

## **Politeness Strategies in Hotel Service Encounters in Jordan: Giving Directives**

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**Date of Submission:** Oct. 02, 2019

**Date of Acceptance:** Dec. 31, 2019

### **Abstract**

This paper examines directive speech act performed by hotel service counters staff in Jordan. It investigates the politeness strategies employed by staff when they give their directives to hotel foreign guests. The data were collected through audio-recording interactions that occurred between the staff, who are nonnative speakers of English, and foreign guests. Findings from the study show that the directives issued by the staff are characterized by significant directness. The study argues that such directives can be perceived as blunt and discourteous and therefore capable of causing face-threat to the interactants. This principally refers to the fact that they appear to give the guests no choice in complying with the request and fail to acknowledge the imposition involved. The study concludes that the frequent use of such direct strategies may refer to the nature of institutional encounters where the staff enjoy more power due to their institutional knowledge of offering services or information that the guests need as well to the staff's right to ask questions to achieve the purpose of their task-oriented transactions. Furthermore, and more importantly, the staff's use of direct forms may be due to the need for clarity and efficiency in giving directives. The study implies that hotel managers and hospitality curricula designers can benefit from the findings to design materials and manuals that help hotel staff to use appropriate level of directness when they issue their directives to foreign guests to avoid potential face-threat and potential social misunderstandings which can lead to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure.

**Keywords:** Directives Speech Acts, Hospitality Language, Hotel Service Encounters, Cross-Cultural Communication, Jordan.

## 1. Introduction

Hotel industry has nowadays become one of the most important sectors in Jordan economy. As a result of the widespread use of low cost flights, Jordan attracts every year thousands of tourists from Anglo-Saxon and Western countries (Rababah et al., 2019a). Hotel service staff in international hotels in Jordan use Arabic language with Arab customers and English with foreign customers. Generally, the language of communication with foreign guests is English; therefore, it has become an essential and widespread means of communication in hotels and relevant hospitality industry sectors. Although English is the main medium used in hotels, hotels staff still suffer from the low proficiency in English (Rababah et al., 2019a). Commonly, international hotels in Jordan look to hire employees who have a bachelor degree in English, hotel and tourism management or public administration. Those people are assumed to command a good level of English to be able to communicate effectively with foreign customers. Nonetheless, due to the lack actual use of English in Jordan in general and the lack of explicit instructions of directives use in academic syllabi, Jordanian staff, who are non-native speakers of English (NNSs), often face hesitations regarding employing appropriate sociopragmatic strategies in their interactions (Rababah et al., 2019b). This is particularly the case in staff-customers interactions in Jordan.

Giving directives to hotel guests requires possessing high pragmatic competence and awareness of the politeness conventions in language. Usually, the hotel staff need to follow the hotel protocols of dealing with customers, thus, they spend some time learning how to communicate, verbally and non-verbally, with foreign clients and employ certain strategies to defuse various potential face-threatening acts. Consequently, crafting an appropriate language in the hotel context often involves a lot of consideration and accountability and this can be a challenge for non-native speakers who often lack the "sophisticated pragmatic competence in the second language (L2) and critical language awareness of how discourse shapes and is shaped by power relations, identity, and ideologies established in the target culture" (Chen, 2006, p.36). The hotel staff need to have sufficient pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge to make appropriate sociopragmatic choices concerning degree of directness they would use among other things. In so doing, they have to be able to judge the kind of relationship they have with the guests and assess accordingly the degree of imposition of their directives by considering the rights and obligations of the parties involved in the interaction (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Felix-Brasdefer, 2015). They should be able to issue their directives in such a way so as not to risk their face as well their customers' face. They are assumed that they would care about their own positive face by

maintaining their public self-image and sustain their guests' negative face by maintaining their freedom of action unimpeded (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Although many of the staff's directives requests address job requirements and duties that fall within their rights, it is not necessarily the case that the guests have the obligation to comply with the request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

