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## **A Comparative Study of the Use of Directives by Native and Non-native Speakers of English**

Zuhair Abdulameer Abdulrahman  
*English Department*  
*College of Arts and Letters*  
*Cihan University, Iraq*

Pola Tahseen Mohammed  
*English Department*  
*College of Arts and Letters*  
*Cihan University, Iraq*

### **Abstract in English**

The aim of this paper is three-fold. First, it aims at investigating the ability of nonnative speakers of English at Cihan University to appropriately interpret and implement the four directives, i.e. advice, suggestion, command, and request. The second aim of the paper is to find out whether nonnative speakers have the same knowledge of native speakers in recognizing the various types of directives as well as using the appropriate strategies for producing them. Third, the study also aims at facilitating the use and interpretation of directives by suggesting some pedagogical implications. In order to achieve the aims of the paper, a test of recognition and production was constructed and given to the students whose replies were compared with native speakers provided to the researcher by Chat GPT. Then a thorough analysis of the results reveals the ability of the students in using and interpreting the four types of directives as well as to what extent the two groups are different..

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## 1 Introduction

As a teacher of English at the Department of English at Cihan University, the writer has experienced the difficulties our students face when they communicate with their teachers and classmates in English. One of the main reasons underlying this failure in communication maintenance is the wrong implementation and interpretation of directives; advising, suggesting, commanding, and requesting. The type of cooperation between addresser – addressee to maintain communication is usually governed by the type of relationship between them as well as the type of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information.

Generally speaking, the use of directives is influenced by linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. Without knowing the contextual factors and relying only on linguistic realization, it is difficult for an addressee especially a nonnative speaker of English to interpret the type of speech act intended by the addresser. Consider the following examples:

- 1 You had better leave now.
- 2 Why don't we leave now?
- 3 Leave now.
- 4 Would you mind leaving now?

This sort of misinterpretation is called “pragmatic failure” by Reynolds (1995: 6). According to him, pragmatic failure is classified into two types: pragmalinguistic failure (5) and sociolinguistic failure (6):

- 5 Native speaker: Is it open on Sundays?

Nonnative speaker: of course.

- 6 Visitor to a city: Excuse me; do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?

Passer-by: Oh, sure I know where it is (and walks away).

It is obvious that (5) is an example of pragmalinguistic failure since the native speaker asks a question and the nonnative speaker responds incorrectly by using 'of course' instead of 'yes'. In (6), there is a sociolinguistic failure because the visitor requests the passer-by to tell him the way to his destination, but the passer-by misinterprets the goal of the utterance and gives an answer considering the request as a question.

## 2 Literature Review

Although several studies have examined the differences between native and nonnative speakers of English in using of directives, none of them, to the best knowledge of the writer, have explored all four types of directives, as most studies have focused on only one or two. Moreover, most of these studies investigated the use of advice and suggestion, but rarely request and command. Taguchi, N (2006) examined the ability of Japanese English learners in producing request. Darweesh, A and Al-Aadili, N (2024) focused on the implementation of advice and suggestion by university students. Al Jaid, Z and Ghazanfari, M (2023) explored what strategies both native and nonnative speakers of English used to indicate politeness. Hussein, N and Albakri, I (2019) on the challenges facing EFL learners in request issuance. However, like the current study,

most research on directives focus on the different strategies implemented by native and nonnative speakers of English in issuing the four directives. Abdelfattah Abidi et al. (2022) found that in university settings, Moroccan EFL students exhibited greater directness than American native speakers, frequently employing direct request strategies and hearer-oriented requests. In teacher–student interaction contexts, non-native students also display different sensitivities to politeness cues. Chaqmaqchee, O and Jasim, Z (2022) investigated politeness strategies employed by Iraqi EFL students. Duryagin et al. (2022) showed that L2 learners of English did not perform in a target-like manner when evaluating the pragmatic implications of verbal aspect in teacher directives. Moreover, unlike native speakers who perceived imperfective verbs in direct and conventionally indirect constructions as salient markers of impoliteness, L2 learners struggled to recognize these language-specific politeness cues. This finding suggests that certain pragmatic features may not be acquired through incidental learning, even at intermediate proficiency levels.

