars.

According to Austin, things can be done by words like 'advise, welcome, promise …etc.' (1962: 12).

As an example of speech acts, Yule (1996a: 47) mentions the following utterance:

1- You are fired.

In this utterance, the speaker is ending the job of the hearer. Yule calls the circumstances that determine the interpretation of the utterance like the one above as 'speech event'.

Saeed (1997: 204) mentions two conditions that determine the speech act to be performed successfully: interactivity as the speech act arises from the participant's interaction with each other. The other points is context dependence.

In respect to social perspective, there are intentional and conventional speech acts. In the former, the intention determines the future act whereas in the latter the circumstances influence the speech act.

Austin (1962:101) states that there are three actions that can be done simultaneously: locutionary, illocutionary and perluctionary. thelocutionary act is the act of saying something with a certain sense and reference; the

illocutionary act is the act performed in saying something, i.e. the act named and identified by the explicit performative verb. The perlocutionary act is the act performed by, or as a consequence of, saying something.

In terms of illocutonary force, Austin divides the performative verbs into five categories:

1. Verdictives: Among these verbs are "estimate, value, assess, etc…" which are used to give findings, verdicts and judgments.

2. Excercitives: this kind includes verbs like "order, dedicate, appoint, name, sentence, etc…" which are used to show power, rights or influence. For example, when the judge says:

   2- I sentence you to ten years.

3. Commissives: this group includes verbs that express obligation or intention like "promise, guarantee, swear, plan, bet, ..etc." for example:

   3- I promise I'll be back within an hour.

4. Behabitives: this class includes the verbs that express attitude and social behavior like apologize, welcome, compliment, congratulate, ..etc. for example:

   4- I apologize for coming late.

5. Expositives:

   In this group, verbs are used to keep argument and discussion going by giving clarification in different ways. The verbs include "expect, remark, hypothesize, assume, etc…" for example:

   5- I expect the questions will be easy.

Being interested in the philosophy of language, the American philosopher John Searle published his famous book 'Speech Acts' in 1969 as a modification of Austin's speech act theory. According to Searle (1969: 57) there are four conditions which govern the execution of an illocutionary act, and the violation of any one of them will be infeliticious.

1. Propositional Content Condition

In these, we have restrictions on the content of speaker's utterance. As an example, speech act of request requires a future act of the hearer.

2. Preparatory Conditions:

These include the speaker's authority or right to do the speech act and also the appropriate utterance to do it.

3. Sincerity Conditions:

These conditions include the findings, beliefs and intentions of the speaker that are appropriate to the type of the speech act. For example, the sincerity condition involves the speaker's desire for the hearer to do the speech act.

4. Essential conditions:

This requires the syntactic and semantic rules for constructing the utterance of speech act.

Searle's (1975: 12-17) taxonomy of speech act verbs include five basic categories:

1. Assertives (representatives)

   This class includes verbs like "assert, state, affirm, conclude, ..etc.. " which fit the speaker to the world so as to express a belief through the established proposition.

2. Directives:

   In this class, there are verbs like "warn, advise, demand, request, ask, …etc.". These verbs direct the addresser towards doing (or not doing) something. For example:

   6- Don't do that.

   7-You should read this book.

3. Commissives:

   Verbs that express commissives are as such "pledge, threaten, commit, vow, promise" in which the speaker is committed to a future action.

4. Expressives:

Speech act of expressives show the psychological state of the speaker, as in the following utterance:

8- I am so sorry.

The verbs that are used are "condole, welcome, thank, congratulate, …et.c).

5. Declarations:

Verbs that denote declarations are "name, declare, appoint, quit, …etc." which bring into existence the state described in the proposition.

2. Direct and Indirect Speech Act

A speech act that does not match the sentence type is called indirect speech act. Consider the following utterance:

9- It is hot in here.

This utterance is recognized as a declarative structure but its function is a request to open the window.

Searle (1975: 59) states that an indirect speech act is fulfilled when "a sentence that contains the illocutionary indicators for one kind of illocutionary act can be uttered to perform in addition to another type of illocutionary act."

Yule (1996b: 133) adds that "one of the forms … is used to perform the function other the one listed beside it.".for example:

10- Can you pass me the salt?