The staff-guests relationship is clearly one of unequal power. On one hand, the staff have the authority to ask, thus they enjoy more power. And on the other hand, the guests pay money to receive service and the sustenance of the whole business relies on them, and thus they entertain power too (Koester, 2010). In this kind of relationship, the staff are claimed to have "power of control" (Brown and Gilman, 1972 [1960]; Brown and Levinson, 1987) over the guests and the legitimate right to exert influence by virtue of their institutionalized role. Also, the guests enjoy power as they are those who own money and pay for receiving a service (Leichty and Applegate, 1991). According to Leichty and Applegate (1991), in this institutionally undetermined or unclear relationship, the staff are expected to use an appropriate language that fittingly maintains their institutional right of exercising power and acknowledges their own lower status as they are hired to offer service

So far, there has been little research on the politeness of staff's directives to guests and similarly rare studies have dealt with Arab hotel service encounters specifically to investigate staff directives. In addition, with the exception of Blue and Harun (2003) and Yuen (2009), no other study has, to our knowledge, investigated the language employed by staff towards their guests in their hotel service encounters. The present study aims to make a contribution to these under researched areas by exploring the pragmatics of hotel service counters communication. More specifically, the study aims to explore the English directives performed by Jordanian hotel service counters staff (NNS of English) to their guests. The research question posed by the study is as follows:

What is the degree of directness employed in the English directives of Jordanian hotel service counters staff?

## **2. Background**

Pragmatic research has so far focused on studying speakers' performance of speech acts, and strategies used to express politeness. In the majority of such studies, data were chiefly obtained through the use of a discourse completion test (DCT) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009; Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Fukushima, 1990) or through role-plays (Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Hassall, 2001). In contrast, few studies have focused on the examination of

realistic directives that are used in real encounters and thus genuine speech act performance (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007).

Ervin-Tripp's (1976) work was one of the earliest studies on directives. The study analyzed the directives of native of English and investigated how students' requests were evaluated by the faculty for their positive or negative effect on the addressee. Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gherson (1985) studied requestive strategies and variation in requests types in Hebrew. They found that power, requesting goals, and age were the most important factors that affect requestive strategy. Similarly, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) studied requesting behaviour across some languages and found that all languages made use of direct and indirect strategies of request but there are different frequencies of using such strategies across languages. Australians, for instance, tend to use conventional indirect strategy while Argentineans and Hebrew speakers have the inclination to use higher level of directness.

Gordon (1998) found that Russians employ several morpho-syntactic means to issue directive acts. They prefer mood derivables, query preparatories, performatives and permission directives. Béal (1994) compared French and Australians' performance of directives and found that Australians tend to use more softening devices than French. On the other hand, French tended to use simple softeners and avoided using complicated softeners. Yates (2005) compared directives performed by Chinese trainee teachers and found that Chinese tended to use frequently mitigating devices as English native speakers did but they did not use devices that build solidarity as native speakers to reduce social distance. The native speakers used solidarity-building address terms and informal language to establish solidarity.

More recently, Yates (2010a) found that immigrants in Australia use less syntactic devices than Australian native speakers to soften their requests. The immigrants used less past forms and less past and continuous forms to distance themselves from the requested actions. The author interpreted that this may refer to lack of awareness of these forms as directive mitigators rather than the learners' unfamiliarity with these forms. She remarked that form is not often challenging for learners but the challenging part is its use in softening functions.

Chen (2001) studied Taiwanese (NNSs) and American (NSs) graduate students' performance of requests upon asking for an appointment, and recommendation letter. He found that both groups preferred query preparatory strategies and want statements but varied in the volume of lexical and syntactic modification used. The NSs students used more lexico-syntactic modification which resulted in more indirect and polite requests. Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) examined the degree of directness and the politeness features of students' request

to university faculty. Her examination of NSs and NNSs' use of lexico-syntactic modification showed that NSs used syntactic modifiers in high imposition requests whereas NNS modified their requests primarily through the use of the past tense, downtoners and the politeness marker 'please'. Significantly, the NNS did not show much flexibility in the use of internal modification as NS did (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006).

