

## TRANSFORMATION OF NEGATIVE IMPERATIVES INTO POSITIVE DIRECTIVES IN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL MEANING

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### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi imperatif negatif menjadi direktif positif dalam wacana kelas serta mengkaji bagaimana perubahan bentuk linguistik tersebut membangun makna interpersonal dalam interaksi antara guru dan siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (Systemic Functional Linguistics/SFL) dengan fokus pada metafungsi interpersonal, khususnya sistem mood dan residue dalam klausa imperatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis wacana. Data penelitian berupa dua puluh pasangan klausa yang terdiri dari imperatif negatif dan direktif positif yang umum digunakan dalam interaksi kelas. Data dianalisis melalui tiga tahap, yaitu identifikasi struktur mood, analisis unsur residue, serta interpretasi makna interpersonal yang muncul dari transformasi bentuk direktif tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa imperatif negatif yang ditandai oleh penggunaan *don't* berfungsi sebagai bentuk larangan yang menekankan pembatasan terhadap perilaku siswa. Sebaliknya, direktif positif mengalihkan fokus komunikasi dari penghentian tindakan menuju panduan perilaku yang diharapkan. Transformasi ini tidak hanya mengubah struktur linguistik klausa dengan menghilangkan penanda polaritas negatif, tetapi juga menghasilkan pergeseran orientasi makna interpersonal dari komunikasi yang bersifat restriktif menuju komunikasi yang lebih konstruktif dan suportif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pilihan bentuk bahasa dalam *teacher talk* memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk interaksi pedagogis di kelas. Secara pedagogis, penelitian ini mengimplikasikan bahwa penggunaan direktif positif dapat menjadi strategi komunikasi yang lebih efektif bagi guru dalam mengelola perilaku siswa sekaligus menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih kooperatif, kondusif, dan mendukung proses pembelajaran.

**Kata Kunci:** Wacana Kelas, Imperatif Negatif, Direktif Positif, Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik, Makna Interpersonal.

### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the transformation of negative imperatives into positive directives in classroom discourse and to examine how these linguistic changes construct interpersonal meaning in interactions between teachers and students. The study employs the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on the interpersonal metafunction, particularly the mood and residue systems in imperative clauses. This research uses a qualitative approach with discourse analysis as its method. The data consist of twenty pairs of clauses containing negative imperatives and positive directives commonly used in classroom interactions. The data were analyzed through three stages: identification of mood structure, analysis of residue elements, and interpretation of the interpersonal meanings emerging from the transformation of these directive forms. The findings reveal that negative imperatives marked by the use of *don't* function as prohibitive forms that emphasize restrictions on students' behavior. In contrast, positive directives shift the communicative focus from stopping undesirable actions toward guiding expected behavior. This transformation not only changes the linguistic structure of the clauses by removing markers of negative polarity, but also results in a shift in interpersonal meaning orientation from restrictive communication toward more constructive and supportive communication. These findings indicate that language choices in teacher talk play an important role in shaping pedagogical interaction in the classroom. Pedagogically, this study implies that the use of positive*

*directives can serve as a more effective communication strategy for teachers in managing students' behavior while simultaneously creating a more cooperative, conducive, and supportive learning environment.*

**Keywords:** *Classroom Discourse, Negative Imperatives, Positive Directives, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Interpersonal Meaning.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language plays an important role in shaping interaction and managing behavior in the classroom. Verbal instructions delivered by teachers not only function to regulate learning activities but also to build interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. The way teachers deliver instructions can influence students' responses, levels of participation, and the overall classroom atmosphere. In various learning situations, teachers frequently use imperative clauses to control students' behavior, maintain discipline, and direct learning activities.

Imperative clauses are one of the language structures commonly used in instructional discourse because they enable speakers to give commands, requests, or directions directly. In the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by M.A.K. Halliday, imperative clauses are part of the mood system that represents interpersonal meaning in language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The mood system shows how speakers position themselves toward their interlocutors when performing speech functions such as commanding, requesting, or offering something. In the context of classroom discourse, imperative clauses often function as directives used by teachers to guide students' behavior during the learning process (Eggins, 2004).

In practice, classroom directives frequently appear in the form of negative imperatives, such as "Don't talk," "Don't run in the corridor," or "Don't be noisy." These forms emphasize prohibitions against certain behaviors and are usually used to stop actions considered inappropriate. Although such forms are effective in controlling behavior, the use of negative imperatives tends to focus more on restricting actions rather than providing guidance for expected behavior. Consequently, these prohibitive forms may create a more controlling communicative atmosphere in interactions between teachers and students (Seedhouse, 2004).

