

If you look at the table...: Directives in conference presentations and university lectures

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Abstract

This paper investigates differences in the characteristic form, frequency and role of directives in two spoken academic genres, conference presentations and university lectures. The study also reports the existence of differences between English native and non-native speakers in the way they use directives at conferences. Data consist of a self-compiled corpus of conference talks and a comparable corpus of lectures from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). Results show that, comparatively, directives in lectures are stronger and less mitigated than in conference presentations. Conference speakers in our study make the intrinsic imposition in directives more palatable for the peer audience by using milder directive forms, deploying indirectness and stressing communal membership. Non-native speakers' directives show interesting similarities with those in lectures, a possible sign of overlapping or confusion of two major genres in the "overpopulated" generic world of academics. Findings on conference presentations and lectures are also compared with existing evidence on directives in written research articles: some characteristic roles of directives in writing are irrelevant in speech, while others, e.g. integrating visu-

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als in the presentation and reactivating background and previously constructed content, are central to the spoken genres but irrelevant to writing.

KEYWORDS

conference presentations, directives, English as a Lingua Franca/international language, language for special purposes, native versus non-native speakers, Actos de habla directivos, presentaciones en congresos, clases universitarias, hablantes no nativos, inglés académico oral

Resumen

En este trabajo se explora la existencia de posibles diferencias en la forma, la frecuencia y la función de las expresiones con valor directivo en dos géneros académicos orales en inglés, presentaciones en congresos y clases universitarias. Además, en el trabajo se describen algunas diferencias entre dos grupos de ponentes en congresos, hablantes nativos y no nativos de inglés, en lo referente al uso de estas expresiones. La investigación se basa en datos de dos corpus: un corpus de ponencias en congresos compilado por el propio autor y una muestra comparable de clases universitarias extraída de MICASE. En general, se observa que las expresiones directivas en el contexto docente suelen ser más directas y menos atenuadas que en las ponencias. En estas últimas, se percibe un mayor esfuerzo por mitigar la imposición intrínseca a los directivos, optando por expresiones menos enfáticas y más indirectas o reforzando la solidaridad con la audiencia. En el estudio, se defiende que estas diferencias pueden responder a dos percepciones distintas de la relación entre el hablante y su audiencia en ambos géneros: iguales, en el caso de las ponencias, desiguales en el caso de las clases universitarias. Sin embargo, los directivos empleados por los ponentes no nativos muestran interesantes semejanzas con los de las clases universitarias, lo que apunta a una posible hibridación entre estos dos importantes géneros académicos en las prácticas comunicativas de este grupo de hablantes. Por último, cabe destacar que algunas de las funciones características de los directivos en ambos géneros orales son propias del modo

oral y difieren, por tanto, de lo observado en otros estudios sobre géneros escritos como el artículo científico.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Generic differences manifest themselves in specific formal features that reflect the particular nature of the context of production (Halliday, 1978; Swales, 1990). One such feature in academic discourse is directives, roughly defined as expressions intended to get the addressee to do or refrain from doing something (Condoravdi & Lauer, 2012). Directives occur surprisingly frequently in academic discourse. In research articles (RAs), authors employ them to lead readers to tables, figures, and relevant literature or to highlight important points. Directives in RAs would be highly sensitive to features of the communicative situation like disciplinary variation (Swales et al., 1998), participant configuration, or genre (Hyland, 2002; Kuo, 1999), occurring, for instance, more frequently in textbooks, “where a writer would like to sound authoritative,” than in RAs, where they “would sound offensive and impair the reader–writer relationship” (Kuo, 1999).

Specialists have also studied the nature of directives in academic speech, mostly in lectures. He (2000), for instance, makes a broad distinction between *disciplinary* directives, which serve to discipline students, and *instrumental* directives, which help implement classroom procedures and teaching agendas. Deroey and Taverniers (2012) and Suviniitty (2012) observe that classroom directives frequently consist of “mental verbs,” like *remember*, used as relevance markers to focus students’ attention on important points. Waring and Hruska (2012) describe problematic uses in tutoring sessions that may hinder learning, while Tapper’s (1994) early study reveals interesting differences between directives used by native and non-native lecturers in laboratory sessions. More generally, studies have shown important variation in the way lecturers use directives influenced by personal background, familiarity with students, and other subtle differences in the classroom situation (Kia, 2018), such as content-focused versus practice-oriented lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015) or class size (Lee, 2009): in large classes, lecturers would put more emphasis in bridging the psychological gap with students by, for example, using more solidary pronouns (inclusive *we*) and, perhaps also, by avoiding face-threatening acts such as the use of directives.

