Directive Speech Acts in the Speech of Tuan Guru: A Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract

Language serves as a crucial tool in delivering messages, shaping interactions, and influencing audiences, particularly in public speeches. One essential linguistic feature commonly used by speakers is directive speech acts, which function to instruct, request, advise, or encourage listeners to perform certain actions. This study analyzes directive speech acts in the speech of TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin, a prominent Islamic leader whose sermons contain strong educational and leadership values. The objectives of the study are to identify and classify directive speech acts, examine their pragmatic functions, and explore the embedded values of leadership and education. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a pragmatic approach; the data were drawn from selected transcripts of his speeches, categorized by directive type, and analyzed contextually. The findings reveal various directive speech acts, such as commands, requests, advice, and suggestions, each serving different communicative purposes. The analysis further shows that these directive strategies not only fulfill communicative intentions but also reflect discipline, moral guidance, and leadership within the *pesantren* tradition. These findings highlight the significance of directive speech acts as instruments for shaping character, influencing audiences, and promoting educational values, while contributing to pragmatic studies in religious discourse.

Keywords: Directive Speech Acts; Education; Leadership Values; Pragmatics; Religious Discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental medium of communication that not only conveys information but also shapes attitudes, directs behavior, and influences audiences. In public discourse, especially speeches, language serves as a persuasive tool for leaders, educators, and preachers to reach their audiences effectively (Saidi et al., 2023; Salzborn, 2016; Searle, 1979). Among various linguistic phenomena, directive speech acts occupy a central position because they explicitly aim to make the hearer perform certain actions (Mohd Noor Be, 2023; Sidabutar & Johan, 2023). These actions may take the form of commands, requests, suggestions, or advice, each reflecting particular intentions and social relationships.

In the realm of religious communication, directive speech acts are particularly significant, as they guide followers toward moral values and spiritual practices. Through sermons and religious lectures, leaders do not merely transmit knowledge; they also instill discipline, shape character, and reinforce cultural and ethical norms.

Hence, investigating directive speech acts in religious discourse provides important insights into the pragmatic functions of language as a medium of instruction, persuasion, and leadership.

The speech of TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin, an influential Islamic scholar and leader in Lombok, is a compelling case for such a study. His speeches not only articulate theological concepts but also embody values of discipline, morality, and leadership within the *pesantren* tradition. As a religious figure whose discourse shapes both educational practices and community values, analyzing his use of directive speech acts can reveal how language contributes to leadership strategies and the moral education of society (Khaya, 2024; Wardoyo, 2017).

A growing body of research has examined directive speech acts across different domains. Studies in educational settings have shown how teachers employ directives to manage classrooms and encourage student participation (Widyastuti & Sartika, 2023). In political discourse, directives are used strategically to persuade or mobilize audiences (Sabila et al., 2024). Other studies have explored directives in literary and cinematic works, demonstrating their role in structuring narratives and shaping character interactions, such as in The Croods: A New Age (Widyastuti & Sartika, 2023), Dunkirk (Silaen et al., 2022), and L'Enfant (Astrianingsih & Ratna, 2019), and Sleeping Beauty (Della & Sembiring, 2018). Collectively, these works establish the centrality of directive speech acts as tools of influence across diverse communicative contexts.

Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to focus either on pedagogical, political, or fictional contexts, with relatively limited attention given to religious leaders' discourse—particularly in local, community-based settings. This leaves an important gap, as religious leaders possess unique authority to shape moral behavior and cultural identity, especially within the *pesantren* tradition in Indonesia. Unlike political figures or fictional characters, their directives carry both pragmatic and spiritual force, embedding values that extend beyond communication into daily practice. Yet, few studies have systematically analyzed directive speech acts in the speeches of local Islamic leaders such as TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin, whose influence extends across educational, social, and spiritual dimensions.

This research addresses that gap by analyzing the directive speech acts in TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin's speeches. Previous studies have extensively examined directive speech acts in political, educational, and fictional discourse; however, none have analyzed the speeches of TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin examined directive speech acts delivered by a *pesantren* leader within the ritual context of a student handover ceremony. This situates the present study as the first to document directive speech acts in this local religious setting, thereby introducing a new empirical domain to pragmatic research on religious discourse. Specifically, the study aims to identify and classify directive speech acts, examine their pragmatic functions, and uncover the leadership and educational values they reflect. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a pragmatic approach, the study uses transcripts of his speeches as primary data. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of pragmatics by expanding the understanding of directive speech acts in religious discourse, and practically by highlighting how language serves as a tool of moral instruction and leadership in pesantren-based communities.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method within the framework of pragmatic discourse analysis (Khan et al., 2025; Mantula et al., 2024). This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine language use contextually, particularly in identifying and classifying directive speech acts in the speeches of TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin. The study is grounded in speech act theory developed by Searle (1979), who divides directive speech acts into several categories, including commands, requests, advice, prohibitions, and suggestions. The main focus is to identify the types of directive speech acts and explain the pragmatic strategies the speaker employs to influence listeners' behavior.