At the elementary level, directive use is heavily influenced by cultural and linguistic contexts. Hl et al. (2023) reported that young learners employed a range of directive acts—including demanding, commanding, begging, and challenging—while embedding cultural values through specific linguistic markers such as clitics to signal politeness distinctions. Extending the focus to professional training contexts, Tri Pujiati et al. (2024) demonstrated that health science students adapted their directive strategies to social variables such as gender and audience diversity, showing flexibility in their communication practices.

What has been stated above clearly shows that while prior research has provided valuable insights into directive use across different contexts, it has typically examined only one or two types of directives at a time. This narrow focus limits our understanding of how directive strategies function as an integrated system in authentic communication. Moreover, earlier studies have largely relied on traditional qualitative or discourse-analytic approaches, leaving untapped the potential of advanced computational methods for large-scale, fine-grained analysis. By investigating all four directive types and incorporating artificial intelligence tools for systematic analysis, the present study addresses these gaps. It not only broadens the empirical scope of directive research but also demonstrates how AI can enhance the precision and efficiency of pragmatic inquiry, offering methodological innovations with implications for both linguistic theory and pedagogical practice.

### 3 Directives in English

The term 'directive' is defined by Searle (1977) as an action intended by the speaker to motivate the hearer to do something. This category which consists of four types, advice, suggestion, command, and request, is considered the most powerful and the most active speech acts in everyday language.

Sentences in English are classified into declarative, interrogative, and imperative, e.g.

7 It is so cold in here.

8 Are you serious?

9 Go out.

This classification is based on the assumption that these types can express the illocutions of questioning, requesting, commanding, and stating (Levinson, 1983: 242). These syntactic classes are realized with different illocutionary categories, i.e. they can be used to make statements, issue directives and make questions. Thus, a directive can be achieved through the use of the declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Thus, a speaker has different options to issue a particular speech act.

Leech (1983: 80) argues that interlocutors are guided by two basic principles, namely, cooperative and politeness, when they get involved in any conversational situation. He points out that while the former is accomplished when addresser and the addressee regulate what they say to achieve their illocutionary force; the latter is used to minimize impoliteness.

In order to indicate politeness, Lakoff (1977: 88) states that there are certain rules which are designed to maintain interlocutors' interaction with minimal wasted effort or friction. He presents the rules as follows:

A Formality: Don't impose/remain aloof.

B Hesitancy: Allow the addressee choose his options.

C Equality: Act as though you and the addressee were equal/make him feels good.

The writer (1977: 100) also adds that there is a sort of relation between the sentence type and politeness. Through the analysis of people interaction, he observes that while the imperative type is the strongest because it cannot be overridden by the other two types, the interrogative is the weakest as it can be overridden by the other types. In order to illustrate what has been stated above, the following examples are given:

10 Where is the book?

Con conversationally, the above interrogative sentence implicates:

a You did not put the book in its usual place.

b Give me the book.

c Why isn't the book on the shelf?

11 It's cold in here.

Con conversationally, the above declarative sentence implicates:

a Close the door behind you.

b I feel uncomfortable because you left the door open.

12 Take out the garbage.

Con conversationally, this sentence only implicates one possibility which is 'Follow my order.' (Lakoff, 1977: 100-101).

The most prominent feature in the afore-mentioned examples is that the addresser and the addressee are primarily controlled by social distance or status. This is clearly illustrated by the type of speech act issued by the speaker and the act intended to be done by the hearer. Therefore, the process of choosing any speech act is highly influenced by the socio-cultural factors of the community where the speech act takes place. In the English community, for instance, the most avoided speech act is the imperative type because people feel that they don't have the authority to command other people.

In order to give the reader a general idea of the four directives in English and how they are implemented in different contexts, the following brief survey is presented.

### 3.1 Advice

As a speech act, advice is used by interlocutors to express or state the best thing or the right thing to do, e.g.

13 They should/ought to build more hospitals

Fraser (1987:187) states that 'advice' as a speech act in the above example contains the obligation of the speaker to ask the hearer to do some act. Here the speaker used modals instead of the verb 'advice' to make his advice an indirect one.

