



SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC TYPES OF DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS AND THEIR MOTIVATIONAL FUNCTIONS

Zulayho Fayzullayeva

Assistant Professor, Sharda University Uzbekistan

E-mail: zulajhofajzullaeva4@gmail.com

Phone: +998 97 339 42 34

ORCID: orcid.org/0009-0007-6601-982X

Abstract. This thesis treats a directive as more than an imperative sentence. Its force depends on who speaks, what action is expected, whose interest the action serves, and how much choice remains for the addressee. The discussion distinguishes commands, requests, instructions, advice, suggestions, warnings, prohibitions, invitations, and encouragement. It also proposes six motive clusters: authority or obligation, responsiveness to need, task competence, benefit or autonomy, risk avoidance, and affiliation or confidence. Constructed English examples show why the same grammatical form may express unequal pragmatic force. The model has value for pragmatic analysis, translation, and English-language teaching in multilingual university settings.

Keywords: directive speech act, illocutionary force, semantic type, pragmatic context, compliance motive, politeness.

A directive is a verbal attempt to alter another person's conduct. In Searle's classification, its propositional content refers to a future act of the addressee, while its illocutionary point seeks to make that act occur [4]. This common core unites an order such as "Submit the form today" with the milder "Could you submit the form today?" Yet the two utterances do not place the same pressure on the hearer. Grammar signals part of the force; the social situation supplies the rest.

The label semantic-pragmatic therefore covers two linked levels. The semantic level identifies the expected act, its positive or negative polarity, and the speaker's expressed attitude. The pragmatic level identifies the speaker's right to direct, the cost of compliance, the degree of choice, and the relation between the participants. Austin's exercitives already connected directives with power and influence [1]. Later accounts drew sharper lines between commands, which presuppose authority, and requests, which leave a genuine route to refusal [2; 5].

Semantic-pragmatic types

Commands and orders. These acts present compliance as required. The speaker invokes a role, rule, or accepted hierarchy: "Upload the marks before 4 p.m." A command need not sound rude. In an examination office, clarity may protect the procedure. Outside a recognized authority relation, the same wording can sound intrusive or hostile.

Requests and pleas. A request makes the speaker's need relevant but normally grants the hearer some choice. Modal questions, politeness markers, and reasons often reduce the burden: "Could you read this paragraph once more?" A plea raises urgency and personal dependence, as in "Please, do not leave me here alone." Its force comes from need rather than institutional power.

Instructions. An instruction directs action through procedural knowledge: "Select the file, then press Submit." The speaker's expertise supports the act, and successful task

completion gives the hearer a practical reason to comply. An instruction can turn into a command when assessment, discipline, or a deadline dominates the exchange.

Advice, recommendations, and suggestions. These forms place the addressee's benefit at the centre. Advice often carries stronger confidence: "You should keep a copy of every receipt." A suggestion sounds more open: "You might compare the two translations first." Both remain directives because they favour a future course of action, though their pressure stays lower than that of an order [6].

Warnings and prohibitions. These acts have negative orientation. A warning supplies danger as the reason for restraint: "Do not open that link; the sender is unknown." A prohibition invokes a rule or authority: "Do not use a phone during the examination." The surface form may match, but one protects the hearer while the other protects a norm or institution.

Invitations and encouragement. An invitation proposes shared participation: "Join us for the seminar." Encouragement supports an act that the hearer may already wish to perform: "Go ahead and present your idea." Their motivational force rests on affiliation, confidence, and voluntary uptake rather than pressure.

Table 1. Directive types and their dominant compliance motives

Type	Typical basis of force	Choice	Dominant motive
Command / order	Authority or rule	Low	Obligation
Request / plea	Speaker's need	Medium	Responsiveness
Instruction	Expertise and sequence	Medium	Task success
Advice / suggestion	Hearer's likely benefit	High	Utility or autonomy
Warning / prohibition	Danger or norm	Low-medium	Risk avoidance
Invitation / encouragement	Shared activity or support	High	Affiliation or confidence

Motivational functions

Here, motivational function means the immediate reason for compliance that a directive makes salient; it does not name a stable personality trait. Six motive clusters recur across the types. Institutional force links authority with a duty or shared rule. Need-based force asks the hearer to respond to another person's difficulty. Competence-based force treats compliance as a route to task success. Benefit-based force supports the hearer's interest and may preserve personal choice. Preventive force makes harm or loss salient. Affiliative force invites participation or lends confidence.

These motives rarely appear alone. "Please submit the draft today so I can return feedback before the examination" has the form of a request, yet it joins institutional obligation with mutual benefit. "You may want to save a second copy" uses a declarative frame, but it functions as advice because the context supplies a desirable future act. Directness and force



must therefore remain separate. An indirect form can carry strong pressure, while a bare imperative can serve as friendly encouragement. Brown and Levinson's account of face helps explain why speakers soften costly directives or make the reason for compliance explicit [3].

This distinction matters in multilingual universities in Uzbekistan, where students and staff may move among Uzbek, Russian, and English. A word-for-word English version of a routine imperative may acquire a harder tone in a new setting. The answer is not a fixed rule that direct forms are impolite. Learners need to ask four questions: Who has the right to direct? Whose interest does the act serve? What burden does it impose? Can the hearer reasonably refuse? Such questions turn grammar practice into pragmatic judgement and help translators preserve social force, not merely sentence form.

The proposed account treats directive meaning as a relation among an expected act, a source of force, and a reason for uptake. Commands foreground authority; requests foreground need; instructions foreground competence; advice foregrounds benefit; warnings foreground risk; invitations foreground affiliation. Context may shift any one of these values. A sound analysis must therefore describe both what the speaker wants done and why the hearer is expected to do it.

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