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TEACHERS' DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION: PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES AND STUDENT RESPONSES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study examines teachers' directive speech acts and students' verbal and non-verbal responses in junior high school EFL classrooms at SMP Negeri 6 Makassar, Indonesia. Data were collected from eight recorded lessons involving four English teachers, observation checklists, coding sheets, and one semi-structured interview with each teacher. Searle's speech act theory guided directive classification, while classroom discourse perspectives informed interpretation of interactional sequences. Politeness markers, supportive wording, variation in directness, and English–Indonesian code-switching were examined as features of directive formulation. Of 108 directives, 36 were commands (33.33%), 24 invitations (22.22%), 19 requests (17.59%), 15 suggestions (13.89%), and 14 prohibitions (12.96%). Student responses varied by context: one student answered "Elephant," some students began opening their books after a bilingual instruction, and a hesitant student volunteered after encouragement and an offer of extra points. Continued whispering after a request to stop talking illustrated partial compliance. These examples show context-dependent student uptake rather than a fixed causal relationship between directive strategies and responses. Observable compliance was not treated as proof of comprehension, and silence was interpreted cautiously.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, Directive Speech Acts, EFL Classrooms, Pragmatic Strategies, Student Responses

INTRODUCTION

Classroom interaction is a central component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because language serves both as the object of learning and as the medium through which teaching and learning are organized. During classroom activities, teachers use language to manage tasks, guide learning, allocate turns, provide feedback, and encourage student participation. The meaning of teacher talk therefore depends not only on grammatical form but also on the action performed through an utterance and its role in the surrounding interaction. Previous classroom discourse research has examined how teacher talk and questioning practices shape opportunities for student participation, particularly in whole-class interaction.

Within this context, directive speech acts are important because they are used to get hearers to perform an action. According to Searle (1979), directives constitute an

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illocutionary category in which speakers attempt to influence the actions of others. In EFL classrooms, these actions may involve opening learning materials, following instructions, answering questions, repeating language forms, or expressing opinions. A directive may be realized through different grammatical forms, such as "Open your book," "Please open your book," or "Can you open your book?" Although these utterances differ in form and interpersonal tone, their pragmatic force depends on the context in which they are produced. Research in Indonesian EFL classrooms has also examined the role of directives in classroom management, instructional guidance, and student participation (Ghozali et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2022).

The interpretation of directives also requires attention to interpersonal relationships and the pedagogical purpose of an utterance. Teachers hold institutional responsibility for organizing classroom activities, but they may vary their wording according to the action expected and the interactional situation. A direct command may be appropriate when students need to perform an immediate classroom action, whereas an invitation or supportive question may be used to encourage students to contribute. Research on teacher questioning has examined how teachers' interpersonal choices relate to student responses, while studies of response pursuit have investigated practices such as rephrasing questions, providing hints, and repeating questions when students do not respond. These studies highlight the importance of examining directive utterances in relation to the interactional sequences in which they occur.

Previous classroom discourse studies have further shown that teacher and student contributions serve different but connected interactional roles. Darong (2024) discusses the relationship between teacher and student speech acts in classroom interaction, while studies in Indonesian secondary classrooms have examined how teacher questioning, directions, scaffolding, and feedback organize participation and create opportunities for student elaboration (Darong, 2024; Fortuna et al., 2025). Related international EFL research has also explored teacher questions and response-pursuit practices as resources for eliciting student participation (Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021). Collectively, these studies provide a basis for examining classroom directives beyond their linguistic forms by considering the actions they make relevant and the responses that follow.

Previous studies have found that directive speech acts play an important role in organizing classroom activities and managing teacher–student interaction. Research on online English classrooms has examined the types and frequency of teachers' directive speech acts, while other studies have investigated explicit and implicit instructions, including commands and requests. Students' responses to these instructions have also been found to vary, with some instructions receiving no response (Aini et al., 2023; Siritman & Meilantina, 2020; Zahroh & Susanto, 2022).