According to Bach and Harnish (1979: 48), the term 'advisories' includes: admonish, advice, caution, counsel, propose, recommend, suggest, urge, and warn. Using one of the above expressions, the speaker advises the hearer to act if the speaker believes that there is a (sufficient) reason for the hearer to act, and the hearer takes the speaker's belief as a sufficient reason for him to act. Here, the speaker does not express his desire that the hearer does a certain action, but fully believes that it is good for the hearer to do it, i.e. it is in the hearer's interest to do it.

However, to perform an advice obligates the fulfillment of the contextual factors that include the mutual contextual features of the speaker-hearer. These factors are the hearer's capacity to perform the advice as well as the social distance between the speaker and hearer. The following normal forms of advice are suggested by Wierzbicka (1985:150):

14 If I were you, I would tell him the truth.

15 Tell him the truth - I would.

16 Why don't you tell him the truth? I think it would be best.

17 Do you think it might be a good idea to tell him the truth?

The above examples show three facts. First, they cannot be considered direct advices because the verb 'advice' is not used. Second, the verb 'advice' is rarely used by native speakers in their spoken discourse because its use indicates formality. Third, the directive 'advice' cannot be considered an impositive act because as Bax (1986: 676) states that the hearer has the right to perform it or not depending exclusively on the benefit of the hearer.

#### 3.1.1 Advice Linguistic Realizations

Advice as a speech act can be realized by a wide range of sentence types. The following are the most commonly used by native speakers of English:

##### 3.1.1.1 Declarative

In declarative sentences, the speaker may employ a statement or an indirect declarative statement to achieve an advice, e.g.

18 She must know the truth, John.

Native speakers often resort to modals to issue an advice, e.g.

19 I ought to tell her the truth.

##### 3.1.1.2 Imperative

The imperative form of 'advice' can be expressed by marked (20) and unmarked forms (21) and (22):

20 Listen carefully.

21 You ought to study hard.

22 You must tell her the truth.

In giving advice, a native speaker of English may use the hypothetical form, e.g.

23 If I were you, I would study harder.

### 3. 1. 1. 3 Interrogative

This type of linguistic form is commonly used to give an advice or ask others for advice, e.g.

24 Do you think I'd better call a doctor?

### 3.2 Suggestion

As a speech act, 'suggestion' is defined by Bach and Harnish (1979: 49) as "an utterance used to refer to a special reason that the recommended action is a good idea for both speaker and hearer", e.g.

25 Why don't we go on a picnic?

The above sentence shows that 'suggestion' can be included under the heading of advisories due to the fact that doing that action is a good idea for both the speaker and hearer. However, the difference between the two directives is that in giving advice, the action will be performed only for the benefit of the hearer.

Suggestion, therefore, can be considered as a matter of presenting future preferable actions or the most desirable choices for both speaker and hearer. In such a situation, a valuable decision from both interlocutors is required. Therefore, the act of suggesting does not necessarily demand the authority of the speaker over the hearer because the suggested act is intended to be beneficial for both of them.

### 3. 2. 1 Suggesting Linguistic realizations

The following linguistic forms are commonly used by native speakers of English to express suggestions:

#### 3. 2. 1. 1 Declarative

In this type, a statement that can be an introduction to the intended act by which the speech acts can be realized as 'suggestion', e.g.

26 We are so hungry.

Con conversationally, the sentence implicates the suggestion 'why don't we look for a restaurant' because the speaker and hearer share the same communicative intentions.

#### 3. 2. 1. 2 Imperative

The imperative form of suggestion normally calls for the approval of the hearer since the speaker is neither powerful nor powerless, i.e. both the speaker and hearer are of equal status. Consider the following example:

27 Let's have lunch before the test.

Suggestion imperatives can be formed negatively, e.g.

28 Let's not have lunch before the test.

Another type of suggestion imperatives takes the form of 'yes/no question', e.g.

29 Shall we have lunch before the test.



Feigenbaum (1985: 35) states that since the purpose of the above sentence is suggestion, it should end in a period. Moreover, native speakers of English say the above sentence with the intonation of a statement.

### 3. 2. 1. 3 Interrogative

The interrogative forms are not used as 'wh-questions', but as a means of getting people to act, e.g.