As an alternative, teachers may use positive directives, which are instructional forms that emphasize expected behavior rather than prohibiting certain actions. For example, instead of saying "Don't run in the corridor," a teacher may say "Walk slowly," or replace "Don't be noisy" with "Be quiet." Positive directives emphasize constructive behavioral guidance and therefore have the potential to create a more supportive and conducive classroom atmosphere. By focusing on expected behavior, positive directives can build more positive interpersonal meaning in classroom discourse (Walsh, 2011).

From the perspective of discourse analysis, the choice between negative imperatives and positive directives represents an important linguistic strategy in teacher talk. Studies on classroom discourse show that the language used by teachers plays a major role in organizing classroom interaction and shaping the learning environment. Teachers' instructions not only regulate students' behavior but also convey attitudes, expectations, and social relationships between teachers and students (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Therefore, analyzing the forms and functions of directives in classroom discourse is important for understanding how interpersonal meaning is constructed through language choices.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the importance of directive speech acts in classroom discourse. Research on teacher communication in learning activities has shown that directives are among the most dominant speech acts in classroom interaction. Teachers use various types of directives such as commands, requests, suggestions, and prohibitions to regulate the learning process and maintain students' engagement during classroom activities (Searle, 1979). These findings indicate that directives play an important role in classroom management and in facilitating the learning process.

Other studies analyzing directive speech acts in classroom talk also reveal that commands and requests are the most frequently used directive forms in classroom interaction. In English classrooms, teachers employ various directive forms such as commands, requests, suggestions, invitations, and prohibitions to organize classroom activities and maintain students' engagement in learning. The findings suggest that the use of directives helps teachers guide students' behavior while simultaneously supporting effective pedagogical interaction (Walsh, 2011).

Furthermore, several studies have emphasized that the use of directives by teachers is not only associated with instructional functions but also with politeness strategies and interpersonal relationships in the classroom. The politeness theory proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson explains that directive forms may potentially threaten the hearer's face or self-image; therefore, speakers often employ certain strategies to minimize such threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the classroom context, the use of politeness strategies in directives can help create communication that is more respectful of the relationship between teachers and students.

Although various studies have examined the use of directives in classroom interaction, most of them still focus on identifying the types and functions of directive speech acts in teacher communication. Research specifically investigating the linguistic transformation of negative imperatives into positive directives within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics remains relatively limited. In addition, most previous studies tend to discuss the use of directives in general without thoroughly examining how these linguistic structural changes influence interpersonal meaning in classroom discourse. This condition indicates the existence of a research gap in educational discourse analysis, particularly concerning the structural and functional analysis of directive transformation.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze how negative imperatives can be transformed into positive directives in classroom discourse using a Systemic Functional Linguistics approach. This study examines the mood and residue structures of imperative clauses and explores how such transformations construct different interpersonal meanings in classroom communication.

The novelty of this study lies in its systematic analysis of the transformation of prohibitive forms into positive directives through a functional discourse analysis approach. This study not only identifies the imperative forms used in classroom contexts but also demonstrates how minor changes in linguistic structure can shift the communicative focus from prohibition toward more constructive behavioral guidance. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective on understanding the role of language choice in shaping more positive pedagogical interactions.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the field of classroom discourse analysis, particularly in understanding the function of directive language in teacher–student interaction. In addition, this study is also expected to provide practical implications for teachers in using more positive directive forms to create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Systemic Functional Linguistics**

This study employs the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by M.A.K. Halliday. From the perspective of SFL, language is viewed as a social semiotic system used to construct meaning within particular social contexts. Language functions not only to convey information but also to establish social relationships between speakers and listeners as well as to represent human experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Halliday explains that language has three main metafunctions: the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and the textual metafunction. The ideational metafunction concerns how language represents experience and reality. The interpersonal metafunction relates to how language is used to establish social relationships between speakers and listeners. Meanwhile, the textual metafunction concerns how linguistic messages are organized to form coherent texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

In this study, the analysis focuses on the interpersonal metafunction, particularly on how the choice of directive forms in classroom discourse can construct interpersonal relationships between teachers and students.

#### **1. Mood System in Clauses**

Within the framework of the interpersonal metafunction, Halliday explains that the relationship between speakers and listeners is realized through the mood system in clauses. The mood system indicates how speakers perform speech functions such as giving information, asking questions, or issuing commands.

The basic structure of a clause in the mood system consists of two major components: mood and residue. Mood usually consists of the subject and finite elements, whereas residue includes other elements such as predicator, complement, and adjunct (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

In imperative clauses, the mood structure has characteristics that differ from declarative or interrogative clauses. In many imperative clauses, the subject element is often omitted because it implicitly refers to the listener. For example, in the clause “Be quiet,” the subject you is not explicitly stated but is understood by the listener as the receiver of the command.