Using interrogatives to express request is more preferable than the use of imperatives. In fact, the most clear direct speech act is the one done by using explicit performative verb, like:

11- I promise I will be here within two hours.

3. Directive Speech Acts

These acts include getting other people to do something that match what the speaker says. They change the world to fit the speaker's words.

3.1 Advice and Warning

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, the term 'advise' means "to tell somebody what you think he should [of course in this interest] in a particular situation. For example:

12- I advise you to study hard.

In this utterance, the addressee is offered a good idea by the speaker by telling what is beneficial to him, that is to study hard.

The concept 'warn' on the other hand, means "to tell somebody about something especially something dangerous that is likely to happen, so that he can avoid it" , as in the following utterance:

13- I warn you that there is a wolf on the way.

Austin (1962: 151) places the speech acts of advice and warning in the category of Excercitives that mean "the exercising of powers, rights or influence."

This kind of speech acts involves "the giving of a decision in favour or against a certain course of action or advocating of it…its consequences may be that others are compelled' or allowed or not allowed to do a certain acts" (ibid: 155).

Searle (1969: 67) states that directive speech act of warning and advising should be confused with requesting because they do not constitute "an attempt to get you take an evasive action." Instead, they tell you what is the best for you or what is unpleasant for you.

According to Quirk et al (1985: 1088) most warning are hypothetical represented by if-conditional clauses:

14- If you do not study hard, you will fail.

Speech acts of warning and advice are either 'implicit' or 'explicit', thus occurring in the assertive form or exercising of power, respectively. The following example will make the point clear:

15- I advise you that you should stay where you are. (explicit performative)

16- You should stay where you are. (implicit performative).

16- I warn you that there is an explosive charge. (explicit performative)

17- There is an explosive charge. (implicit performative).

Thus, using an implicit speech act of warning, as in if-conditional clauses is because the speaker does not want to straightforwardly warn the addressee, as a smoother way of warning.

Verbs that express speech acts of warn and advice include "advocate, urge, suggest, command, recommend." (Halliday, 1973: 87).

3.2 Command

A command means an action that is supposed to be performed by a person to do something on condition that the speech is given by someone who has the power to give such an extraction. Command is placed with the category of 'Excertives' by Austin (1962: 55). It suggests exercising power over the hearer. However, it is placed under the category 'directives', by all other speech act theorists, in which the speaker wants the addressor to do the action expressed by the proposition.

As for Searle (1975: 35) command has a strong attempt to get the hearer to perform something unlike other verbs like, request, invite, and suggest. So he placed it under the category of directives.

From the psychological perspective, basic mental state is wanting. Auwera (1980: 261) explains that "a stimulus for the effort to reproduce some part of the mind in the outer world." As an example:

18- Come early.

19- The teacher wants the student to come early.

For the act to be performed successfully, wanting of the speaker and the addressee's compliance are the basic conditions. So, we can interpret the above utterance as:

20- I want you to come early.

Green (1975: 120) adds that the speaker of the command "believes that he has the authority to control the intentional behavior of the recipient and expects to be obeyed." So, command differs from request psychologically and socially.

3.4 Request

The speech act of request includes acts with the illocutionary point of "getting somebody to do something" which has advantageous to the speaker. These acts range in illocutionary force from ordering to begging (Trosborg, 1995: 189).

Edmondson and House (1981: 99) add that speech act of request may be for an action, an object, or a kind of service, etc. Or it can be for information. The desired act is expected to occur after the utterance, either in the immediate future or at some later stage .

In English, there are numerous ways of making polite requests. If you don't want to sound rude, then have to know how to make a request in a polite way. Requests in English are usually made in the form of questions .

Could I...?

Can I...?

Could I possibly...?

 Is it all right if I...?

 Do you think I could...?

Asking others to do things – making requests

Can you...?

Could you...?

Is it all right if you...?

Do you think you could...?

Do you mind -ing...?

Would you mind -ing...?

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4.The Test

This part points out a detail description of the procedures utilized to show the empirical aspect of the present study. It includes information about the population and the sample of the study ; the construction of the diagnostic test ; the reliability of the test ; content and face validity , in addition to the pilot study.