Yuen (2009) found that while some directives used by Chinese hotel staff were conversational and informal, others followed a more institutional shape and included more formal expressions. Some hotel staff's directives to guests involved a high degree of directness through certain syntactic features such as imperatives, and want statements, while others were featured by more conventional indirectness and more mitigating modifiers. In hotel staff-guests interaction, too much direct directives that are not sufficiently mitigated might be considered inappropriate. In situations where the relation between the interactants is asymmetrical or not clearly defined, giving directives normally require greater pragmatic skills and knowledge to employ language effectively (Yuen, 2009).

Placencia (2005) studied requests in corner shops in Spanish. She found that Spanish tend to use direct requests such as imperatives and ellipsis more than any other strategies. Shively (2011) examined the American learners of Spanish in Spain. She found that American learners' socialisation into the Spanish language made them abandon more indirect requests which is typical in their L1, and turned to use more direct forms such as imperatives in different commercial service encounters. More recently, Shively (2013) suggested that differences in the degree of directness/indirectness of requests may refer to cultural variation.

Yates (2015) studied requests in corner stores in Buenos Aires and found that sellers and clients mainly used elliptical imperatives and direct requests. This suggests casualness and closeness between the interactants. In his study of requests of Hispanic and Anglo-American customers at a taco stand in Pennsylvania, Ramírez-Cruz (2017) found that the Anglo-Americans customers used more conventional indirect requests while the Hispanic used more affirmative requests and imperatives which made the latter's encounters more sociable.

Holmes and Wilson (2017) observed that when speakers hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy and their addressee's obligations are clear, they generally use direct forms. On the other hand, when directives are issued to superiors, more politeness is expected. Therefore, according to Izadi (2020), when requests are performed upwards, typically more mitigation is expected to be employed

Concerning directives research in Arabic, the majority of studies have focused on the realization and performance of speech acts by Arab students as English foreign learners relying on written questionnaires or used discourse completion test (DCT) to investigate the differences in requesting behaviour (DCT) among native and non-native speakers of English. One of the pioneering studies on directives as used by Arab learners was by Scarcella and Brunak (1981). The authors investigated the performance of directives and found that Arab learners tend to use different terms of positive politeness strategy such as endearment terms (e.g., friends) unlike Americans who may use terms like '*pal, buddy, and honey*' in similar situations. In addition, Arab students used long openings of elaborate greetings; nonetheless, they did not use closings as the Americans did. This linguistic phenomenon was also observed in common interactions between Jordanians in their native language (Rababah and Malkawi, 2012). The authors also found that Arab learners tend to be more indirect with superiors and frequently employed the politeness marker 'please' as a pre-sequence to their requests. The findings of the study revealed that there was pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer from Arabic language.

Umar (2004) examined Arabs EFL learners and British English native speakers' requesting strategies through using discourse completion test (DCT). He found that there is a pragmatic transfer influence over Arab EFL learners' requesting behaviour. He found that Arab learners were more direct than British especially when addressing a lower status person. The author explained that the high level of directness in Arab learners' requests is attributed to pragmatic transfer from Arabic language where direct requests are common among Arabs when there is no social distance or when the hearer is lower in social status. The study also found that Arab learners use less internal modifications in their requests in comparison with native speakers. The study concluded that Arab learners might deviate from the British requesting behaviour because of lack of observance of the influence of social factors over requesting behaviour.