30 I bought two tickets, why don't we go to the movies?

### 3. 3 Command

Commands are utterances used by speakers to guide, direct or give instructions to others. According to Bach and Harnish (1979: 47), the issuant of a command should have a sort of authority on the hearer that enables him to command the hearer to act or refrain from acting. In this case, the hearer should comply because the source enjoys a sort of authority which he exploits to command others, e.g.

37 Hold on now!

### 3. 3. 1 Command Linguistic Realizations

Commands can appear in the following linguistic types:

#### 3. 3. 1. 1 Declarative

To issue a command, a speaker may use the form of a statement, e.g.

38 These doors need painting.

Sometimes, the speaker uses a modal or a semi-modal to issue a command, e.g.

39 You have to paint the doors.

40 You mustn't forget painting the doors.

41 I want you to paint the doors now.

42 The doors must be painted.

The verb (to be) followed by an infinitive can be used to issue a command as well, e.g.

43 You are to paint the doors.

Native speakers of English rarely use the verb 'command' or 'order' to issue a command as in:

44 I order/command you to paint the doors.

#### 3. 3. 1. 2 Imperative

The imperative form is commonly used by native speakers to command or instruct people to do something, e.g.

45 Do not come back until you have finished the job.

46 Read the examples before beginning the test.

Sometimes, the doer of the action is mentioned for emphasis or clarity. To illustrate this, Feigenbaum (1985: 34) introduced the following sentences:

47 Tom, open the door for them.

#### 3. 3. 1. 3 Interrogative

The interrogative forms are sometimes used to issue commands due to two facts. These forms which have the superficial form and intonation of questions with illocutionary force of imperatives are not used to elicit information, but as a means of getting people to act, e.g.

48 Can't you stop smoking in the room?

### 3.4 Request

Though 'requests' and 'commands' have the same illocutionary act, the former should have polite expressions. Green (1975: 121) defines 'requests' as "the method used with polite expressions for getting someone to do something..... the utterer is someone who has or is acting as if he has no authority or power to compel compliance". The non-existence of power or authority on the part of the speaker is also asserted by Trosborg (1995: 187) who describes the act of 'request' as "an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker".

McCawley (1977: 18) seems to agree with the above two writers when he states that a request is an act which commits the requestee to consider it and commits the requester to be grateful if the requestee performs the action.

Allan (1986: 199) suggests the following three conditions to issue a request:

Preparatory: S has a reason to believe that H can (or might be able to) do A.

Sincerity: S wants the deed done, perhaps, specifically by H.

Illocutionary intention: S reflexively intends the utterance to be recognized as a reason for H to agree to do A.

Bach and Harnish (1979: 47) seem to focus on the desire of the speaker which stimulates the hearer to consider the speech act as a request. However, in order to get the act of request accomplished, the hearer should have desire to do the act, and the intention to do the act to carry out the speaker's desire.

49. A. Could you help me to wash my car?

B. Sorry, but I have to go for shopping now.

### 3.4.1 Linguistic realizations of request

Requests as speech acts can be realized in the following syntactic structures:

#### 3.4.1.1 Declarative

Native speakers of English usually use declarative sentences to express request, e.g.

50 It is hot in here.

51 I am asking if there are any windows in this room.

52 I am so thirsty.

Native speakers of English rarely use the verb 'request' to express this speech act, e.g.

53 I request you to have a rest.

A request can also be expressed by the use conditional clauses, e.g.

54 I would be grateful if you send me your address.

Sometimes native speakers use other syntactic devices in the form of conditionals to express requests, e.g.

55 As soon as the bus comes, tell me at once.

#### 3.4.1.2 Imperative

To distinguish requests from commands, native speakers usually use polite words or phrases the most common of which is the word 'please', e.g.

56 Open the door for me, please.

Modal markers are also used to indicate imperative requests, e.g.



57 Could you tell me the time?

58 Would you return this book to the library for me?

A tag question is also used to indicate request as in:

59 Pass me the salt, will you?

### 3. 4. 1. 3 Interrogative

Requests can be also expressed by the use of questions to elicit either a verbal response or a nonverbal one, e.g.

60 Do you have some milk?

61 May I have a cup of coffee with you?

### 3.5 Strategies of directives issuance

The following table represents a rather comprehensive list of strategies employed by native speakers of English to issue directives. These strategies are considered mitigation devices that tone down the impact of imposition on the hearer.