4.1 Population and Sample

4.1.1 Population

Richard et al.(1992 : 282) indicate that population refers to any set of items or individuals that share some common and observable features and from which a sample can be taken . Al Samawi (2000:112) defines population as" a group of people or documents of special features used for collecting data or represented by sample selected from among this group ".The population of the present study is represented by the EFL fourth year students at the College of Education for Humanities in the University of Tikrit.

4.1.2 Sample

Richard et al.(1992 : 321) point out that the word sample refers to any group of individuals which is chosen to state a population . Al-Samawi (2000:112) shows that sampling is selecting a number of individuals to represent the population . A sample of the students has been chosen randomly. They are 60 among whom twenty students are overlooked for the pilot study .The total number of the selected students is forty (twenty females and twenty males) which represents about 82% of its original population .

4.2 The Construction of the Diagnostic Test

To achieve an objective analysis for the students' performance in using speech act of directives , a diagnostic test has been constructed . Heaton (1975: 5) affirms that a test may be constructed essentially as a way of evaluating students performance in language. Hence, the construction of the present test primarily is meant to explore the performance of the College students and to find out the strong and weak points of those students . The following table of specifications reflects the contents of the test, its behaviours , items , as well as its scores:

Table (1)

Table of the Specifications

Contents	Behaviours	No. of items	Scores
Intended speech act	To identify the intended speech act in the following utterances whether they are commissive , Directives , Expressive or Declaration	10	20
Function of speech act of directives	To give the function of the following utterances whether they are warning , advice ,request or command	10	20

From Table (1), the test consists of two questions. The first question includes ten items. Two marks are given to each item. The total number of scores is twenty . The testees in this question are asked to identify the intended speech acts   whether they are directive , expressive , commissive or declaration when they are stated by similar linguistics devices in a number of situations. The

second question also contains ten items, each of which represents a complete sentence. The testees are asked to determine the function of the speech act of directives whether they are warning , command , request or advice . Two marks are specified for each item. The total number of marks is twenty (see appendices) .

4.3 Content and Face Validity

Mousavi (1992: 26) points out that content validity is one aspect of validity which is based on the degree to which a test effectively and sufficiently quantifies the accurate skills or behaviour that it sets out to asses. To ascertain the content validity of the test, a table of specification has been constructed. This table specifies the contents of the diagnostic test, as well as its scores as shown in Table (1).

Face validity, on the other hand, is another aspect of validity. A test is said to be valid if it assess correctly what it claims to assess (Hughes, 1989: 22) . To achieve the face validity of the test and find out whether its items are appropriate to assess the students level of performance in using the speech act of directives, the test has been exposed to a jury of specialists in teaching EFL. The jury members discussed with the researcher the various test items. Some of the jury members affirm that some of the items are very simple especially those in (Question 1), while others indicated that some of the items are too difficult to be answered by the examinees .The jury members advised the researchers to rewrite and modified these items. After making all the necessary modification, the final version of the test is prepared .

4.4 Pilot Administration

The constructed test has been initially applied on a sample of twenty students selected randomly from the original population of the study sample . According to Harreis (1969: 25) the administration of the pilot test involves " trying out the

material on a similar group for whom the test is being designed ". This pilot administration is utilized to achieve the following purposes:

1- Finding out whether any of the test items is too easy or too difficult for the research subjects to handle. In other words, to calculate the difficulty level of the test items and their discrimination power.

The jury members are :

1- Prof. Nahida T. Majeed . College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit (Ph.D) .

2- Asst.Prof. Nagham Q. Yahya . College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit (Ph.D) .

3- Asst.Prof. Muhammed B. Ahmed. College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit (Ph.D) .

4- Asst. Prof. Ahmed M. Salah . College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit (Ph.D) .

5- Instructor Muhammed B. Salman . College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit (Ph.D) .

2- Finding out the required time for the administration of the test.

3- Making the necessary changes or modifications on the items of the test.