Al-Momani (2009) investigated Jordanian EFL learners' realization of requests as compared with American English native speakers. The study revealed that Jordanian learners were considerably influenced by their L1 pragmatic norms in making direct requests. They used excessive verbosity in their supportive moves but they rather underused internal modifiers such as downgraders. In the same vein, Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) found that there are differences in the syntactic structure of requests in terms of frequency and type between Jordanian learners of English and Americans native speakers. Similarly, Tawalbeh and Al-Oqaily (2012) found that Saudi Arabic native speakers preferred directness strategy in intimate relations to express solidarity and closeness and found that Americans tend to use conventional indirectness.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Participants

The sample of participants was purposively chosen relying on particular criteria of respondents which include that (i) they have a bachelor in English language or hotel and tourism management (ii) they have been enrolled in hotel jobs for more than five years. Some of these staff worked in hotels abroad while others have never been abroad. As a result of the data collection method employed, the sample was not homogenous regarding the staff English language proficiency and age. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants' English language proficiency varied from intermediate to advance. The recipients of the directives were foreign tourists who were between the ages of 18 and 60 years. The communication style between the staff and the guests could be characterized as formal but friendly and sometimes conversational informal.

**Table 1:** Participants' Profile (NNSs staff).

Partici-pants	Nationality	Program	Gender	Hotel experience
P1	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	11years
P2	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	8 years
P3	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	13years
P4	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	11years
P5	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	12 years
P6	Jordanian	Hotel management	Male	9 years

#### 3.2 Procedure and Instrumentation

The current study examined the directives issued by Jordanian hotel service encounters staff to their guests. More specifically, it focused on the degree of directness of directives that these encounters include. The data therefore encompassed naturalistic directives and represent data from authentic interactions. With the aim of answering the research question and consequently establish the extent to which direct directives may be pragmatically inappropriate, conversational data have been collected through the audio-recording the staff and guest's interactions. The data consisted of 90 hotel service encounters that were collected from three hotels in Jordan over a period of three months (May-August 2015). These encounters occurred between Jordanian hotel service staff, non-native speakers of English, and foreign hotel guests who visited Jordan as tourists.

The directives collected involved both giving/asking for information and requests for actions. The encounters therefore concerned directives for a number of various actions such as giving directives for checking-in and checking-out procedures, giving instructions, directions, and so on.

In order to address the ethical issues in relation to this study, staff and guests were requested to fill informed consent forms which clarified that their encounters would be stored for analysis and that no personal information would be exposed, and that their names would be anonymous. Encounters that comprised confidential or sensitive information would be excluded from the study.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved the identification of each directive head act within each encounter. Each of the produced directives was analyzed and coded with regard to the degree of directness (direct requests, conventionally indirect requests, non-conventionally indirect requests (hints)). Ervin-Tripp (1976), Blum- Kulka et al.'s (1989) and Trosborg's (1995) models were adapted to categorize request strategies. The data analysis also relied on the pragmatic frameworks outlined in section 2.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis showed that the majority of the directives were constructed through using direct strategy (52.5%), and conventionally indirect strategy (32.28%) and non-conventional indirect directives (2.76%) (See Table. 2).

Table 2. The strategies used by the staff upon giving directives to guests

Strategy	category	percentage
Direct directives	Imperatives	98/330 (29.7%)
	Need and want statements	94/330 (28.4%)
		Total 192/330 (58.2%)
Conventional indirect directives	Query Preparatory	140/330 (42%)
Non-conventional indirect directives	Strong Hints/Mild Hints	17/330 (5%)

### 4.1 Direct Directives

Two types of direct directives emerged in the data, namely, imperatives, and need statements as discussed below.

#### 4.1.1 Imperatives

The imperatives found in the data were formatted in three forms, namely, conventional imperatives, elliptical imperatives, and embedded imperatives.

##### 4.1.1.1 Conventional Imperatives

Conventional imperatives or directive imperatives, which are examples of the bald-on-record usage (Brown and Levinson, 1987), were used in 45



situations of the whole 330 directives. In the following encounter, a male guest asked about his reservation and the staff (a receptionist) used conventional imperatives to elicit personal information from him.