**Table 4**

Types of strategies used by native speakers of English to issue directives

Syntactic	Lexical	Discoursal
Modals	Deference Markers	Disarmers
Yes/no questions	Interpersonal markers	Preparators
Past tense	Minimizers	Supportive reasons
Negation	Consultative devices	Sweeteners
Embedding	Downtoners	Cost-minimizing
'ing' form	Introductory phrases	Promise of reward
Agent indirection	Terms of address	
If clause	Euphemism	
Tag questions		

The above table shows that strategies of issuing directives are of three types: syntactic, lexical and discoursal.

### 3. 6 Syntactic strategies

#### 3. 6. 1 Modals

Modals such as will, shall, can, may, must, etc. are frequently used by native speakers of English to indicate politeness, e.g.

64 Would you mind lending me your pen?

#### 3. 6. 2 Yes/no question

Generally speaking, the use of yes/no questions is considered politer than statement as it gives the hearer the freedom of response, e.g.

65 Will you help me?

#### 3. 6. 3 Past tense

The use of past tense is regarded politer than the use of present tense since it "biases the utterance into a more hypothetical reading" (Haverkate, 1992: 509), e.g.

66 Could you help me?

### 3. 6. 4 Negation

In order to be politer, native speakers tend to use the negative form as it gives the hearer more freedom to say 'no'; hence, it downtones the expectations of fulfilling the action (Trosborg, 1995: 210), e.g.

67 Couldn't you take me home?

In this regard, Holmes (1984: 358), states that the use of the negative form 'not ...un' (68) indicates more politeness than the use of only 'not'(69):

68 The relationship is not unproblematic.

69 The relationship is not problematic.

### 3. 6. 5 Embedding

One way of mitigating the negative effect of an utterance is by embedding it in a preface containing parenthetical verbs, such as tentative (70), appreciative (71) and subjective (72) (Frazer, 1980: 348).

70 I wonder whether you can take me home.

71 I would be very grateful if you'd take me home.

72 I think you wouldn't mind taking me home.

### 3. 6. 6 '-ing' form

The use of '-ing' form with parenthetical verbs indicates more politeness (Trosborg, 1995: 211), e.g.

73 I am wondering if you could lend me some money.

### 3. 6. 7 Agent indirection

The avoidance of using *I* and *you* is one of the mitigation devices used by native speakers to increase the distance between the speaker and the hearer in order to downtone the effect of the utterance, e.g.

74 We clean up after ourselves here.

### 3. 6. 8 If-clause

The main objective of using if-clause by native speakers is to soften directives as it includes the notion of possibility (Brown and Levinson (1978: 158), e.g.

75 If you are not too busy, would you give me a hand?

### 3. 6. 9 Tag questions

Generally, tag questions are used by native speakers to express 'indeterminacy' (Leech, 1983: 337), e.g.

76 You couldn't send him a letter, could you?

## 3. 7 Lexical mitigation devices

The following are the most common lexical devices used by native speakers of English to indicate politeness:

### 3. 7. 1 Deference markers

To indicate politeness, native speakers resort to some markers of deference like *please*, *thank you*, *kindly*, *so nice as*, etc., e.g.

77 Would you kindly hand me this paper?

### 3. 7. 2 Interpersonal markers

Native speakers of English often appeal to some expressions such as ‘you know’, ‘you see’, ‘I mean’, ‘right?’, ‘OK?’, etc. to establish and maintain interpersonal relationship (See Trosborg, 1995: 214), e.g.

78 You wouldn't mind helping me, I mean, would you?

### 3. 7. 3 Minimizers

Minimizers such as *a bit*, *a second*, *a tiny* are commonly used to minimize the impact of imposition on the hearer, e.g.

79 Would you wait just a second?

### 3. 7. 4 Consultative devices

To decrease the impact of their utterances on hearers, speakers tend to preface their utterances with expressions like ‘would you mind?’, ‘Do you think?’, ‘Do you object to, etc., e.g.

