

## Beyond Instructions: Exploring the Power of Directives in English as Foreign Language Tutoring

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### Abstract

This study explores the directive illocutionary acts produced by a tutor in a Small England Class during English teaching and learning. This research was conducted to find out the types of directive illocutionary acts employed, identifying the most and least frequent types and their implications. The data were analyzed by the descriptive qualitative method, and collected by recording the teaching and learning process, watching and listening to the video, transcribing the video, and classifying the tutor's utterance into directive illocutionary acts. The writer applied Searle's theory to the types of directive illocutionary acts which include direct, request, ask, urge, tell, require, demand, command, order, forbid, prohibit, enjoin, permit, suggest, insist, warn, advise, recommend, beg, supplicate, entreat, beseech, implore, and pray. The result of the study revealed that there are a total of 429 data points found in the speech, with command being the most dominant with a total of 247 (57.58%), followed by ask at 156 (36.36%), request at 12 (2.80%), suggest at 5 (1.17%), forbid at 3 (0.70%), recommend at 3 (0.70%) and the last three sequences (advise, tell, and urge) being the least dominant at 1 (0.23%). The findings indicate that commands were the most prevalent type of directive illocutionary acts, as they were mainly used to get the students to perform a specific action that the tutor desired i.e., translating the tutor's speech into English when drilling session.

**Keywords:** *directive illocutionary acts; English course; speech acts*

### INTRODUCTION

The study of language use in communication, particularly within instructional settings, has attracted a lot of interest in linguistics. Speech act theory, first proposed by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), provides a foundational framework for understanding the function of language beyond its structural form. In addition, Oktarini (2019) added that speech act is linguistic process in which the speaker does something through their speech, in addition to merely saying something. Thus, a speech embodies not just meaning but also power. The speech acts are classified into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaration. The theory's main focus is on illocutionary acts, which describe the speaker's intention when using specific expressions. Among these, directive illocutionary acts—which are intended to persuade the hearer to take action—are particularly relevant in educational settings where the primary objectives are guidance and instruction. Directives acts can be the following types: Direct, request, ask, urge, tell, require, demand, command, order, forbid, prohibit, enjoin, permit, suggest, insist, warn, advise, recommend, beg, supplicate, entreat, beseech, implore, and pray (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). The directive illocutionary acts performed by tutors at the Small England Course, a language learning facility in Blora that focuses on teaching English to non-native speakers, are examined in this study.

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Directive acts play an important role in the dynamics of teaching and learning, particularly in language courses where clear instructions and guidance are essential for effective learning. Directive utterances are ones in which the speaker attempts to persuade the listener to do something or not do something (Kreidler, 2013). Yule (1996) asserts that directives include a variety of statements that call for an active response from the hearer, including commands, requests, and suggestions. In the context of the Small England Course—a language education program aimed at improving English proficiency among non-native speakers—the use of directive acts by tutors becomes a focal point of interest. This study explores how tutors employ directive speech acts to facilitate learning, maintain classroom control, and guide students toward achieving their language learning goals.

Directive acts, such as commands, requests, asks, recommend, forbid, and advice, are vital in shaping the interactions between tutors and students. A number of variables, including as the tutor's tone, cultural norms, the relationship between the teacher and students, and the general classroom atmosphere, might affect how effective they are. When these acts are used effectively, they can produce a welcoming and stimulating atmosphere that encourages student involvement and improves learning results. On the other hand, when directive acts are handled poorly, pupils may become confused, lose motivation, or even resist, which could affect their ability to learn. This is in line with Brown & Levinson (1987) that inappropriate or overly authoritative use of directives can lead to communication breakdowns or reduced motivation among learners. This issue becomes even more critical in informal learning environments like Small England Course, where the balance between formality and approachability is key.