*Extract 1*

1. *Staff: Hello sir. Can I help you?*
2. *Guest: Hello sir. I have a reservation for tonight.*
3. *Staff: Ok. Welcome sir*
4. *Staff: Your name, please*
5. *Guest: (gave his name)*
6. *Trainee: Give me your passport please.*
7. *To check your account*
8. *Guest: Okay. Here it is.*
9. *Staff: Fill this form please*
10. *Guest: (Filled the form)*
11. *Staff: Don't forget your passport sir*
12. *Guest: Okay thanks*

The staff opened the encounter with the informal greeting term 'hello' then he asked how he can offer help. Then the staff asked the guest with the bald conventional imperative 'give me your passport, please!' (Line 6). The imperative is mitigated with the politeness marker 'please' which made the imperative less imposing and more polite. Further, it was mitigated in line 7 with a grounder to explain the need for the passport. This structure was frequently used by service counters staff and it seems that this bald imperative directive did not threaten the guest's face because of the institutional nature of relationship between the staff and the guest or the need for clarity and efficiency to achieve the task-oriented interaction.

In line 11 'Don't forget your passport sir', the staff used negative imperative to remind the guest to take his passport. Usually, negative imperatives are highly face-threatening because they indicate prohibition and impede the hearer's freedom (Ruhi, 2006). In addition, they stress inequality and impede the hearer's autonomy. However, the staff did not try to sugar-coat his directive which shows his spontaneity and genuineness in offering help. In addition, using positive imperative in the preceded directive (line 9) followed with negative imperative is an attempt from the staff to portray himself as a supporter rather than an authoritarian (Skewis, 2003) and expresses his concern about the guest's interest. The guest's agreement 'Okay' (line 12) to accomplish what she is ordered to do

and his expression of gratitude '*Thank you*' shows that she is pleased with the treatment she received.

In extract 2, a guest asked the staff how he could go downtown.

*Extract 2*

1. *Guest: Good morning sir*
2. *Staff: Good morning*
3. *Guest: How can I get downtown?*
4. *Staff: Okay... (was busy)wait just wait a moment please*
5. *Staff: Want to go*
6. *Guest: Downtown*
7. *Staff: Go over there, please! (pointed to the entrance of the hotel)*
8. *They can help you better.*
9. *Guest: Okay... thanks*
10. *Staff: Welcome sir.*

The staff was going to help the guest but he was busy. He used the conventional imperative form asking the guest to wait. Then the staff used a conventional imperative again to go to the other desk. The staff used a very bald imperative two times and it seems it did not look that his directive was imposing because it was for the benefit of the guest. The guest, through his reply with '*okay*' and expression of gratitude '*thanks*', showed his agreement by supporting the staff's command. After that the staff redressed his bald imperative with a grounder of reason '*They can help you better*' (line 8) to soften the imposition of his directive.

In the following extract, a female guest told the staff member that she wanted to settle her bill.

*Extract 3*

1. *Staff: Good morning madam*
2. *Guest: Good morning sir.*
3. *Staff: How can I help you?*
4. *Guest: I just want to settle my account.*
5. *Staff: What's: the name?*
6. *Guest: (Gave her name)*
7. *Staff: Two hundred twenty dollar*
8. *Guest: (Gave the staff 220 dinars)*

9. *Staff: Sign here please!*

The staff opened the encounter with a formal greeting morning. The guest stated that she wanted to settle her bill and the staff told her how much she should pay. Then he used the conventional imperative in line 7 '*Sign me here please!*' tailed with the politeness marker 'please' asking her to sign a sheet.

**4.1.1.2 Embedded Imperatives**

Embedded imperatives were used in 7 out of 330 situations. In embedded imperatives, the agent of the action is clearly declared. Embedded forms usually function as pre-sequences and grounders that cue for the recipient for an upcoming directive, thus, they soften the force of the illocutionary force (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The extract below occurred between a female guest who asked a staff about her umbrella. The guest left her umbrella in the front desk and wanted to get it back on the other day.