The primary data consist of utterances containing directive speech acts from TGH's speeches. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin. Sources include video recordings available on platforms such as YouTube as well as officially published transcripts (Mikula et al., 2022; Surinov, 2024). The selection was based on the delivery context (religious or social), content clarity, and audio comprehensibility. Both spontaneous and prepared speeches were

considered representative of capturing the realization of directive speech acts in religious and social contexts.

The data collection process involved several stages. First, relevant speeches were selected based on technical and contextual criteria. Video recordings were carefully transcribed into written text, and each utterance containing a directive element was identified. The utterances were then classified following Searle's typology, which includes commands, requests, advice, prohibitions, and suggestions (Yoon, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Gonzalez, 2016; Greene, 1989; Hashimov, 2015). During data reduction, irrelevant utterances were excluded, and the remaining data were organized into tables showing speech context, direct quotations, directive types, and linguistic strategies. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the findings, identifying patterns, and relating them to theoretical frameworks.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, several validation strategies were applied. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from transcripts, video recordings, and secondary sources. Peer debriefing with supervisors and colleagues was carried out to ensure analytical consistency, and detailed contextual descriptions supported by direct quotations were provided to strengthen interpretive validity (Ishtiaq Ahmed & Sundas Ishtiaq, 2021; Karnia, 2024; Spence et al., 2023).

3.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1.   Findings

The analysis revealed five types of directive speech acts in TGH's speech. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin during the admission ceremony of new students at *Pondok Pesantren Raudlatuttholibin*. These directives include **commands, advice, requests, prohibitions, and warnings**, each employing different linguistic strategies and serving distinct communicative purposes. The following sections elaborate on these patterns and their functions in the *pesantren* context.

A.   Commands as Explicit Instructions for Discipline and Worship

The most dominant directive type in the data is commands. Examples include *"Calm down, Sir. Do not resist!"*, *"Just do our work. Do not talk about others!"*, *"At 4 o'clock you must wake up, perform ablution, tahajud, and pray in the middle of the night,"* and *"Do not rent vehicles, and so on. Keep studying."* These utterances are expressed in the form of **direct–explicit imperative sentences**, leaving no room for ambiguous interpretation by the listeners.

The use of this pattern indicates that the *pesantren* leader emphasizes clarity of instructions, especially during the orientation of new students. The purpose is to instill discipline, keep students focused, and establish worship routines from the very beginning. Thus, commands serve as the foundation of behavioral conditioning in daily life in *pesantren*.

B.   Advice as Motivational Support for Resilience

Advice appears in the utterance *"Be patient with trials because that is how we struggle."* This directive employs an **indirect–mitigated strategy**, framing it not as a direct order but as a motivational statement with a persuasive tone.

This strategy is chosen to provide emotional support without sounding coercive. Advice serves to strengthen students' resilience in facing challenges during their *pesantren* experience. In other words, advice complements commands by offering a softer approach that emphasizes psychological and spiritual encouragement.

C.   Requests as Polite Appeals to Foster Social Cooperation

Requests are found in utterances such as *"We humbly intend to establish a madrasah aliyah"* and *"Please sincerely entrust your children to Raudlatuttholibin."* Both employ the **indirect–polite request form**, marked by mitigating expressions such as 'please' and 'humbly'.

This pattern is used to maintain politeness and show respect toward parents and the surrounding community.

Requests serve not only as invitations to participate in educational development but also as a means of fostering social cooperation. This highlights the *pesantren*'s commitment to building strong social relations with the broader community as an integral part of its educational mission.

D.   Prohibitions as Firm Boundaries for *Santri* Behavior

Prohibitions are also prominent in the data. Examples include *"No student is allowed to wake up late, especially new students,"* *"Waking up late is not allowed,"* and *"Students are not permitted to wander around."* These utterances employ **direct–negative declarative** or **explicit prohibition** strategies, which are firm and straightforward.

Such prohibitions emphasize the importance of discipline. By enforcing these rules, the *pesantren* leader establishes behavioral boundaries that students must not cross. The communicative purpose is to ensure order, prevent misconduct, and cultivate discipline as an inherent value in daily life in *pesantren*.

E.   Warnings as Indirect Reminders of Consequences

Warnings appear in the utterance *"If students wander around, it will be dangerous."* This directive is delivered through an **indirect strategy**, presenting a consequence rather than a direct prohibition. This approach is intended to help students understand the logical risks of breaking the rules, rather than complying merely out of fear. Warnings thus function to foster self-awareness, showing that adherence to regulations is not only an obligation but also a way to protect oneself from harm.