The Small England Course in Blora has become a prominent illustration of a language school that combines formal and informal teaching methods. Tutors use a range of teaching techniques in a semi-structured environment, adapting to students with different backgrounds and skill levels. But how well tutors utilize language to run the classroom, provide directions, and create a positive learning atmosphere will determine how effective these tactics are. As noted by Nunan (2004), the patterns of interaction that are developed between teachers and students are closely linked to the success of language learning. Thus, analyzing the kinds and purposes of directive illocutionary acts employed by tutors in this context offers important insights into how language promotes learning.

Despite its significance, directive illocutionary acts in informal educational settings remains underexplored, especially in rural area like Blora. Most studies have focused on formal classroom environments (e.g., Farahani et al. (2023); Maesaroh (2013); Khammari (2021); Koceva & Kostadinova (2021); Şanal & Ortaçtepe (2019) leaving a gap in understanding how directives function in less conventional learning setting. This lack of research limits our ability to generalize findings and adapt pedagogical strategies to diverse educational contexts. Filling this gap is essential since non-formal educational establishments like Small England Course frequently serve students who might not have access to traditional classroom settings or who would rather learn in a more relaxed learning atmosphere.

The cultural and social context of Blora adds another layer of complexity to the use of directives in language instruction. As Hofstede (1986) cultural dimensions theory suggests, power distance and societal norms influence communication styles in educational settings. In a community-oriented culture like Blora, tutors must navigate these cultural expectations while ensuring their directives are understood. Failure to consider these sociocultural factors can result in miscommunication and decreased learner satisfaction, ultimately impacting the effectiveness of the course.

There are many previous studies on speech act of directive. Previous research stated that directive acts are important in elementary school because they are useful as a form of pragmatic science study that can enrich the development of pragmatics. The result show that the use of directive politeness strategies can affect the effectiveness of learning, including students being active, making conducive classroom atmosphere, and attracting students' attention to focus on learning (Nisa & Abduh, 2022). Another finding states that directives are used in the form of

interrogatives, imperatives, and declaratives for various function. The functions are mostly instructional and managerial. Instructional functions are including asking for confirmation, asking question, elicitation, checking knowledge; managerial functions are including commanding, instructing, grouping, guiding, stimulating, and correcting the students' error and suggestion (Sulistiyani, 2017).

Research on directive acts occurred at school environment is also important. Mubarak et al. (2021) tried to identify directive illocutionary acts occurred in school slogans. The results showed that three kinds of directive speech acts are utilized in the school slogans; they are advising (the dominant one), commanding, and requesting. The school provides a lot of advice to their students (addressee) through these school slogans. In addition, context and co-context have a very important role in understanding the slogans, thus the slogan found contains more to the philosophy of life and educational values.

In the same vein, the study of directive acts particularly related to English diminutives in children's literature was conducted by Bystrov et al. (2020). The authors want to demonstrate that the realization of diminutives is influenced by speech situations in which a kid participates in communication as an addresser, addressee, referent, or third party. The quantitative analysis of English diminutives in children's literature reflects the findings of the empirically-based study, showing that directed speech acts of order and demand have a substantially higher frequency of occurrences.

Based on the explanation that has been provided, this study aims to analyze: What kinds of directive illocutionary acts performed by tutors at Small England?; What is the most and least frequent type of directive illocutionary acts found during teaching and learning in the classroom?; What is the implication of directive acts usage in pedagogical contexts?

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, appropriate for describing and interpreting naturally occurring phenomena (Creswell, 2012). The focus was on understanding the nature and function of directive illocutionary acts used by tutors in authentic classroom settings. The research was non-experimental and entirely observational, with no manipulation of conditions or variables. Participants were observed naturalistically, and the study adopted a within-subject design, focusing on the utterances of a single tutor across one class session. This design allowed the researchers to examine how different types of directive speech acts emerged in various instructional contexts.