80 Would you mind having the meeting on Friday?

### 3. 7. 5 Downtoners

Adverbs such as *just*, *perhaps*, *maybe*, *probably*, *possibly*, etc., adjectives like *possible*, *apparent*, *likely*, etc., and nouns such as *assumption*, *suggestion*, *possibility* are frequently used by native speakers to downtone the impact of the utterance (Salager-Meyer, 2002: 6), e.g.

81 It seems possible to finish the report today.

### 3. 7. 6 Introductory phrases

In order not to claim that they have the final word on certain decisions, speakers tend to use some expressions that can achieve mitigation, e.g.

82 To the best of my knowledge, he is fired.

### 3. 7. 7 Terms of address

Words such as *mate*, *dear*, *sweetheart*, *Sir*, *Mr*, *Dr*, etc. are commonly used by native speakers of English to show solidarity; hence they soften the impact of the directive, e.g.

83 Sir, I wonder if I can use one of your pens.

## 3.8 Discoursal mitigation devices

These are some supporting statements used by native speakers of English to render their utterances more justifiable and plausible. They are of the following types:

### 3. 8. 1 Disarmers

To reduce the impact of some utterances, disarmers which usually take the form of apology ending with 'but' are used, e.g.

84 I don't mean to bother you but .....

### 3. 8. 2 Preparators

Preparators are presequences used by native speakers to prepare their utterances to achieve the fulfillment of preconditions. According to Trosborg (1995: 216), utterances can be prepared in one of the following ways:

#### 3. 8. 2. 1 Preparing the content

Native speakers of English often structure their conversation in such a way that the content of their utterances goes smoothly with the context. If, for instance, one wants to ask for a pen, he may state that his pen is lost, e.g.

85 I don't know where I put my pen. May I use your pen for a while?

### **3. 8. 2. 2 Preparing the speech act**

Speakers can foreshadow the speech act they are about to perform so that it will be expected by the hearer, e.g.

86 Listen, there is something I want to talk to you about, you remember our agreement, don't you?

### **3. 8. 2. 3 Checking on availability**

To prevent an excuse that it might come from the hearer, speakers use certain expressions to accomplish the performance of the speech act, e.g.

87 May I disturb you for a moment?

### **3. 8. 2. 4 Getting a pre-commitment**

Certain expressions are often used by native speakers to ensure compliance on the part of the hearer leading to pre-commitment, e.g.

88 May I ask you a favor?

### **3. 8. 2. 5 Supportive reasons**

In order to secure the learner's compliance, a speaker has to provide reasons such as justification, explanation, etc. for his speech act, e.g.

89 Do you have any flour to spare? I've just run out of it.

### **3. 8. 2. 6 Sweeteners**

Speakers sometimes need to flatter the hearer before issuing their directives. For instance, they praise the hearer's skill in doing something, showing approval towards their behavior, expressing admiration to their belongings, etc., (Trosborg, 1995: 217), e.g.

90 Your collection of books is very interesting. Could I borrow one for a couple of days?

### **3. 8. 2. 7 Cost-minimizing**

To achieve compliance and cooperation of the hearer, speakers often tend to use cost-minimizing indications, e.g.

91 Could I borrow your car tonight? I'll have it back in time for you to drive to work tomorrow.

### **3. 8. 2. 8 Promise of reward**

Speakers sometimes offer rewards to the hearer to gain his compliance as it sounds more attractive, e.g.

92 If you help me now, I'll help you later.

## **1. Methodology**

The primary aim of the test is to find out whether nonnative speakers of English have the same knowledge of native speakers in recognizing the various types of directives as

well as using the appropriate strategies for producing them. The sample of the study is a group of stage 4 students who are studying at the Department of English at Cihan University-Erbil. The test comprises two types of questions. The first type consisting of sixteen situations is of recognition nature. These situations are classified into four types each of which is designed to perform one directive, i.e. advice, suggestion, command, and/or request.

The second question is of production nature, i.e. the subjects are asked to produce the four directives. The instructions given to the subjects to produce a certain situation are formed in such a way that the subjects are forced to accomplish only one directive.

After designing the test, the writer asked Chat GPT to state whether the situations are authentic, i.e. commonly produced by native speakers of English. After getting the approval, the following section was presented.

#### 4.1 Discussion of results

Below is a thorough analysis of the sample performance at the recognition level and the production level.