*Extract 4*

1. *Staff: Welcome madam*
2. *Guest: I just want to ask about mu umbrella*
3. *I left in the front desk last night.*
4. *Staff: What colour is it*
5. *Guest: I think it's grey*
6. *Staff: Okay. (..) you come and see*
7. *You find it better*
8. *Guest: Okay*

In line 2, the guest asked about her umbrella. The staff asked about its colour and the guest was not sure what colour it was. The staff asked the guest to have a look at the umbrellas left in the counter and check herself what umbrella was hers using an embedded imperative in line 6 '*Okay. (..) you come and see*'. The staff used embedded imperative in which the agent of the action '*you*' is stated clearly. This type of imperative is very direct but the institutional nature of the relationship between the staff and the guest might have made it acceptable. Commonly, the directive structure '*you-imperative*' can carry a high confrontational tone which might be misunderstood by the guest and lead to complete rejection; therefore, the staff followed it with the grounder '*You find it better*' (line 7) to modify the force of the imperative.

#### 4.1.1.3 Elliptical Imperatives

Elliptical imperatives were used in 45 out of the 330 directives. In elliptical imperatives, the agent and/or the verb are dropped. In the following extract, a guest was asked to sign on the bill.

##### *Extract 6*

1. *Guest: Is that everything*
2. *Staff: Yes.*
3. *Just your signature (...), please!*
4. *Guest: (Held the pen to sign)*
5. *Staff: Here, sign here, please.*

In extract 6, the staff asked the guest to sign by using an elliptical imperative tailed with the politeness marker 'please'. This structure is an instance of negative politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987) in which the agent is omitted and the directive is impersonalized, thus, it is considered less forceful than a normal blank imperative. Seemingly, the staff member used this strategy to exclude himself from the responsibility of requesting. Per-posing the minimiser '*just*' expresses to the guest that what is being asked for is easy and only requires little effort. Minimizers with imperatives help to ease the task for the interlocutors and redress the speaker's face (Koester, 2010).

The above extracts show that using imperatives with positive politeness markers are very common in hotel service encounters. The regularity of a structure in a setting displays its appropriacy by the community in the given context (Terkourafi, 2005). Thus, according to Terkourafi's (2005) principle of regularity, the staff are not perceived as commanding or rude due to the frequent use of imperatives in this setting because guests are accustomed to receive such imperatives in this context and staff are used to issuing their directives in direct ways. The staff's use of imperatives indicates their sincerity to offer help and present them as objective professional service givers. In addition, the staff's position may grant them a powerful authority to give blunt directives without being regarded by the society as impolite, thus, the use of imperatives display the staff's genuineness to achieve their tasks.

#### 4.1.2 Need/Want Statements

Need and want statements were used in 94 situations out of the 330 directives. In the following encounter, a female guest, who is familiar with the staff, wanted the front desk staff to call her a taxi.

*Extract 7*

1. *Guest: Good evening sir.*
2. *Staff: Good morning madam. How are you today?*
3. *Guest: Fine thanks*
4. *Staff: How can I help you?*
5. *Guest: Can you call us a taxi at 5 p.m.?*
6. *Staff: Welcome dear.*
7. *At five, ok*
8. *Guest: Right*
9. *Staff: I need your mobile number only.*
10. *Guest: (Gave her mobile) thanks*
11. *Staff: I call you as he comes.*
12. *Guest: Good*
13. *Trainee: Wish you a nice trip*
14. *Guest: Thanks dear*

In line 5, the guest asked for a taxi and staff member replied with a want statement '*I need your mobile number only*' (Line 9) tailed with the minimiser '*only*' that modified his directive. He might have used the direct directive in the performative form to make his directive clear and concise.

In extract 8, the staff asked the guest to give him his passport.

*Extract 8*

1. *Staff: I just want your passport*
2. *Guest: (Gave his passport) here it is*
3. *Staff: To check your profile*
4. *Guest: O.K. sir*

The staff baldly asked the guest to show him the passport using a speaker-oriented need statement '*I just want your passport*' declaring his institutional authority. This kind of bald-on-record strategy is forceful as the speaker stated his intent clearly. This structure is often used by the hotel staff because they have the necessary information and legitimate power over the guest to state their requirements directly.