#### **2. Imperative Clauses and Directives**

Imperative clauses are among the most common forms used to express directive speech acts. According to John Searle, directive speech acts are utterances used by speakers to make listeners perform certain actions (Searle, 1979). In the context of teaching and learning, directives are used by teachers to guide students’ behavior, organize classroom activities, and maintain order during the learning process.

Directives in the classroom may appear in various linguistic forms, including commands, requests, suggestions, and prohibitions. One frequently used form is the negative imperative, which is usually marked by the use of the word don’t followed by the base form of a verb, such as “Don’t talk” or “Don’t run.” This form functions to prohibit certain actions considered inappropriate according to classroom rules.

#### **Negative Imperatives and Positive Directives in Classroom Discourse**

In classroom interaction, teachers frequently use negative imperatives to stop undesirable behavior. However, these prohibitive forms tend to focus on actions that students are not allowed to do. Therefore, several pedagogical approaches encourage the use of positive directives, which are instructional forms that emphasize expected behavior.

Positive directives provide clearer guidance regarding the actions that students are expected to perform. For example, the prohibition “Don’t run in the corridor” may be transformed into the positive instruction “Walk slowly.” Such transformations not only change the linguistic structure but also shift the communicative focus from prohibition toward constructive behavioral guidance.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, these linguistic changes may influence how interpersonal meaning is constructed in interactions between teachers and students. Positive directives tend to create a more supportive and cooperative communicative atmosphere compared to negative imperatives, which are more restrictive in nature.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis as its method. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand and interpret the meanings embedded in language use within specific social contexts. Through this approach, the researcher is able to examine in depth how linguistic forms are used in classroom interaction and how these forms construct interpersonal meaning between speakers and listeners (Creswell, 2014).

This study specifically adopts the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by M.A.K. Halliday to analyze the structure of imperative clauses and the interpersonal meanings contained within them. From this perspective, language is viewed as a system that functions to construct meaning in social contexts. The analysis in this study focuses on the mood and residue systems in imperative clauses and on how the transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives influences the construction of interpersonal meaning in classroom discourse.

### **Data Sources**

The data in this study consist of twenty pairs of imperative clauses containing negative imperatives and positive directives within the context of classroom discourse. These data represent various forms of instructions commonly used by teachers to regulate students’ behavior during classroom activities. Each data pair consists of two main forms: a negative imperative functioning as a prohibition against certain actions, and a positive directive providing guidance regarding the expected behavior as an alternative to the prohibition.

Examples of the data in this study include “Don’t be noisy,” which is transformed into “Be quiet,” “Don’t run in the corridor,” which is changed into “Walk slowly,” and “Don’t talk during the lesson,” which is transformed into “Listen to the teacher.” These data pairs are analyzed to identify differences in linguistic structure as well as changes in interpersonal meaning resulting from the transformation of prohibitive forms into positive instructions.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection techniques used in this study are documentation and linguistic construction techniques. The researcher collected various forms of instructions commonly used in classroom interaction and then organized them into pairs of clauses showing the transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives. The collected data were subsequently classified based on clause structure and their communicative functions within the context of classroom discourse. This classification process aims to facilitate the analysis of linguistic patterns emerging from the use of directives in the classroom.

## **Data Analysis Technique**

The data were analyzed using a discourse analysis approach based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. The analysis process began by identifying the imperative clauses found in the data, both in the form of negative imperatives and positive directives. Afterward, each clause was analyzed based on its mood and residue structures in order to identify the linguistic components that form the clause.

The next stage involved comparing the negative imperative forms with the positive directive forms to examine how linguistic transformation occurs at the level of clause structure as well as meaning focus. Through this comparison process, the researcher was able to observe how the shift from prohibitive forms to positive instructions influences the orientation of the message conveyed by the speaker.

The final stage of analysis was interpreting the interpersonal meanings resulting from the transformation. At this stage, the researcher examined how the linguistic transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives may construct different communicative relationships in classroom discourse, particularly in the relationship between teachers and students during the learning process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the results of the analysis of twenty pairs of clauses consisting of negative imperatives and positive directives in classroom discourse. The analysis was conducted using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by M.A.K. Halliday, with a focus on mood structure, residue, and the interpretation of interpersonal meanings emerging from the transformation of prohibitive forms into positive instructions.