After constructing the pilot administration of the test, items analysis formula are applied. Mousavi (1992: 188) states that the analysis of items usually shows the identifications of the items which are too difficult or too easy. Items analysis are powerful instrument to develop the test and to enhance its reliability and validity . The items of the constructed test have been analyzed in order to determine their efficiency and acceptance as follows :

4.4.1 Difficulty Level

Heaton (1975:172) elucidates that the difficulty level of an item demonstrates if a particular item is easy or difficult to be applied in the test. To state the level of difficulty of items, their scores have been ordered decently from higher score to the lower one, then the whole scores have been separated into two halves , i.e. the higher scores and lower scores.The calculation requires representing 27% of high and low correct answers , then counting the number of correct answer to each item in the higher and lower group. The obtained difficulty level of the diagnostic test items ranges from 25% to 75% . This shows the suitability of items difficulty level since the satisfactory level of difficulty ranges from 30% to 90% (Madsen , 1983:183).

4.4.2 Discrimination Power

It is concerned with the degree to which an item separates low-level examinees from high–level examinees (Heaton (1975:173) . The following formula is used to calculate the discrimination power of the items:

Item discrimination = B2 – B1 / 1/2T

Whereas:

B2= Represent the number of the students in the higher group who obtain the right number.

B1= Represent the number of the students in the lower group who obtain the right number.

1/2T = The total number of the students in the item analysis. The test is considered acceptable when its discrimination power is 0.30 and above while the item must be changed or modified if its discrimination power is less then 0.30 (Eble, 1972: 399). The obtained

discrimination power of the test items extends from 0.30 to 0.70 .

4.5 Reliability of the Test

Lado (1961:321) points out that reliability is strongly pertinent to objectivity, but reliability is not exactly the same thing as objectivity. It refers to the stability of the results regardless of what the test measure. The method adopted to estimate the reliability of the constructed test is the split-half way. It is a technique which utilizes results on the two halves of the test taken at the same setting yields suitability coefficient more directly reliant on the test itself (Lado,1961:323). Person correlation coefficient has been calculated between the single and dual marks of students. It has been elicited that its rate is 0.76. Then, when it is recalculated by the use of Spareman / Brown formula, it is found that the reliability coefficient is 0.86. This means that the test is suitable for application due to the fact that reliability coefficient of a test would be enough and acceptable if it is not less than 0.50 (Nunnally ,1979:266).

5. Analysis of Data and Discussion

Having completed the administration of the diagnostic test , the researchers have scored the responses of the students in order to find out their level of performance in dealing with speech act of directives . Data analysis will display the results according to the performance on each question of the test , as well as identifying and classifying the students' errors .

5.1 Students Performance on the First Area

The first question of the test is constructed to estimate the students' ability in distinguishing between the speech act of directives and other related speech acts particularly speech act of commissive , assertive ,expressive and declaration when these are expressed by similar linguistics devices in a number of situations. The results of the students' response in this part are stated in the following table :

Table (1)

The Number of Errors and Percentage of Student' Performance on Question No.1

The syntactic Area	No. of Items	No. of Correct Responses		No. of Incorrect Responses	
To identify the speech act of directives	1	6		34	
	2	9		31	
	3	11		29	
	4	17		23	
	5	2		38	
	6	5		35	
	7	6		34	
	8	11		29	
	9	10		30	
	10	12		28	
	Total	89	22%	311	78%

The obtained results show that the students do not perform well , and commit difficulties in this question of the test .The outcomes manifested in table (1) points out many errors . The total number of errors for the students is (311) with percentage 78 . This affirms that students show poor performance in most items of this question . The students could not distinguish well between speech act of directives and other related speech acts . It is clear that this area of the test forms the largest number of errors made by the students of the College of Education for Humanities .

5.2 Students' Performance on the Second Area

The second part of the test is built in a way to measure the students' efficiency in giving the function of the speech act of directives whether they are warning , advice , command or request . The collected students' responses in this area of the test are exposed in the following table :

Table (2)

The Number of Errors and Percentage of Student' Performance on

Question No.2

The syntactic Area	No. of Items	No. of Correct Responses		No. of Incorrect Responses	
To give the function of speech act of directives	1	20		20	
	2	15		25	
	3	13		27	
	4	19		21	
	5	11		29	
	6	12		28	
	7	15		25	
	8	18		22	
	9	16		24	
	10	19		21	
	Total	158	39%	242	61%

The results reflected by table (2) visualize that the total number of these errors is (242) . The percentage of these errors is 61.This proves that the students have also a problem in this syntactic area , and don't perform well . It clears that the students could not determine well the function of the speech act of directives whether they are command, advice, warning or request .