Other studies provide a broader picture of teacher talk and classroom interaction across educational settings. Research has examined teacher talk in young learners' and secondary classrooms, patterns of English classroom interaction, and quantitative or automated approaches to analyzing teacher talk (Azhar et al., 2019; Dale et al., 2022; Hustiana & Akbar, 2021; Kibret et al., 2026; Mukaromah & Joko Yulianto, 2023; Rahayu & Syahrizal, 2020; Riad, 2023; Solita et al., 2021; Winanta et al., 2020). Interactional features

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such as clarification, feedback, scaffolding, and extended wait time have been examined as important aspects of teacher talk that can provide opportunities for student learning. These features demonstrate how classroom interaction can be analyzed beyond the words spoken by teachers to include the interactional practices that support learning (Junior et al., 2021). Studies focusing more directly on directives have considered their motivational role, use by pre-service teachers during teaching internships, and function in Indonesian school classrooms (Iswatiningsih et al., 2023; Kepirianto & Mariam, 2025; Susanti & Liusti, 2025; Syafitri, 2025). Research on teacher interactional practices has also examined how teachers' participation in classroom talk changes over time. These studies are relevant background, although their settings and analytical emphases differ from the present study.

Student responses may be verbal or non-verbal. Verbal responses include answers, explanations, questions, and other contributions, whereas non-verbal responses may include opening a book, raising a hand, following an instruction, or beginning a task. However, observable action should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of comprehension. Similarly, silence does not necessarily indicate understanding or non-compliance; its meaning depends on the surrounding interaction and any subsequent evidence. Research on teacher–student interaction emphasizes the importance of considering sequential and multimodal contexts when interpreting student responses (Sugianto & Khoirunnisa, 2024). Examining student responses is important because students may respond to classroom instructions through verbal statements or observable actions, while some instructions may receive no response. Such findings highlight the need to interpret student responses in their classroom context rather than automatically assuming that silence indicates understanding or that every instruction has been followed successfully (Azizi & Halimi, 2024; Zahroh & Susanto, 2022). Accordingly, verbal and non-verbal responses in this study are examined as observable forms of student uptake rather than as definitive indicators of learning outcomes.

Another relevant feature of directive practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms is code-switching between English and Indonesian. Teachers may use both languages to clarify instructions, maintain classroom activity, or make an intended action more accessible to students. The use of students' first language can therefore be examined as a language-choice resource within classroom interaction rather than automatically regarded as a failure to use English. Previous Indonesian studies have also explored teachers' language choices in relation to classroom participation and the learning environment (Huda et al., 2025; Muthi'Ah et al., 2022). In the present study, code-switching is considered alongside directness, politeness markers, and supportive wording as a feature of how teachers formulate directives in particular classroom situations.

Analytical framework. This study primarily draws on Searle's (1979) speech act theory to identify and interpret the illocutionary force of teachers' directives. Classification is based on contextual function rather than grammatical form alone; imperatives, interrogatives, and declaratives may function as directives when they make a particular action relevant in the classroom. The analysis distinguishes directive types—commands, requests, suggestions, prohibitions, and invitations—from their pragmatic functions, namely classroom management, instructional guidance, motivation, and facilitation. It also examines pragmatic

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strategies, including variation in directness, politeness markers, supportive wording, and English–Indonesian code-switching. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework informs the interpretation of interpersonal features in directive formulation, while classroom interaction perspectives, particularly Walsh (2011) and Walsh and Li (2013), support the analysis of directives in their surrounding sequences and in relation to students' subsequent responses. Politeness and code-switching are thus treated as analytical features of directive use, not as separate speech-act categories. When a teacher turn contains more than one action, each distinguishable directive action is classified according to its contextual illocutionary force; the whole turn is not assigned a single category if its components perform different actions. Grammatical form, politeness markers, and code-switching are considered separately from the directive type, function, and student response.