### **1. Transformation of Negative Imperatives into Positive Directives**

The results of the analysis indicate that all data in this study underwent a transformation from negative imperative forms emphasizing prohibition of an action into positive directives emphasizing expected behavior. In negative imperatives, the clause structure is generally initiated by the form *don't*, which functions as a marker of prohibition, followed by a predicator indicating the action that students are not allowed to perform. For example, in the clause "Don't be noisy," the speaker emphasizes the prohibition of noisy behavior in the classroom.

When the clause is transformed into a positive directive such as "Be quiet," the focus of the message changes from prohibiting a particular action to guiding the expected behavior. This transformation demonstrates a shift in meaning orientation from prohibition to instruction. In other words, the teacher no longer emphasizes what students must not do, but instead highlights the actions students are expected to perform in the learning situation.

This pattern of change can also be observed in other data pairs, such as "Don't run in the corridor," which is transformed into "Walk slowly," or "Don't talk during the lesson," which becomes "Listen to the teacher." In each pair, the negative imperative functions to stop a particular action, whereas the positive directive provides a more constructive behavioral alternative.

### **Analysis of Mood and Residue Structure**

Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, imperative clauses possess structural characteristics that differ from declarative and interrogative clauses. In negative imperatives, the element *don't* functions as the finite that marks negative polarity in the clause. This element is followed by the predicator indicating the prohibited action. Meanwhile, the subject element is usually not explicitly stated because it implicitly refers to the listener, namely the students as the receivers of the command.

In contrast, positive directives generally consist of a predicator directly indicating the expected action. In clauses such as “Be quiet” or “Walk slowly,” the subject you is not explicitly expressed but is understood as the receiver of the instruction. Therefore, the mood structure in positive directives tends to be simpler because it does not contain negative markers such as don’t.

This structural difference indicates that the transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives does not merely involve changes in linguistic form, but also changes in the focus of the residue elements within the clause. In negative imperatives, the residue highlights actions that are prohibited, whereas in positive directives the residue emphasizes the actions expected within the context of classroom interaction.

The following table presents the results of the analysis of twenty data pairs consisting of negative imperatives and positive directives. The analysis focuses on mood structure, residue, and the interpretation of changes in interpersonal meaning within classroom discourse.

No	Negative Imperative	Mood	Residue	Positif Direktif	Mood	Residue	Shift of Interpersonal Meaning
1	Don't be naughty	Imperatif negatif	be naughty	Be good	Imperatif positif	good	Dari larangan menuju pembentukan perilaku positif
2	Don't be noisy	Imperatif negatif	be noisy	Be quiet	Imperatif positif	quiet	Dari kontrol perilaku menuju pengaturan suasana kelas
3	Don't run in the corridor	Imperatif negatif	run in the corridor	Walk slowly	Imperatif positif	slowly	Dari larangan aktivitas menuju panduan perilaku aman
4	Don't shout	Imperatif negatif	shout	Use a calm voice	Imperatif positif	a calm voice	Dari larangan ekspresi menuju pengendalian komunikasi
5	Don't talk during the lesson	Imperatif negatif	talk during the lesson	Listen to the teacher	Imperatif positif	to the teacher	Dari pembatasan bicara menuju fokus belajar
6	Don't make a mess	Imperatif negatif	make a mess	Keep the classroom clean	Imperatif positif	the classroom clean	Dari larangan tindakan menuju tanggung jawab kelas
7	Don't forget your homework	Imperatif negatif	forget your homework	Remember your homework	Imperatif positif	your homework	Dari peringatan menuju penguatan tanggung jawab
8	Don't disturb your friends	Imperatif negatif	disturb your friends	Respect your friends	Imperatif positif	your friends	Dari larangan gangguan menuju hubungan sosial positif

No	Negative Imperative	Mood	Residue	Positif Direktif	Mood	Residue	Shift of Interpersonal Meaning
9	Don't throw trash	Imperatif negatif	throw trash	Put the trash in the bin	Imperatif positif	the trash in the bin	Dari larangan menuju praktik kebersihan
10	Don't be rude	Imperatif negatif	be rude	Be polite	Imperatif positif	polite	Dari larangan sikap menuju pembentukan karakter
11	Don't play in class	Imperatif negatif	play in class	Sit properly	Imperatif positif	properly	Dari larangan aktivitas menuju pengaturan posisi belajar
12	Don't push your friends	Imperatif negatif	push your friends	Wait your turn	Imperatif positif	your turn	Dari larangan agresi menuju disiplin sosial
13	Don't interrupt	Imperatif negatif	interrupt	Raise your hand	Imperatif positif	your hand	Dari larangan interupsi menuju prosedur komunikasi
14	Don't be late	Imperatif negatif	be late	Be on time	Imperatif positif	on time	Dari larangan keterlambatan menuju disiplin waktu
15	Don't cheat	Imperatif negatif	cheat	Do your own work	Imperatif positif	your own work	Dari larangan pelanggaran menuju integritas akademik
16	Don't write on the wall	Imperatif negatif	write on the wall	Use your notebook	Imperatif positif	your notebook	Dari larangan tindakan menuju penggunaan media belajar
17	Don't break the rules	Imperatif negatif	break the rules	Follow the rules	Imperatif positif	the rules	Dari larangan pelanggaran menuju kepatuhan aturan
18	Don't fight	Imperatif negatif	fight	Be friendly	Imperatif positif	friendly	Dari larangan konflik menuju hubungan harmonis
19	Don't waste time	Imperatif negatif	waste time	Use your time wisely	Imperatif positif	your time wisely	Dari larangan menuju manajemen waktu
20	Don't leave your seat	Imperatif negatif	leave your seat	Stay in your seat	Imperatif positif	in your seat	Dari pembatasan gerakan menuju stabilitas aktivitas belajar