To sum up, the frequent use of imperatives, bald directives or want statements indicates that they might not be perceived as impositive by the guests. This refers to the authority the staff members possess, that is, they have the right to ask questions and the guests have the obligation to comply to attain the

purpose of their transaction. These cases of imperative use demonstrated that the staff's authority makes them entitled to issue imperative directives. Additionally, there is a need for clarity and efficiency in such goal-oriented interactions which made imperatives less imposing as if they were in other non-institutional settings.

#### 4.2 Conventional Indirect Directives

The results showed that conventional indirect directives were used in 140 situations out of 330 making them the second category in use. The meaning in conventional indirect utterances can be easily understood because of their high pragmatic clarity in comparison with hints or non-conventional indirect utterances on one hand, and the level of coerciveness is greatly lessened as the speaker leaves a space of optionality in giving the hearer the choice to obey or not his directive, on the other hand (Brown and Levinson, 1987). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), conventional indirect category is an instance of negative politeness strategy. The encounter below occurred between a front desk clerk and a guest who wanted to check out.

##### *Extract 9*

1. *Staff: Good evening sir. Can I help you?*
2. *Guest: Good morning. I want to check out please.*
3. *Staff: Ok sir. Your name please!*
4. *Guest: (Gave his name)*
5. *Staff: have you used anything from the fridge?*
6. *Guest: No sir*
7. *Staff: I need your credit card. Can I have your credit card?*

The guest wanted to check out and the staff member asked about his name using elliptical imperative structure. Then in line 7, the staff used a want statement followed with a modal directive '*Can I have your credit card?*' to defuse the force of the directive. He might have realized that his first directive is imposing; therefore, he employed a less imposing directive in using the conventional indirect directive. Using modals improves the speaker's negative face because they establish distance and deference, and they convey respect for the individual's autonomy (Brown and Levinson, 1987). As discussed above, conventional indirect directives were not frequent as direct directives in the current study because the staff might want to appear more obvious and sincere in using direct directives. A further explanation offered here is that in Eastern and Mediterranean cultures indirectness may indicate the speaker's insincerity and

non-reliability in making or doing the proposition (Krolak and Rudnicka 2006; Larina, 2015).

### 4.3 Non-conventional Indirect Directives

Non-conventional indirect directives were used only in 17 out of 33 directives. An instance on conventional indirect directives is strong and mild hints. This strategy was used mainly when the staff perceived that their directives may lay big threat to the face of the guest, thus, they tended to encode them in a way that flouts Grice's maxims and leave the guest be engaged in the burden of calculating the implicature. The staff encoded the act by flouting Grice's (1976) maxims leaving the guest infer the intended meaning from the immediate context. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, hints are an instance of off-record strategy that represents their super politeness strategy. In the extract underneath, the staff wanted to tell the guest to pay his bill indirectly through using hints to save their face.

#### *Extract 10*

1. *Staff: Okay...how was everything?*
2. *Guest: Amazing*
3. *Staff: Have you taken your bags*
4. *Guest: Already*
5. *Staff: then you want to check out*
6. *Guest: Right*
7. *Staff: (Opened the guest's profile)*
8. *Yes, the bar.*
9. *Anything from the bar?*
10. *Guest: yes*

The staff did not like to directly tell the guest that he had to pay for the drink because it could be face-threatening, thus, he gave him a chance to interpret his message through inviting Grice's (1975) implicatures. This strategy is used when the risk of the act is probably high as seen in extract 10. The staff (in line 8) first used a mild hint '*Yes, the bar*' signalling to the guest that since he had gone to the bar and he had to pay. Then the staff used a strong hint in line 9 '*Anything from the bar?*' indicating that the guest should pay. The directive is not explicitly stated so it is less imposing on the guest.