Although previous research has investigated teacher directives, teacher talk, questioning, and student participation, these strands of research differ in their analytical focus and classroom contexts. Studies that classify directive types or report their frequencies provide useful descriptions of language use, while research on questioning and response pursuit offers insights into how teachers elicit student contributions. However, these approaches do not necessarily examine directive illocutionary force, pragmatic formulation, classroom function, and verbal and non-verbal student uptake together within the same recorded classroom patterns. Research in Indonesian educational settings has addressed related aspects, but differences in school level, theoretical orientation, and analytical emphasis leave room for a context-specific account of how these dimensions occur together (Rayya et al., 2026). Classroom interaction research has also examined the relationship between teacher talk and student participation. Previous findings indicate that teacher–student interaction in junior high school EFL speaking classes involves various interaction patterns, while students may experience linguistic and psychological difficulties in understanding teacher talk and speaking English (Azizi & Halimi, 2024; Kurniawan, 2022). These studies provide relevant perspectives on classroom interaction and student responses, although their analytical focus differs from the directive-centered approach adopted in the present study. The present study addresses this analytical need in junior high school EFL classrooms without assuming that a particular directive form or strategy invariably produces a particular student response.

To address this focus, the study examines recorded classroom interactions involving four English teachers at SMP Negeri 6 Makassar, Indonesia, supported by teacher interviews. It analyzes how directive forms realize different illocutionary forces, how teachers use pragmatic strategies to serve classroom functions, and how students respond verbally and non-verbally within the observed interactional context. The study is guided by two research questions: (1) What pragmatic patterns, functions, and strategies do teachers employ through directive speech acts in junior high school EFL classroom interactions? and (2) How do students' verbal and non-verbal responses reflect the way teachers use directive speech acts in classroom interaction? By bringing these dimensions together, the study contributes a context-sensitive account of directive use in junior high school EFL classrooms and highlights the importance of interpreting student responses in relation to the interactional context rather than treating compliance alone as evidence of comprehension.

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METHODS

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using pragmatic discourse analysis to examine teachers' directive speech acts and the verbal and non-verbal responses that followed them in naturally occurring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom interactions. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to describe and interpret the contextual meanings, functions, and pragmatic strategies of directive utterances rather than manipulate classroom conditions or establish causal relationships between teacher language and student responses.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 6 Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, during regular English lessons. The analysis focused on teachers' directive utterances and the observable student responses within the surrounding classroom interaction.

Participants and Data Sources

The participants in this study were four English teachers at SMP Negeri 6 Makassar, South Sulawesi, selected through purposive sampling. The teachers were selected to represent male and female participants who taught English in different classes. To protect their identities, they were coded as T1, T2, T3, and T4.

The primary data consisted of eight video recordings of classroom observations, with two recordings for each teacher. The recorded lessons lasted approximately 50–60 minutes each. In addition, four audio recordings of semi-structured interviews were collected, with one interview for each teacher. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview recordings provided contextual information about the teachers' use of directive speech acts and their classroom interaction practices. Classroom video recordings remained the primary source for identifying and analyzing teachers' directives and students' responses, while the interviews served as supporting data. An observation checklist and a coding sheet were also used to organize the data and support the analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages were applied iteratively to analyze teachers' directive speech acts and students' verbal and non-verbal responses in classroom interactions.

Data Condensation

Data condensation involved selecting and organizing relevant data from eight classroom observation videos and four teacher interview recordings. The researcher repeatedly reviewed the classroom videos and identified relevant patterns containing teachers' directive speech acts and students' responses. The directives were classified into five types: commands, invitations, requests, suggestions, and prohibitions. The analysis also considered grammatical forms, classroom functions, and pragmatic features, such as

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directness, politeness markers, supportive wording, and English–Indonesian code-switching. Students' responses were categorized as verbal or non-verbal, including hesitant or delayed, partial, and absent responses when supported by the recordings. Interview data were used to provide additional context for interpreting classroom practices.