##### 4.1.1 Performance at the recognition level

After carrying out a thorough analysis of the subjects' performance at the recognition level, the following points are highlighted:

1 While Chat GPT recognizes every directive used in different scenarios; the students find it difficult to recognize the four directives, especially when performative verbs are not used. The following table shows this fact.

**Table 5**

##### **Students' performance on the recognition level**

Type of speech act	Total number of responses	Number of correct responses	Percentage
Advice	80	43	58%
Suggestion	80	38	48%
Command	80	32	39%
Request	80	27	33%

It is obvious that the student commit a number of errors even on the recognition level because they rely on the linguistic forms rather than the contextual factors which govern the use of certain directives. This means that it is rather difficult for students to recognize the type of directive unless there is a performative verb, namely advice, suggest, command, and request, which is used to directly issue that directive. The least percentage of correct performance of the students is in the recognition of request because it is quite confusing for them to distinguish it from other directives due to the fact that it is frequently recognized by contextual factors rather than by linguistic realizations.

##### 4.1.2 Subjects' performance on the production level

On the production level, the subjects also commit a number of errors. The following table shows the number of errors committed by the students in each directive:

**Table 6**

**Students' performance at the production level**

Type of speech act	Total number of responses	Number of correct responses	Percentage
Advice	80	34	42%
Suggestion	80	19	24%
Command	80	33	41%
Request	80	60	75%

Contrary to the previous percentage of request appeared in table (5), the percentage of students' correct performance at the production level regarding 'request' is the highest (75%). The present writer assumes that the reason behind this high percentage is the interlingual factor. The students' mother tongue is prevailed with polite expressions that interlocutors use to appear to be politer. The other reason is that the emphasis of teachers of English is placed on the use of polite expressions to maintain communication with native speakers of English, especially in request issuance.

In order to compare the strategies implemented by both native and nonnative speakers to accomplish every speech act, the following two tables are presented:

**Table 7**

**Strategies implemented by native speakers of English to issue directives**

Discoursal preparing the speech act	Discoursal preparing the content	Syntactic modal past	Syntactic past yes/no questions	Lexical/ deference/ please	Lexical introducing the phrase	Syntactic modal present
34	24	20	16	16	14	14
Discoursal checking on availability	Discoursal/ disarmers	Discoursal/ getting a precommitment	Discoursal/ preparing the speech act/ comes finally	Lexical/ Downtoner	Syntactic/ Embedding	Syntactic/ tag questions
12	10	10	6	4	4	2
Discoursal/ Supportive reason	Lexical/ interpersonal	Lexical/ Consultative	Lexical/ Terms of address	No mitigation device		
2	2	2	2	16		

**Table 8**

**Strategies implemented by the students to issue directives**

Syntactic/	Lexical/	Syntactic/	Lexical	Discoursal/	Discoursal/	Lexical
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modal/ present	deference	modal/ past	phrase	preparing the speech act	Getting a precommitment	terms of address
46	32	24	17	6	4	3
Lexical/ terms of address	Discoursal/ Preparing the content	Syntactic/ yes/no questions	No mitigation device			
3	2	2	16			

A comparison of the strategies implemented by the two samples of the study enables us to arrive at the following conclusions:

- 1 While native speakers tend to use different types of strategies to downtone the impact of any speech act on the hearer, the students resort to a number of them and ignore the others. This difference is quite obvious in the two tables above. In table (7), eighteen strategies to issue directives are used by the natives whereas only eleven ones are used by the students in table (8).
- 2 While the students seem unaware of the direct and indirect strategies implemented by native speakers to issue every speech act, native speakers are fully aware of them. The outstanding difference is in the use of discoursals. While native speakers implement seven types of discoursals which are used 98 times to indirectly issue their directives, the students use only three types and only 12 times because they resort to performatives to issue their directives. This means that while the natives try to be implicit when issuing directives, nonnatives intend to be explicit.
- 3 Both native speakers of English and the students issue directives sixteen times without using any mitigation devices. This may give a false impression to the reader that both groups issue the same directives in the same situations. This is of course untrue because the analysis of the results shows that native speakers do not use mitigation devices in certain situations which require mitigation devices. However, the students do not use mitigation devices in situations that the use of such devices is required whereas they use mitigation devices in situations that native speakers do not use them. This indicates the ignorance of the students of the appropriate use of such devices.
- 4 The strategy that is used more than all other directives by native speakers to issue directives is 'discoursal preparing the speech act' (34), whereas the nonnatives use 'syntactic modal present' more than any other type (46). This indicates that native speakers rarely use this strategy because it frequently indicates impoliteness whereas the students frequently use it because they are unaware of its impoliteness.
- 5 While native speakers of English make use of all linguistic realizations to issue directives, the students do not.