F.   Cross-Sectional Conclusion of the Findings

The findings reveal that **commands** and **prohibitions** are the most dominant directive patterns, delivered directly and explicitly to provide firm guidance and establish discipline from the outset. Meanwhile, **advice, requests, and warnings** act as balancing elements. Advice offers moral and spiritual encouragement, requests reflect politeness in maintaining social relations, and warnings cultivate logical awareness of consequences. Combined, these patterns illustrate a *pesantren* leadership style that balances authority with persuasion, supporting the holistic development of students through discipline, motivation, and self-awareness. The findings can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Directive Speech Acts in the Speech of TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin

No	Speech Excerpt	Type of Directive	Linguistic Strategy	Purpose	Context
1	*"Tenang-tenang, Tuan. Jangan dilawan!"*	Command	Direct – explicit imperative	Instructing not to resist, maintaining calmness	Admission Ceremony of New *santri*
2	*"Cukup kerjakan pekerjaan kita. Jangan bicarakan orang lain!"*	Command	Direct – explicit imperative sentence	Encouraging focus and avoiding gossip	Admission Ceremony of New *santri*
3	*"Sabarlah atas ujian-ujian karena begitulah cara kita berjuang."*	Advice	Indirect – mitigated (motivational statement)	Giving mental reinforcement to be patient	Admission Ceremony of New *santri*
4	*"Mohon kami berniat membangun madrasah aliyah."*	Request	Indirect – polite request form	Asking for support/permission to establish an institution	Admission Ceremony of New *santri*
5	*"Tidak ada santri yang boleh bangun telat, khususnya untuk santri baru."*	Prohibition	Direct – negative declarative	Emphasizing rule of waking up early	Admission Ceremony of New *santri*

No	Speech Excerpt	Type of Directive	Linguistic Strategy	Purpose	Context	
6	*"Tidak boleh bangun telat."*	Prohibition	Direct – explicit prohibition	Forbidding undisciplined behavior	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New
7	*"Jam 4 sudah harus bangun, wudu', tahajud, berdoa tengah malam."*	Command	Direct – explicit assignment	Guiding daily worship routines	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New
8	*"Silakan tulus ikhlas hatinya menyerahkan di Raudlatuttholibin."*	Request	Indirect – mitigated (polite invitation)	Asking parents to entrust their children sincerely	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New
9	*"Santri tidak boleh keluyuran ke mana-mana."*	Prohibition	Direct – declarative prohibition	Prohibiting students from leaving the pesantren area	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New
10	*"Jika santri keluyuran, maka itu berbahaya."*	Warning	Indirect – consequence-based warning	Informing of the dangers of disobedience	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New
11	*"Jangan sampai menyewa kendaraan, dan lainnya. Belajarlah terus."*	Prohibition + Command	Direct – prohibition and imperative	Forbidding outside activities, reinforcing study focus	Admission emony of *santri*	Cer- New

Before moving to the discussion, it is also important to highlight the frequency of each directive type to identify dominant patterns in the data. Table 2 below shows that commands appear most frequently (4 occurrences), followed by prohibitions (4 occurrences), requests (2 occurrences), and advice and warnings, which each occur only once. This distribution indicates that the speech is dominated by directive acts that are instructive and regulatory, reflecting the speaker's authoritative role in guiding moral and behavioral conduct. This quantitative overview provides an empirical basis for interpreting the pragmatic intentions discussed in the following section.

Table 2. Frequency of Directive Speech Acts

Type of Directive	Frequency	Examples of Speech Excerpt
Commands	4	*"Tenang-tenang, Tuan. Jangan dilawan!", "Cukup kerjakan pekerjaan kita...", "Jam 4 sudah harus bangun...", "Jangan sampai menyewa kendaraan..."*
Prohibitions	4	*"Tidak ada santri yang boleh bangun telat...", "Tidak boleh bangun telat.", "Santri tidak boleh keluyuran...", "Jangan sampai menyewa kendaraan..."*
Advice	1	*"Sabarlah atas ujian-ujian karena begitulah cara kita berjuang."*
Requests	2	*"Mohon kami berniat membangun madrasah aliyah.", "Silakan tulus ikhlas hatinya menyerahkan..."*
Warning	1	*"Jika santri keluyuran, maka itu berbahaya."*

Table 1 and Table 2 show that commands and prohibitions emerged as the most dominant directive speech acts in TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin's speech, while advice, requests, and warnings appeared less frequently and served complementary functions. The distribution of these categories illustrates a balance between firm, authoritative instructions and softer, persuasive strategies.