Data Display

The condensed data were organized using a coding sheet and descriptive tables. These displays presented the directive types, grammatical forms, classroom functions, pragmatic features, and students' responses. Relevant classroom excerpts were included to illustrate how teachers formulated directives and how students responded during the lessons. Each excerpt was interpreted in its interactional context to identify recurring patterns and differences across the recorded classroom sessions.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The researcher drew conclusions by interpreting the displayed data in relation to the research questions. The analysis focused on the pragmatic patterns, functions, and strategies of teachers' directive speech acts, as well as the verbal and non-verbal responses that followed. To verify the interpretations, the researcher revisited the classroom recordings and considered the interview data as contextual support. Coding and interpretive decisions were also discussed with the academic supervisors. Throughout this process, students' observable actions were not automatically treated as evidence of comprehension, and silence or hesitation was interpreted cautiously unless the recordings provided supporting evidence.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To support the credibility of the analysis, the researcher reviewed the classroom recordings repeatedly and interpreted teachers' directives and students' responses in their classroom context. Classroom observation data and teacher interview information were considered together to clarify the findings. The coding and interpretation process was also discussed with the academic supervisors. These procedures supported contextual checking and reflection, but did not involve formal inter-coder reliability testing or member checking. Students' responses were interpreted based on observable evidence rather than assumptions about their understanding.

Permission and consent were obtained before classroom recording. Teacher identities were protected using the codes T1–T4, and students were not identified by personal names in the analysis. Only information relevant to the research questions was included in the reporting of classroom interactions.

RESULTS

Distribution of Directive Types

A total of 108 directive speech acts were identified in the classroom recordings. Commands were the most frequent type (36; 33.33%), followed by invitations (24; 22.22%), requests (19; 17.59%), suggestions (15; 13.89%), and prohibitions (14; 12.96%). These

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figures describe the distribution of directive types in the dataset, rather than their effectiveness or their relationship with particular student responses.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers' directive speech acts

Directive Type	Frequency	Percentage
Commands	36	33.33%
Invitations	24	22.22%
Requests	19	17.59%
Suggestions	15	13.89%
Prohibitions	14	12.96%
Total	108	100%

Pragmatic Patterns, Functions, and Strategies

The recorded patterns show that directives served classroom-management, instructional, participatory, and facilitative purposes. For management, "Clap three times" prompted most students to clap, although some missed or misapplied the instruction. Similarly, "Yang di belakang, please stop talking dulu" *("Those at the back, please stop talking for now")* was followed by continued whispering and laughter, requiring the teacher to prompt students again. These patterns illustrate that students' observable responses were not always immediate or complete.

Directives also guided learning procedures. In "Please open your book, buka buku paketnya halaman 45" ("Please open your book; open your coursebook to page 45"), the teacher combined English and Indonesian. Students began opening their books, while some reported not having one and needed to share with classmates. This sequence shows how a directive could initiate a task while subsequent interaction addressed practical difficulties.

Participation-oriented directives included "Who can read the result? From group 2, c'mon," followed by Group 2 presenting its work. In another instance, students initially hesitated when asked, "Who wants to start?" After further encouragement, one student volunteered and produced the sentence "She is a beautiful girl." In a separate sequence, the teacher added "Don't be shy" and offered extra points; a student then volunteered to answer. These examples illustrate the use of invitations and supportive wording to encourage participation, without establishing a universal causal effect.

Politeness and facilitation were also evident in expressions such as "Put your bag under the table, please" and "Kalau masih bingung, boleh tanya ke Mam" ("If you are still confused, you may ask me"). The former combined a direct instruction with "please," while the latter presented help-seeking as an available option. English–Indonesian code-switching appeared in instructional talk, particularly when the teacher repeated the page instruction in Indonesian. These are features of directive formulation, rather than additional directive categories.