Though valuable, findings on directives in lectures are not extrapolatable to oral research genres, including the key genre of conference presentations (CP). Addressing an expert audience clearly demands different rhetorical strategies from those employed with students. In CPs, relationships are far more egalitarian, with audiences holding “expectations of inclusion” and recognition of “membership of a disciplinary in-group” (Hyland, 2001), which fit ill with the authoritative nature of directives. This would explain, for example, why many conference speakers have been found (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2008) to prefer mild *if*-clause directives, “unthreatening to the listeners’ negative face,” to using blunt imperatives in their talks.

Beyond anecdotal evidence, there is a lack of studies on the nature of directives in CPs and how they might differ from lectures, in particular. The topic holds great practical interest since most university lecturers have to double as conference presenters regularly, and are consequently expected to adapt their discourse. Given the different power configurations in the two genres, failure to adjust the language may result in problematically overlapping discourse practices, with pedagogic discourse features like directives being potentially offensive to the CP audience.

One group for whom such generic “subtleties” pose problems are the myriad non-native English speakers (NNS) attending conferences these days, who would struggle to connect with audiences (Swales, 2004), sometimes awkwardly addressing them the way lecturers address students, threatening “the expert audience’s negative face” (Fernández Polo, 2018, p. 23). Despite the surge of interest in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) academic speech, particularly since the publication of the ELFA corpus (Fernández Polo, 2014; Mauranen, 2009, 2010; Metsä-Ketelä, 2016), research into ELF conference language remains scarce and contradictory. For example, Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005a) find that NNSs are less successful at signaling topic shifts, announcing plans and integrating visuals in

their presentations, a conclusion which is not supported by Fernández Polo (2018). In another study, Fernández Polo (2014) finds that NNS presenters show a strong audience orientation, a tendency to raise “the level of explicitness and pre-empt trouble,” while at times also showing signs of anxiety and lack of confidence that may undermine speaker’s credibility. Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005a) also notice that, while imperatives are rare in conference talks, “undoubtedly [because speakers] feel such direct orders to be inappropriate when addressed to an audience of peers,” some of the polite directives frequently employed by native English speakers (NS) are “rarely used” by NNSs. However, these findings stand in striking contrast to Vassileva’s (2002) observations on Bulgarian scholars presenting at conferences in English, who employ less imperative commands and a similar number of milder directives than their NS colleagues, including the same kind of *let’s*-imperative “invitations” and *if*-clause “requests” studied by Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas.

In this paper, we intend to fill some of the research gaps identified above. The perspective is two-fold contrastive: First, we compare the characteristic form, frequency, and role of directives in a corpus of CPs and university lectures (UL); and second, we compare the way native and non-native speakers use directives at conferences. More specifically, our research questions are as follows: Do directives in CPs differ from those in lectures? (RQ1) Do directives in NNS CPs differ from those employed by NSs? (RQ2) If so, might differences in the use of directives in the two genres somehow account for the particularity of directives in NNS CPs? (RQ3).