- 6 Whereas native speakers are fully aware of the social factors which determine the use of the type of directive which is most appropriate in that situation, the students prove to be ignorant of such social factors.
- 7 While the natives have the ability to use every directive according to its contextual factors, the students prove to use directives randomly since they are unaware of the factors that determine their use.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The most significant conclusion the study arrived at is that level 4 students at the Department of English at Cihan University cannot match the performance of the native speakers of English in the interpretation and implementation of directives due to the following reasons:

#### **1. Difference in language**

The two languages under study are quite different in handling directives. Therefore, when nonnative students try to produce directives, they sometimes transfer from their mother tongue which certainly does not match the target language structures; hence the transfer would be negative.

#### **2. Difference in culture**

It is well known that culture plays a paramount role in the production of certain linguistic structures. Since the students have not yet been fully exposed to the other culture, they will definitely produce directives according to the norms and parameters of their own culture. This, of course, yields constructions which are different from those produced by native speakers who, unlike the nonnative, try to implement different types of mitigation devices to downtone the impact of their speech act. Furthermore, when native speakers of English try to issue any directive, they are very concerned about the social factors which determine the relationship between interlocutors whereas the students do not care about them.

#### **3. Difference in language mastery**

While native speakers of any language have the ability to produce all the structures of their language unconsciously as it is their mother tongue, nonnative speakers rely on the level of language mastery they have achieved. This is clearly shown in the analysis of the performance of the students who always tend to be explicit by using direct performative verbs such as 'advice', 'suggest', 'command, and 'request'. Native speakers on the other hand always tend to be implicit by using indirect structures and rarely use those performative verbs when they produce directives. Moreover, native speakers of English make use of all types of linguistic realization as well as the contextual factors when they issue directives whereas the students do not.

In the light of the results of the test which clearly show the inability of the students to issue directives appropriately, the following recommendations can be suggested:

1. Nonnative speakers of English are advised to make use of any opportunity to get involved in all types of interactional communication with native speakers of English to help them use the target language appropriately.
2. Syllabus designers as well as text-book writers should include different types of authentic situations where students are obliged to use all the four types of

directives. Moreover, the students should be exposed to the contextual factors that determine the issuance of each directive as well as the linguistic realizations which can be implemented to express each one of them.

3. Teachers of English should try to expose their students to linguistic situations in which directives are used to help them master their implementation. Furthermore, students should be exposed to native speakers' culture to be fully familiar of how the people there behave when they interact with each other due to the fact that cultures are different and people's attitude is inevitably governed by the norms of their culture.

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#### Abstract in Arabic

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يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحقيق ثلاثة أهداف رئيسية، أولها دراسة قدرة المتحدثين غير الأصليين للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة جيهان على تفسير وتنفيذ الأنواع الأربعة من التوجيهات بشكل مناسب، وهي: النصيحة، والاقتراح، والأمر، والطلب، ثانيها معرفة ما إذا كان لدى المتحدثين غير الأصليين نفس معرفة المتحدثين الأصليين في التعرف على الأنواع المختلفة من التوجيهات واستخدام الاستراتيجيات المناسبة لإنتاجها، وثالثها تسهيل استخدام وتفسير التوجيهات من خلال اقتراح بعض التطبيقات التربوية. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم إعداد اختبار للتعرف على التوجيهات وإنتاجها، وقدم للطلاب، حيث تمت مقارنة إجاباتهم مع إجابات المتحدثين الأصليين التي قرأها الباحث باستخدام Chat GPT، وأظهر التحليل الدقيق للنتائج قدرة الطلاب على استخدام وتفسير الأنواع الأربعة من التوجيهات، وكذلك مدى الاختلاف بين المجموعتين.

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