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Table 2. Representative Directive Patterns

Teacher	Patterns	Directive excerpt	Pragmatic feature	Observed response and interpretation
T1	Classroom readiness	"Clap three times."	Direct imperative	Most students clapped, although some missed or misapplied the instruction.
T1	Group presentation	"Who can read the result? From group 2, c'mon."	Interrogative invitation and group prompt	Group 2 presented its work after the prompt.
T2	Direct directive	"Now, listen to me carefully."	Direct instruction	The teacher directs students' attention before the activity.
T2	Invitation	"I want to invite you to be here to write down the adjective you remember and make sentences."	Supportive wording	The teacher encourages students to participate through an invitation.
T2	Direct directive	"Please be quiet, please. Focus on your task."	Politeness marker	The teacher manages classroom behavior through a direct but polite instruction.
T3	Opening materials	"Please open your book, buka buku paketnya halaman 45."	Direct instruction and English–Indonesian code-switching	Students began opening books; some needed to borrow materials.
T3	Volunteering	"Who wants to try?" followed by encouragement and an offer of extra points	Invitation and supportive motivational wording	One student volunteered and answered after the follow-up prompt.
T4	Classroom behavior	"Focus, please. Yang di belakang, please stop talking dulu."	Direct directive with code-switching and "please"	Whispering continued, and the teacher prompted students again.
T4	Help-seeking	"Kalau masih bingung, boleh tanya ke Mam."	Supportive permission and facilitative directive	Students responded, "Iye Mam." *("Yes, Ma'am")*

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Student Responses to Teachers' Directives

The selected patterns revealed several forms of student response, including verbal contributions, non-verbal actions, and delayed or partial responses. These responses were interpreted according to the observable behavior recorded in the classroom interaction.

Some directives were followed by physical actions. For example, students clapped after "Clap three times," and students began opening their books after being instructed to turn to page 45. However, these actions did not always indicate complete uptake of the instruction. Some students missed or misapplied the clapping instruction, while others encountered difficulties because they did not have their books.

Verbal responses were also recorded. When the teacher asked, "Anyone can answer? What animal is it?", a student answered, "Elephant." In another lesson, a teacher prompted students to identify examples related to the environment by saying, "Coba sebutkan satu-satu" ("Please name them one by one"). Students responded with examples such as "Di jalan, Mam…" ("On the road, Ma'am"), "Di sungai juga, Mam…" ("In the river too, Ma'am"), and "Kadang di depan rumah orang juga ada, Mam" ("Sometimes in front of people's houses too, Ma'am"). These responses show students contributing verbal examples in the recorded interaction.

Other patterns involved delayed or partial responses. During the classroom-management patterns, whispering and small laughter continued after the teacher asked students to stop talking. In the volunteering patterns, students did not immediately offer answers after the initial invitation, but one student responded after further encouragement. These examples show variation in the timing and form of students' responses.

Table 3. Examples of student responses to teachers' directives

Teacher	Teacher directive	Recorded response	Response description	Interpretation
T1	"Clap three times."	Students performed the action, although some missed or misapplied the instruction.	Non-verbal; variable uptake	The action was observable, but it did not establish comprehension of lesson content.
T1	"Anyone can answer? What animal is it?"	"Elephant."	Verbal response	A student provided a specific answer in this instance.
T2	"Put your bag under the table, please."	The student follows the instruction.	Non-verbal response:	The student shows observable compliance with the directive.
T2	"Mention your adjective and then make a sentence."	"Beautiful. She is a beautiful girl."	Verbal response	The student identifies an adjective and uses it in a sentence.

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T3	"Please open your book… page 45."	Students began opening books; one said "Belum, Mam," and another explained that they did not have a book.	Non-verbal action followed by verbal clarification	The task began, but practical difficulties remained.
T3	"Who wants to try?" followed by encouragement and an offer of extra points	A student said "Saya, Mam" *(Me, Mam)* and answered the question.	Delayed verbal participation	The student volunteers after additional encouragement.
T4	"Please stop talking dulu."	Whispering and small laughter continued, prompting the teacher to speak again.	Partial or delayed behavioral response	The directive does not immediately stop the students' behavior.
T4	"Coba sebutkan satu-satu." *("Please name them one by one")*	Students gave examples related to the environment.	Verbal contribution	Students responded with examples relevant to the teacher's prompt.