In terms of pragmatic functions, commands were primarily used to instill discipline and provide clear guidance on religious practices and daily routines. Prohibitions reinforced behavioral boundaries by restricting actions considered harmful or distracting, while warnings complemented them by raising awareness of the possible dangers of disobedience. Advice, on the other hand, served to motivate and strengthen students' resilience, helping them endure the challenges of *pesantren* life. Requests softened the tone of instruction, expressing humility and respect, particularly toward parents and the wider community. This finding shows that directives not only regulate

behavior but also serve as a medium for leadership communication that integrates discipline, motivation, and cooperation.

Beyond their pragmatic roles, directive speech acts in this context also reflect core leadership values. Commands project discipline and responsibility, ensuring structured habits and regular worship among the *santri*. Advice emphasizes moral and spiritual guidance, shaping patience and resilience as key aspects of character development. Requests represent politeness and humility, building strong social ties with parents and the community, while prohibitions reveal a concern for safeguarding students from potentially harmful or distracting behaviors. Warnings further reflect a preventive approach rooted in care and protection. Taken together, these patterns demonstrate that directive speech acts are not only practical tools of instruction but also vehicles for transmitting *pesantren* leadership values such as discipline, respect, cooperation, and moral integrity. Through this combination, TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin's speech highlights the dual role of directives: as linguistic strategies for guiding behavior and as instruments for shaping character within the *pesantren* tradition.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that **commands** and **prohibitions** were the most frequently used directive speech acts in TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin's speech during the admission ceremony for new students, while **advice, requests,** and **warnings** appeared less frequently and served complementary roles. The dominance of commands and prohibitions reflects a leadership strategy that emphasizes clarity, discipline, and control from the very beginning.

According to Searle's speech act theory, directives are utterances intended to make the hearer perform a particular action, including commands, requests, and prohibitions. Recent studies confirm a similar pattern, where explicit commands are often dominant in Islamic sermons to underline desired actions (Mohd Noor Be, 2023).

However, the use of softer strategies such as advice, requests, and warnings demonstrates communicative awareness of how directives psychologically affect the hearers. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is particularly relevant here, as it explains how mitigation strategies can reduce the face-threatening nature of directives. For example, expressions such as *mohon* ("please") and *silakan* ("kindly") reflect both positive and negative politeness strategies. Previous studies highlight that politeness strategies are effective in reducing the impact of face-threatening acts in both social and institutional communication (Febriyani et al., 2023; Hashimov, 2015).

From a leadership perspective, the findings indicate that directive speech acts serve not only pragmatic functions for regulating behavior but also play a role in transmitting *pesantren* values. Commands embody discipline and responsibility, advice emphasizes moral and spiritual guidance, requests reflect humility and respect toward parents and the community, prohibitions safeguard students from harmful or distracting behaviors, and warnings demonstrate a preventive concern for students' well-being.

Taken together, these findings are consistent with previous research showing that directive speech acts in religious or institutional discourse are predominantly used to regulate behavior, inculcate discipline, and transmit moral values. However, this study contributes beyond prior work by examining directives within the local context of a *pesantren* graduation speech delivered by a respected Islamic leader, demonstrating how pragmatic strategies are employed not only to instruct but also to socialize *santri* into institutional norms. This contextual nuance—linking directives to leadership authority and moral pedagogy in *pesantren* culture—adds an empirical dimension that has been underexplored in earlier pragmatic studies on religious discourse.

In line with previous research, the present findings confirm that directive speech acts serve as dominant pragmatic tools for maintaining discipline, guiding behavior, and transmitting moral and educational values within institutional and religious contexts. However, this study extends earlier works by situating the analysis within a local *pesantren* environment, where directives are employed not only to regulate conduct but also to convey moral pedagogy and spiritual guidance. This contextual emphasis demonstrates that directive speech acts in Islamic educational discourse embody leadership authority, ethical instruction, and communal values, thereby offering a

nuanced perspective on pragmatic studies of religious communication.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that directive speech acts play a central role in TGH. M. Hilmi Nadjmuddin's speech, particularly during the admission ceremony for new students at Raudlatuttholibin Islamic Boarding School. The analysis revealed various directive speech acts — most notably commands and prohibitions — that function to establish discipline, emphasize obligations, and provide behavioral guidance. Meanwhile, advice, requests, and warnings appeared less frequently but served as important complementary strategies reflecting humility, care, and moral responsibility. These findings align with the abstract in showing that directive speech acts not only fulfill communicative intentions but also embody leadership values such as discipline, moral guidance, and character formation within the *pesantren* tradition.

As for future research directions, scholars may further investigate how students internalize these different forms of directives and how they shape discipline, motivation, and moral identity within the *pesantren* environment. Comparative studies across different religious leaders or Islamic institutions could also provide broader insight into distinctive directive strategies in religious discourse and their implications for leadership, education, and community building.

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