2 | DATA AND METHODS

Our data (see Appendix 1) consists of a corpus of CPs and a corpus of ULs, for comparison. The CP corpus consists of 12 presentations by NNSs and 5 by NSs, totaling 54,717 words (NNS = 37,241; NS = 17,476), videotaped at four international conferences in Spain and Portugal and transcribed by the author and one collaborator. The different sizes of both sub-corpora reflect the regular proportion of participants in present-day international conferences. Four of the talks were co-presentations, giving a total of 21 speakers. All presentations reported empirical research and both sub-corpora contained a similar proportion (8 out of 12 in the NNS, 3 out of 5 in the NS component) of quantitatively oriented research, resulting in many slides with tables and graphs. All NNSs were English specialists, therefore highly competent in English, and slightly more experienced than the NSs. Spanish speakers clearly predominate in the NNS group, undoubtedly because of the geographical location of the events. All but one of the NSs are British, although half had been working in foreign universities for a relatively long period. The UL corpus consists of 11 lectures from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), totaling 112,619 words, including large (LL = 58,848 words) and small (SL = 53,771 words) lectures, all by English native speakers. To enhance comparability with CPs, only “highly” and “mostly-monologic” lectures were included. CPs and lectures are also broadly comparable in terms of field (linguistics), but the number of linguistics lectures in MICASE being too small, they were complemented with lectures from other areas in the humanities and the social sciences.

In Speech Act Theory, directives constitute a broad category of speech acts which, illocutionarily, express an attempt to make the hearer do something (Searle, 1975): “They may be very modest “attempts,” as when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it” (Thaler, 2012). In all directives there is a certain asymmetry between participants, so that even the mildest of directives entails a knowledge and authority deficit on the part of the receiver (Locher & Hoffmann, 2006).

Hyland (2002) classifies directive acts in academic writing into three categories “according to the principal form of activity they direct readers to engage in”: *textual* acts, referring readers to another part of the text or to another text; *physical* acts, involving readers in a research process or real-world action; and *cognitive* acts, “where readers are initiated into a new domain of argument, led through a line of reasoning, or directed to understand a point in a certain way.” (p. 217). Directives in academic discourse may evoke various levels of imposition (Huddleston, 1971; Swales et al., 1998), from straight commands, through simple requirements to a mere invitation, consequently, different

face-threatening levels. Additionally, they may take different forms, some of which are more forceful than others (Leech, 2014). In this study, we will adopt a broad approach including the following directive forms:

- Imperative clauses (*look at the slide*)
- Let's imperatives (*let's suppose that*)
- Modals of obligation (*you/we must/should/need to + verb, etc.; you must remember*)
- Adjective/noun + complement to-clauses (*it is essential to understand that; the first thing to remember*)¹
- If-clauses: *if you/we + verb (if you recall)*
- As-clauses: *as you/we + verb (as you can see)*
- Declarative clauses (*we can see that*)
- -ing-clauses (*returning to our main goal*)

Imperatives, modal verbs (*must, should, etc.*) and adjective/noun + complement to-clauses are particularly forceful, while the remaining four are clearly “milder.” The use of if-clauses as “polite” directives is well attested in the literature (Ferguson, 2001; Stirling, 1999), including in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Biber et al., 2004), to instruct audiences where to attend (*if you look at*), for example, a slide, or to signal topic shifts (*if we turn now to*). As-clauses, declaratives, and *ing*-clauses frequently have directive force in academic speech (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005b; Vassileva, 2002), an “invitation” for the audience to do something, for example, *here you can see that; looking at the screen; as you will notice, etc.* Although not in Hyland’s (2002) list of directive expressions, some of his examples are actually declarative clauses (*You remember in our discussion of Plato’s word “participation” that*). Similarly, Hyland (2008) also notes that some *as*-clause bundles (*as can be seen*) often behave as engagement markers in research writing, “almost all directives” (p. 18).

CPs and lectures were scanned to identify all directive uses of a number of verbs (see Appendix 2) frequently employed with directive force in academic writing, based on Swales et al. (1998) and, especially, Hyland (2002). Of the three categories of predicates in Hyland’s list, only *cognitive* and *textual* acts were included in the analysis, while the more “open” category of *physical* acts (both *research* and *real-world*) were excluded on account of their limited relevance to lectures in particular. Additionally, after a preliminary analysis of the material, we decided to exclude from the analysis some of the cognitive and textual verbs characteristic of academic writing in Hyland’s list (e.g., *remark* and *ensure*), while other more “oral” predicates (*make sure, bear/keep in mind, and take into account*) were added.