To sum up, the data have shown that directives in their three forms were used in different situations in university service encounters with different variations depending on contextual factors. The most direct forms, imperatives, which are with the strongest illocutionary force, were frequently used probably

due to the authoritative power of the staff and the need for explicitness in issuing directives. The staff are entitled with more power and knowledge so they may perceive themselves authoritative in delivering their directives in the imperative form. The staff also tend to seek for simplicity and clarity in their directives to save time and effort and get their instructions be accurately and succinctly achieved. The regularity of imperatives indicates that they might not be considered impolite in this setting (Terkourafi, 2005). Second in frequency in use were conventional indirect directives which are normally less forceful than direct directives. The use of conventional indirect directives may signal for the staff' orientation towards formality and non-intimacy. They may convey a message to the guests to keep formal and achieve their tasks as soon as possible. The least in use were hints. They were used when the staff and guests talked about delicate matters such as payment and money-related issue.

## **5. Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

The present study examined the directives used by NNS Jordanian hotel service counters staff to their guests. It focused on the politeness strategies and levels of directness employed by the staff in their directives. The analysis of data has shown that the encounters are typically characterized by significant directness. This does not give the guest a space of freedom to comply or not the directives and fails to acknowledge the imposition involved. This suggests that giving directives appropriately remains a demanding task especially for non-native speakers who often find it difficult to accomplish their communicative purposes and demonstrate politeness in the lead. This study suggests that these NNS staff could benefit from explicit hotel service instructions and activities that help to raise their meta-pragmatic awareness (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). It is also necessary to design EFL/ESL books that have explicit hotel instructions to teach hotel workers the appropriate level of politeness in hotel context.

One of the limitations of the present study is that it only explored encounters of non-native speakers. Further studies should examine how NSs behave in the same context compared with NNSs. Such studies will help to investigate further whether that directness is a feature of hotel service encounters. Certainly, the area of politeness of hotel communication still has too much further research. As hotel service encounters can offer precious authentic data, it is hoped that more interlanguage studies will focus on study of hotel encounters in order to expand the inquiry scope of NNs' speech act production.



## إستراتيجيات الأدب في لقاءات خدمة الفنادق في الأردن: إعطاء التوجيهات

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### ملخص

تبحث هذه الورقة في التوجيهات التي يقوم بها موظفو خدمة الفنادق في الأردن، وتحديداً في إستراتيجيات الأدب التي يستخدمها الموظفون عندما يعطون توجيهاتهم لنزلاء الفندق الأجانب. تم جمع البيانات من خلال التسجيل الصوتي للتفاعلات التي حدثت بين الموظفين الذين هم من غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية والضيوف الأجانب. أظهرت النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة أن التوجيهات الصادرة عن موظفي الخدمة تتسم بنسبة عالية من صيغ التعبير المباشرة أو الأمر. تناقش الدراسة فكرة أنه يمكن اعتبار هذه التوجيهات صريحة فظة، وبالتالي فهي قد تتسبب في تهديد المتحاورين أو إحراجهم. يرجع هذا بشكل أساسي إلى حقيقة أن موظفي الخدمة لا يمنحون الضيوف أي خيار في الامتثال للطلب. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن الاستخدام المتكرر لهذه الإستراتيجيات المباشرة قد يشير إلى طبيعة التفاعلات المؤسسية، حيث يتمتع الموظفون بقدر أكبر من القوة؛ بسبب معرفتهم المؤسسية بتقديم الخدمات أو المعلومات التي يحتاجها الضيوف، وكذلك إلى حق الموظفين في طرح الأسئلة لتحقيق الغرض من المعاملات الموجهة نحو المهام الخاصة بهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن استخدام الموظفين الصيغة المباشرة أو الأمر قد يرجع إلى الحاجة إلى الوضوح والسرعة في إعطاء التوجيهات. وتشير الدراسة إلى أنه يمكن لمديري الفنادق ومصممي مناهج الضيافة الاستفادة من النتائج في تصميم المواد التعليمية والكتب التي تساعد موظفي الفندق في استخدام المستوى المناسب من الأمر، عندما يصدرن توجيهاتهم للضيوف الأجانب؛ لتجنب تهديدات الوجه المحتملة، وسوء الفهم الاجتماعي المحتمل الذي يمكن أن يؤدي إلى فشل براغماتي واجتماعي.

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