### **Research Participants and Sampling Procedures**

The study was conducted at Small England, a non-formal English course based in Blora, Central Java, Indonesia. The main participant was an English tutor assigned to the Basic Training Course (BTC) class, which comprised 10 students with beginner to intermediate proficiency levels. Purposive sampling was used to select the tutor based on their central role in classroom instruction and the likelihood of producing rich data relevant to the study's focus on directive speech acts.

All ethical standards for conducting qualitative research were observed. The tutor provided informed consent for participation and for the video recording of the teaching session. Participants' identities were anonymized, and no identifiable personal information was disclosed. The research posed minimal risk and followed institutional and professional ethical guidelines for educational research.

## Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The study's sample size consisted of one tutor observed during a single recorded teaching session lasting 1 hour and 3 minutes. Although small in number, the unit of analysis was not individuals but rather the utterances produced within the classroom interaction. The sample size was sufficient to explore the frequency and types of directive illocutionary acts and reflect broader language use patterns in similar EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instructional contexts. The target population includes EFL tutors in non-formal learning environments, particularly those teaching beginner to intermediate learners.

## Data Collection

Data were collected during a real-time tutoring session in the BTC class. The setting was a regular classroom in the Small England course. A video recording of the entire session was made using a smartphone, capturing both audio and visual data. The researchers observed the session without intervening in the instructional process to maintain ecological validity. Permission for data collection was obtained from the tutor and institution before the session took place.

The researchers used non-participant observation supported by video recording as the primary data collection method. The recorded session was transcribed manually to capture all tutor and student utterances. The data were analyzed using Searle (1976) theory of speech acts, focusing on identifying directive illocutionary acts. The analysis used Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) to determine the communicative force behind each utterance, such as performative verbs (ask, command, suggest). While the study centered on tutor speech, contextual features such as classroom setting and student responses were considered to aid interpretation, though not systematically coded.

No manipulations or interventions were involved in this study. The researchers did not apply instructional treatments, administer pre/post-tests, or introduce control groups. The tutor followed their normal lesson plan and teaching style. The aim was to investigate the naturally occurring use of directive speech acts in an authentic classroom environment.

## RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analysis for the study. The study's conclusions are organized into three key ideas. Presenting the results of the several types of directive illocutionary acts found in tutors' utterances is the first step. The second point is finding the directives illocutionary acts that occurred most and least frequently in tutor's speech. Presenting the implication of the most and least frequently directives illocutionary acts types utilized in tutors' speech during teaching and learning is the final point.

The writers' conclusions of the first point in the analysis of the various types of directive illocutionary acts are shown in table 1 below to give a summary of the findings.

Table 1. The Types of Directives Illocutionary Acts

Types of Directive Acts	Frequency	Percentages
Command	247	57.44%
Ask	156	36.28%
Request	12	2.79%
Suggest	5	1.16%
Forbid	3	0.70%
Recommend	3	0.70%
Advise	1	0.23%
Remind	1	0.23%
Tell	1	0.23%
Urge	1	0.23%
Total	430	100%

As shown in the table above, the tutor's directive speech contained 429 points of data. Ten types of directive illocutionary acts were found in the data. Among these, command comprised 247 data points (57.58%), ask totaled 156 (36.36%), request numbered 12 (2.80%), suggest had 5 (1.17%), forbid 3 (0.70%), recommend 3 (0.70%), and the last three sequences (advise, tell, and urge) that have the same amount of data that is only 1 (0.23%).

### Command

M1/T/27

Tutor : ***Melanggar!***  
 Students : *Disobey-disobeyed-  
 disobeyed-  
 disobeying*

The tutor's utterance included into command even though it is only containing one word. In this situation, the tutor intends to get the hearer to perform a specific action that is instructing the students to translate the word 'melanggar' into English. The performative verbs in this sample is implicitly presented, by using the performative verb of command in hereby test below the utterance remains meaningful and verifies the acts. .

I (*hereby*) Vp *you (that)* U

Vp stands for Performative Verb

U stands for utterance

I (*hereby*) command *you (that)* you translate the word of 'melanggar' into English.