### **Shift of Interpersonal Meaning in Classroom Discourse**

The transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives also demonstrates a shift in the interpersonal meaning constructed in classroom discourse. Negative imperatives tend to create a more restrictive communicative relationship because they emphasize limitations on students' behavior. In this situation, the teacher positions himself or herself as an authority figure who directly prohibits certain actions.

In contrast, positive directives tend to establish a more constructive communicative relationship because they provide guidance regarding expected behaviour. In this form, the teacher not only stops undesirable actions but also gives clear direction regarding the actions students are expected to perform. Therefore, positive directives may create a more supportive communicative atmosphere in classroom interaction.

This change is also related to how language is used to build social relationships between teachers and students. From the perspective of discourse analysis, the choice of linguistic forms may influence how interpersonal meaning is interpreted by the listener. Positive directives have the potential to create more cooperative interactions because students receive clear guidance regarding the expected behaviour rather than merely prohibitions against certain actions.

### **Linguistic and Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives affects not only the linguistic structure of clauses but also the way interpersonal relationships are constructed in learning interaction. The shift from prohibitive forms to positive instructions demonstrates that language choice plays an important role in creating the communicative atmosphere in the classroom.

From a pedagogical perspective, the use of positive directives may help teachers create a more conducive and supportive learning environment. Instructions emphasizing expected behaviour allow students to understand more clearly the actions they are supposed to perform during learning activities. Therefore, the use of positive directives can serve as an effective communication strategy for managing classroom interaction while simultaneously building more positive relationships between teachers and students.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to analyse the transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives in classroom discourse and to examine how such transformations construct different interpersonal meanings in interactions between teachers and students. The analysis was conducted using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by M.A.K. Halliday, with a focus on mood and residue structures in imperative clauses.

The findings reveal that negative imperatives in classroom discourse generally function as prohibitive forms emphasizing the stopping of certain actions. This clause structure is typically marked by the use of the element don't as an indicator of negative polarity in the mood system. In this form, the communicative focus is placed on actions that students are not allowed to perform; therefore, the interpersonal relationship constructed tends to be restrictive and oriented toward behavioural control.

In contrast, when negative imperatives are transformed into positive directives, the focus of the message shifts from prohibition toward guidance of expected behaviour. Positive directives not only stop inappropriate behaviour but also provide direction regarding the actions students are expected to perform. Consequently, this transformation results in a shift of interpersonal meaning from restrictive communication toward more

constructive and supportive communication.

The findings of this study demonstrate that small changes in linguistic structure choices may influence how interpersonal relationships are constructed in classroom interaction. Positive directives have the potential to create a more cooperative communicative atmosphere and support the learning process because students receive clearer guidance regarding the expected behaviour during classroom activities.

### **Research Implications**

This study provides several important implications, both linguistically and pedagogically. From a linguistic perspective, this study demonstrates that the analysis of mood and residue structures in imperative clauses can provide a deeper understanding of how interpersonal meaning is constructed through the choice of language forms. The transformation from negative imperatives into positive directives indicates that variations in linguistic structure have a direct impact on meaning orientation in classroom discourse.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that the use of positive directives can serve as an effective communication strategy in learning interactions. Teachers who use positive instructions not only control students' behaviour but also provide clear guidance regarding the expected behaviour. This can help create a more positive, conducive, and supportive learning environment that encourages students' participation in classroom activities.

Furthermore, the findings of this study may also contribute to the development of teacher talk practices in language learning as well as in education in general. The selection of more constructive directive forms may help teachers build better interpersonal relationships with students while simultaneously improving communication effectiveness in the classroom.

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