5.3 Students' Performance in the Whole Diagnostic Test

Reviewing the students' responses in the whole diagnostic test points out clearly that testees encounter difficulties in using speech act of directives .Therefore , they do not perform well in the areas of the test . The obtained results of their responses to each question of the test can be displayed in the following table :

Table (3)

The Frequency and Rate of Students' Performance in the Whole Test

No. of Question	No. of Errors	Percentage
Q1	311	78%
Q2	242	61%
Total	553	69%

It is concluded from table (3) that the total number of errors made by the students is (553) with (69%) . This means that the information that the students have about speech act of directives is weak . Speech act of directives constitute a real problem for the fourth year students in the College of Education for Humanities, Department of English ; in other words , the two areas of the test state the weakness of the students regarding speech act of directives . The students' poor performance on the two parts of the diagnostic test could be attributed to many reasons . The first reason may be related to the lack of the knowledge about the subject , or faulty of comprehending speech act of directives . as well as , for the unawareness of the significance of speech act of directives and the different functions of directives . Another reason may be related to the insufficiency of the exercises in the students prescribed textbook which concern the speech act of directives. Finally , lack of emphasis in the teaching materials given to the subjects on this aspect are considered reasons for students weakness in the use of speech act of directives .

6. Conclusions

The conclusions below are drawn in the light of the obtained results .

1- Speech acts are either direct realized explicitly by certain verbs or indirect expressed implicitly by declarative sentences .

2- Students must be aware of these two kinds especially the indirect kind since it is somewhat confusing.

3- Students must be aware that speech act of warning cannot be expressed in passive construction .

4- Special attention must be focused on the indirect advice since indirect advice is more polite and more persuasive than direct .

5- It is somehow difficult to categorize the kinds of directives speech act ; therefore a condensed study of the subject is needed .

6- The high number of students' errors concerning directives speech act reflects that this area forms serious problems to fourth year students of the Department of English at the College of Education for Humanities .This means that College students are deficient in using directives speech act .

7-The highest percentage of students' errors occur in the first part of the test (78%) which shows that students could not distinguish between speech act of directives and other related speech acts .This means that there are significant differences in students' performance between the two areas of the diagnostic test.

8- The overlap between speech act of directives and other related speech act is thought to be problematic without a full comprehension of the all types of speech act together , and therefore ,College students suffer from distinguishing between the speech act of directives and other related speech acts.

9- The inadequacy of the mastery of the English grammar and lack of knowledge including this aspect of grammar, i.e. Directives speech act are the reasons behind students' error .

7. Suggestions and Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. English textbooks should provide students with sufficient description of the main characteristics that point out the Speech Act of Directives ..

2. It is important to assist the students develop awareness for learning all functions of Speech Act of directives to be able to express them .

3.Students should be given enough opportunity to practice the various constructions of sentences that express the Speech Acts in general and Speech Act of directives in particular .

4. Another study can be conducted to show the comparison between the speech act of directives and other related speech acts such as commissive, assertive and declaration.

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APPENDIX

TheDiagnostic Test in Speech Act of Directives

Q1 Identify the Intended Speech Act in each of the Following Utterances Whether they are Declaration , Expressive , Directive or Commissive .

1- I will be here tomorrow .

2- I am going to Paris tomorrow .

3- She is sorry that She lied to you .

4- Stop talking now .

5- Why do not you do some more practice ?

6- You are fired , I swear , I beg you .

7- I would suggest doing more exercise

8- We find Joe guilty .

9- I am sorry for being late.

10- We will not do it again .

Q2 Give the Function of each of the Following Utterances .

1- I want to speak to the manager right now . I am not leaving here until

I get my money back .(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

2- Take two tablets every evening .(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

3- You would not drop this into the post office for me , would you ? (**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

4- Don't you ever buy things in that shop .(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

5- Wherever you decide to eat , don't go to that restaurant (**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

6- You had better do more exercise before you start getting fat .(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

7- Beware of Tigers !(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

8- May I have the bill , please ? (**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

9- If I were you , I would buy that car . (**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice , D. Request .**

10- I need the fire extinguisher .Fast !(**A. Warning , B. Command , C. Advice, D. Request .**