### Ask

M1/T/5: "*Have you borrowed your friend's note? Sudah? Have you written the note? Sudah mbok tulis?*"

In this case, one of students did not join the class in the previous meeting. The tutor asked question to the student whether he has borrowed and written his friends' note related to the material in the previous meeting or not. The tutor is performing the act of asking question. The hereby test is used to confirm whether a verb is performative.

I (*hereby*) Vp *you (that)* U

Vp stands for Performative Verb

U stands for utterance

I (*hereby*) ask if *you* have borrowed your friend's note.

I (*hereby*) ask if *you* have written/copied your friend's note.



### Request

M1/T/200: “*Kalau anak apa, kambing trus domba, trus anak opo maneh iku, itu kayak anak sapi ya. Nandang tulis, with the Indonesian ya! Oh iya, tomorrow please come at a half past eight. Besok kita masuk pagi jam setengah sembilan, ya!*”

M1/T/200: “*If it's a baby like goat and sheep, then what the baby of that other one is, it's like a baby cow, yeah. Hurry and write it down with the Indonesian, yeah! Oh yeah, tomorrow please come at half past eight. Tomorrow we will start early at half past nine, yeah!*”

In this utterance, the speaker is attempting to get the listener to take specific action. The performative verb in this context is not explicitly stated, the tone and structure of the sentence indicate that it functions as a polite request. A request is a subtype of directive illocutionary acts, where the speaker politely asks the hearer to do something. In this case, the speaker is asking the listener to come at a specific time. To apply the hereby test, we can modify the original sentence to include "hereby" before the performative verb:

I (*hereby*) request *you* to come tomorrow at a half past eight.

The sentence makes sense, showing that the implicit performative verb is "request."

### Suggest

M1/T/2: “*Yok, let's start our meeting today by reciting Basmallah together.*”

In this utterance, the tutor is proposing a course of action for the group to follow, which is to start the meeting by reciting *Basmallah* together. The performative verb here is “let’s” (short for “let us”) which is typically used in suggestions or proposal. Let’s can sometimes carry a commanding tone depending on context and intonation. In this specific instance, it is more aligned with a suggestion rather than a direct order or command.

The hereby test involves transforming the sentence into one with an explicit performative verb and checking if it fits the illocutionary force of a suggestion. The IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) would be used to show the act being performed.

I (*hereby*) suggest (*that*) we start our meeting today by reciting *Basmallah* together.

In conclusion, the performative verb “let’s” functions primarily as a suggestion in this context. It encourages collective action without imposing authority or obligation, making it an inclusive and inviting expression.

### Forbid

M1/T/210: “*Plus V+ing? Gak boleh e modal langsung ke V+ing, gak boleh! Modal itu diikuti dengan VI, supaya dia bisa diikuti V+ing karna continuos maka be dulu baru Ving+Objek.*”

(M1/T/210: “*Plus V+ing? You can't use a modal directly with V+ing, you can't! Modals are followed by VI, so that they can be followed by V+ing because for continuous forms, you need to have 'be' first and then V+ing + object.*”)

The tutor’s speech perform prohibitive illocutionary acts, it is issuing a forbidden directive. The speaker is instructing or commanding the listener not to do something i.e., not to go directly to V+ing. The performative verb in this sentence is “boleh” (which means “can” or “may”), but in this context, it is negated, indicating prohibition. The verb “boleh” itself, when used in the context of permission or prohibition, serves as a performative verb in a prohibitive speech act.

To test whether the sentence is a prohibitive using the IFID test, we insert the typical IFID: “*I hereby*”. This often indicates the illocutionary force of the sentence.

I (*hereby*) forbid you from using modal going directly to V+ing.

Thus, the directive illocutionary acts is forbid and the IFID test confirms the illocutionary force of prohibition.