Taken together, the selected extracts show that student responses varied across classroom situations. Some directives were followed by immediate actions or verbal answers, whereas others were followed by partial responses, hesitation, or further clarification. Because the examples are illustrative and the study did not quantify response types by directive category, they should not be read as establishing that direct directives generally produce non-verbal responses or that indirect directives generally produce verbal engagement. The findings instead support a context-sensitive interpretation of the observed sequences, rather than treating an observable action or silence as direct evidence of understanding.

DISCUSSION

Contextual Functions of Teachers' Directive Speech Acts

The findings show that teachers' directive speech acts served different purposes depending on the classroom activity and the action expected from students. Commands were the most frequent category, accounting for 36 of the 108 identified directives (33.33%). This finding is consistent with previous studies of teacher directives in EFL classrooms, which have documented the use of directives to provide instructions and organize classroom activities (Ghozali et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2022; Saidah, 2021). However, the frequency of commands should not be interpreted as evidence that teachers relied exclusively on authoritative language. The classroom patterns also show invitations, requests, and supportive expressions used to facilitate participation and respond to students' needs.

Searle's (1979) speech act theory helps explain this variation by distinguishing an utterance's grammatical form from the illocutionary act it performs. For example, "Clap three times" explicitly directs students to perform a physical action, whereas "Who wants to start?"

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invites a student to take a speaking turn. Although both utterances make a student action relevant, the expected actions differ. The first concerns an immediate classroom activity, while the second opens an opportunity for voluntary participation. This distinction demonstrates why directives need to be interpreted in relation to their contextual force rather than classified solely by sentence structure. It also supports the present study's decision to analyze separate directive actions within an extended teacher turn when they perform different functions.

Student Uptake and the Organization of Classroom Interaction

The response patterns indicate that students' uptake varied across classroom situations. Following "Clap three times," students performed the requested movement, although the observation record also noted missed or inconsistent responses. In the book-opening patterns, students began opening their books after the bilingual instruction, but some did not have their own books and needed to join classmates. These patterns illustrate that a directive can make an expected action clear without ensuring that every student performs it fully or encounters no practical difficulty. Therefore, observable actions provide evidence of how students responded to an instruction, but they do not establish comprehension of the lesson content.

The participation patterns further demonstrate the importance of the surrounding interaction. When the teacher asked, "Who wants to try?", students initially hesitated. The teacher then added encouragement and offered extra points, after which a student volunteered and answered. This sequence suggests that participation developed through successive interactional moves rather than through the initial prompt alone. Research on eliciting student talk similarly emphasizes the role of teachers' follow-up moves in creating opportunities for classroom contributions (Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021). The present study adds a directive-focused account of how an invitation, subsequent encouragement, and a student's response appeared in one observed sequence. However, because these are contextual observations, they do not establish that encouragement or incentives will always lead to participation.

This interpretation is consistent with classroom discourse perspectives that examine how teaching and learning opportunities develop through interaction (Walsh, 2011; Walsh & Li, 2013). A directive should therefore not be evaluated only by whether students immediately comply. The subsequent turns and actions also matter: students may respond verbally, perform an action, respond partially, hesitate, or fail to respond immediately. In the patterns where whispering continued after the teacher asked students to stop talking, the response was not full or sustained compliance. Similarly, silence after an invitation cannot be assigned one definite meaning. Although hesitation may be consistent with uncertainty in a particular pattern, the recordings alone cannot establish students' private reasons for remaining silent.