### Recommend

M1/T/349: “*Pakainya was/were bukan is/am/are yo Ma, Zahma. Siapa yang senang kan iso ma Zahma.*”

M1/T/349: “*Use was/were, not is/am/are, okay, Ma, Zahma. You can ask who was happy Ma, Zahma.*”

In this utterance, the tutor recommend one of students (in this case Zahma) to ask question to her friend who is telling his experience in front of the class. To apply the hereby test, we can modify the original sentence to include "hereby" before the performative verb as follow:

I (*hereby*) recommend (*that*) you ask ‘Who was happy?’

### Advice

M1/T/214: “*Biasakan pakai the karna kata benda ya!*”

(M1/T/214: “*Get used to using 'the' because it's for nouns!*”)

The illocutionary acts type of the utterance “*Biasakan pakai the karna kata benda ya!*” can be analyzed as a directive act. The tutor is asking or advising the students to get into the habit of using “the” because it applies to nouns. The performative verb in this case is “*biasakan*” (which is the verb “to make accustomed to” or “to get into the habit of”). This is a directive verb that influences the listener’s behavior.

To prove it by using the “hereby” test and IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device), we would reformulate the sentence into a performative statement:

I (*hereby*) advise you to get into the habit of using ‘the’ because it applies to nouns.

Thus, through the hereby test, we conclude that the illocutionary verb for this utterance is best categorized as advise. It conveys a sense of guidance rather than imposing an obligation or command.

### Tell

M1/T/214:

“Tutor : *How if my chickens ...?*”

Students: *is*

Tutor: *chickens o. (b)*

Students: *are hungry*”

In this case, the students is false in answering the sentence. Then, the tutor tells students that the subject is plural by reminding that it is ‘chickens’. In the context of directive illocutionary acts, the verb “tell” is often used to indicate that the speaker is attempting to get the listener to do something i.e., change the linking verb.

In assertive illocutionary acts, ‘tell’ is used to convey information, statements, or facts. The speaker is not trying to get the listener to do anything. While in this case, the action is about what the listener should do (action-oriented). Here the performative statement by using hereby test.

I (*hereby*) tell you to change the linking verbs based on the subject ‘chickens’.

Thus, “tell” is a performative verb in directive illocutionary acts because it performs the act of directing or instructing the listener to act in a particular way.

### Urge

M1/T/335: “*Hurry up, Rendra! You said you are ready. Come forward as soon as possible yok, ket ndek mau sekali sekali.*”

(M1/T/335: “*Hurry up, Rendra! You said you are ready. Come forward as soon as possible yok, you’ve been procrastinating since earlier.*”)

In this utterance, the tutor uses expressions like “Hurry up”, “You said you are ready”, and “come forward as soon as possible”, all of which indicate that the speaker is not merely requesting, but a strong push or urging for immediate action.

I (*hereby*) urge you to come forward to tell your story quickly.

By applying the hereby test, the performative verb in this utterance can be considered "urge", because the speaker is expressing a strong desire for the other person to act quickly. The phrase "Come forward as soon as possible" further reinforces this urgency.

## DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings of the study in light of the research questions and relevant theoretical frameworks. The discussion is organized into three key parts: (1) the identification and classification of directive illocutionary acts used by tutors at Small England, (2) the frequency distribution of these acts, and (3) their pedagogical implications within the teaching and learning process.

### 1. Types of Directive Illocutionary Acts Performed by Tutors

The analysis revealed a rich variety of directive illocutionary acts in the tutors' classroom discourse, comprising ten distinct types: command, ask, request, suggest, forbid, recommend, advise, remind, tell, and urge. These findings align with Searle's (1979) categorization of directives, which function to get the hearer to do something. Commands and asking questions were the most prominently used forms, indicating the tutor's strong role in directing and regulating classroom activities. Other directive types, such as request, suggest, and recommend, were less frequently observed but nonetheless contributed to the dynamic interaction between tutors and students.