Politeness, Supportive Wording, and Code-Switching

Politeness and supportive wording were additional features of how teachers formulated their directives. In "Put your bag under the table, please," the word "please"

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accompanied a clear instruction. In another instance, "Kalau masih bingung, boleh tanya ke Mam" ("If you are still confused, you may ask me") presented asking for help as an available option. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework provides a useful lens for interpreting these expressions as interpersonal choices that may soften an instruction or make assistance explicitly available. Nevertheless, the data show the teachers' wording and the responses that followed; they do not directly establish how students perceived the expressions or whether they experienced them as polite.

EFL teachers have been found to employ different politeness strategies in classroom interaction, including direct instructions, positive politeness, and expressions that minimize imposition. These findings provide a relevant comparison for the present study's observations of direct instructions accompanied by politeness markers and supportive wording. However, the present data are interpreted in terms of the teachers' observable language choices and subsequent student responses, rather than students' unreported perceptions of politeness (Rahayuningsih et al., 2020).

English–Indonesian code-switching was also visible in the instruction "Please open your book, buka buku paketnya halaman 45" ("Please open your book; open your coursebook to page 45"). The Indonesian phrase restated the practical instruction in the classroom interaction. This provides evidence of language choice within a directive, rather than a separate type of speech act. Previous studies of classroom language practices provide relevant context for examining how teachers draw on linguistic resources during interaction (Muthi'Ah et al., 2022). The use of multiple languages in EFL classroom interaction has been examined in relation to teachers' instructional practices and students' language needs. Teachers may use code-switching and code-mixing to explain difficult concepts and respond to students' needs, while language choices in classroom interaction may also relate to social factors such as age, familiarity, and social distance. These findings provide a useful context for interpreting the English–Indonesian language alternation observed in the present study, without assuming that code-switching necessarily guarantees student comprehension (Asani et al., 2024; Simpuruh et al., 2020; Zainil & Arsyad, 2021). In the current pattern, however, code-switching should be interpreted as a documented feature of the instruction, not as proof that students understood it better. The fact that some students lacked books also shows that students' responses can be shaped by practical circumstances beyond the wording of a directive.

Contribution and Implications

The contribution of this study is its context-specific analysis of directive illocutionary force, pragmatic formulation, classroom functions, and students' observable responses in junior high school EFL lessons. Among the 108 identified directives, commands were the most frequent type. The findings also show that student responses varied across classroom situations and could be immediate, partial, delayed, verbal, or non-verbal. These patterns suggest that no fixed relationship between directive directness and response type can be established from the data. Furthermore, visible compliance, silence, or hesitation alone cannot establish students' comprehension or explain their reasons for responding in a particular way.

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For classroom practice, teachers may combine clear instructions with supportive follow-up moves and check for uncertainty or practical barriers rather than assume that immediate action demonstrates understanding. The findings should be interpreted within the study's scope, which involved four English teachers and eight recorded lessons at one junior high school in Makassar. Since students were not interviewed about their interpretations, further research across schools and proficiency groups could incorporate student interviews or stimulated-recall procedures to explore how learners interpret directives and why their responses differ across interactional situations.

CONCLUSION

This study examined teachers' directive speech acts in junior high school EFL classroom interaction. Of the 108 identified directives, commands were the most frequent type. Teachers used directives for classroom management, instructional guidance, and student participation, while students responded in different ways, including verbal, non-verbal, delayed, and partial responses. These findings contribute a context-specific understanding of how teachers' directives function in classroom interaction and how students respond in different situations. They also highlight that observable compliance alone does not establish comprehension and that silence or hesitation does not necessarily indicate a lack of understanding. Since the study involved four teachers and eight recorded lessons at one junior high school, the findings should be interpreted within this context and not generalized to all EFL classrooms.

In classroom practice, teachers may combine clear instructions with supportive prompts and check students' understanding when they hesitate or do not respond. Teachers should also consider possible practical barriers before interpreting students' responses. Future research could involve more schools and diverse classroom contexts to explore whether similar patterns occur elsewhere. Student interviews or stimulated-recall procedures could also be used to investigate how learners interpret teachers' directives and what factors may influence their verbal and non-verbal responses.

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