The tutors employed directive acts both explicitly and implicitly. In some cases, performative verbs were directly used (e.g., "I ask..."), while in others, they were inferred through context and tested using the "hereby" test. For instance, the use of "Let's start" was interpreted as a suggestion rather than a command due to its inclusive tone. Similarly, prohibitions (e.g., "Gak boleh!") indicated a forbidding act through negated modals, emphasizing constraints in grammar use.

### 2. Most and Least Frequent Directive Illocutionary Acts

As shown in Table 1, commands dominated the tutors' utterances, constituting 57.44% of the total data, followed by ask (36.28%). These two types alone accounted for over 93% of all directive acts. The high frequency of commands suggests that tutors primarily used authoritative language to guide students' actions and maintain instructional control. This tendency might stem from the tutors' responsibility to correct, assess, and structure students' learning, especially in an environment focused on language acquisition and error correction.

Conversely, acts such as advise, tell, and urge were each used only once (0.23%), while recommend and forbid occurred slightly more often but remained infrequent. These lower-frequency acts may reflect more nuanced or context-specific interactions that do not dominate the classroom's general discourse. Their limited use suggests that tutors seldom rely on subtle or strongly emotional directives, perhaps due to time constraints or the need for clarity and efficiency in instruction.

### 3. Pedagogical Implications

The predominance of command and ask in classroom interaction has significant pedagogical implications. On one hand, it reflects a teacher-centered approach where tutors exert clear control over the learning process. This approach can enhance clarity, minimize ambiguity, and facilitate immediate student responses, which are essential in language learning contexts. Commands such as "Translate this!" or "Write it down!" provide direct and actionable input that aligns with behaviorist learning principles, where repeated practice and feedback are vital.

On the other hand, the scarcity of softening directive types such as recommend, suggest, and advise might limit opportunities for fostering learner autonomy and critical thinking. These



types of directives often promote engagement and invite students to consider alternatives or reflect on their learning processes. Their minimal use may suggest that classroom interactions remain heavily task-oriented and focused on short-term outcomes rather than exploratory dialogue.

Additionally, the presence of lower-frequency acts like "urge" and "tell" introduces emotional or emphatic dimensions to tutor-student communication. While rare, such instances may serve as motivational or corrective moments that can significantly impact student participation and confidence.

In sum, the findings underscore the functional importance of directive illocutionary acts in shaping the pedagogical environment. A balance between authoritative and supportive language strategies could better support varied learner needs and promote more inclusive classroom discourse.

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the directive illocutionary acts used by tutors at Small England, providing a comprehensive analysis of their types, frequency, and pedagogical implications. By examining 430 instances of directive speech, the study identifies a predominance of command and ask, which account for the majority of directives in the classroom discourse. These findings highlight the central role of the tutor in guiding and controlling classroom interactions, underscoring an authoritative teaching style that is typical in language instruction environments. This is in line with Putri et al. (2024) in her result study that directive acts are primarily used to convey urgent messages and prompt action.

The study also reveals that certain directive acts, such as advise, recommend, and forbid, were employed infrequently, suggesting a reliance on more direct forms of communication for task completion and correction. This distribution points to a possible gap in the use of softer directives, which could encourage greater student autonomy and foster a more interactive learning atmosphere.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are significant. The frequent use of command and ask reflects a teacher-centered approach that may prioritize clarity, efficiency, and control. While these acts are essential for maintaining discipline and facilitating immediate learning outcomes, the limited use of directives that promote reflection and engagement, such as suggestions and advice, suggests that there may be an opportunity to incorporate more learner-centered approaches in the teaching process.

Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the impact of directive illocutionary acts on student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Additionally, investigating how different types of directive acts are employed across different educational contexts could provide valuable insights into the broader application of illocutionary theory in language learning.

In conclusion, directive illocutionary acts play a vital role in shaping classroom dynamics, and a balanced approach that incorporates both authoritative and supportive directives could enhance the quality of pedagogical interactions at Small England and similar educational settings.

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