All occurrences of these verbs in both corpora were tracked with AntConc 3.4., manually filtered to confirm directive force and classified into one of our eight directive forms. The illocutionary force of some of these structures, particularly declarative clauses, was not always easy to determine, especially in lectures, where information on the actual context of production was more limited. Directive force is clear in examples like the following, where reference to a projected slide is an important cue: *we’re missing the slide on the right, but we can look at this one in the meantime*; but it is more uncertain in this one: *and the perspective is out of whack, now if we look at an earlier version that Manet painted and this is (...)*. Here, the deictic interpretation of *an earlier version* or the demonstrative *this* are less clear, and the directive force can only at best be inferred, on the understanding that the students were being invited to “actually” look at an earlier version of the painting.

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of results is organized as follows: Sections 3.1 and 3.2 provide a comparison of directive expressions in CPs and lectures (RQ1), first, in terms of their form and relative forcefulness, and second, in terms of the frequency and discourse roles of the various predicates in Appendix 2 in both corpora; Section 3.3 focuses on differences in the nature of directives in NNS and NS talks (RQ2) and explores the idea that the observed differences in

TABLE 1 Directive types per genre, nativeness, and class size.

	CPs						LECTURES					
	NS	% ²	NNS	% _o	Σ	% _o	SL	% _o	LL	% _o	Σ	% _o
Declarative clauses	19	1.09	39	1.05	58	1.06	8	0.15	99	1.68	107	0.95
If-clauses	9	0.51	18	0.48	27	0.49	5	0.09	16	0.25	21	0.19
As-clauses	1	0.06	23	0.62	24	0.44	3	0.06	9	0.15	12	0.11
Let's imperative	2	0.11	14	0.38	16	0.29	7	0.13	10	0.17	17	0.15
Modal verb	10	0.57	4	0.11	14	0.26	2	0.04	10	0.17	12	0.11
Imperative clauses	3	0.17	7	0.19	10	0.18	41	0.76	40	0.68	81	0.72
Adj/N + to-clause	3	0.17	3	0.08	6	0.11	1	0.02	9	0.15	10	0.09
Ing-clause	3	0.17	1	0.03	4	0.07	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
TOTAL	50	2.86	109	2.93	159	2.91	67	1.25	193	3.28	260	2.31

the use of directives in CPs and lectures might account for the idiosyncratic nature of directives in NNS conference talks (RQ3).

3.1 | Directive forms in CPs and university lectures

This section discusses differences in the nature of the directive forms (see Section 2) in the CP and UL corpora. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the frequencies of the different forms in both collections of materials.

Two major findings stand out from Table 1. First, conference speakers employed directives more frequently than lecturers, very often to ask attendees to pay attention to a projected slide, a sign of the highly multimodal nature of the present-day CP (Charles & Ventola, 2002).³ Second, conference speakers also showed a preference for milder directive forms—declaratives, *if*, and *as*-clauses—compared to lecturers, who seemed to favor stronger forms, notably imperatives. These findings coincide with previous work on CPs (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005a) and lectures (Deroey & Taverniers, 2012; Lee & Subtirelu, 2015), and may reflect the different participant configurations in both genres: unlike lecturers, who may confidently use blunt directives with students, conference presenters addressing a peer audience favor milder directives to mitigate the potential FTA of the directive expression to the expert audience.

A detailed analysis of each of the eight directive forms follows, focusing on the type of predicates that they combine with and their rhetorical role in both CPs and lectures.

3.1.1 | Declaratives

Declaratives were by far the most frequent directive form in both genres, almost exclusively in combination with *see* in CPs (*you/we (can) see that*) and with *compare*, *imagine*, *notice*, *remember*, *see*, *think*, and *understand* in lectures. In CPs, *see* directives play a major role in guiding the audience's reasoning, inviting them to pay attention to an aspect of the presentation (see Section 3.2) which is important for the construction of the presenter's arguments, for example, *you can see that in the diachronic corpus (...) we find a proportion of forty-seven per cent*.

3.1.2 | If-clauses

If-clauses were the second most frequent directive form in CPs, nearly three times as frequent as in lectures. In CPs, *look* (22) was the most popular verb in this pattern by far (*remember* (3), *compare* (1), and *conclude* (1)). *If you/we look at*

was a most characteristic cluster in CPs, playing two major roles: directing the audience's attention to relevant content in slides (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2008), for example, *if you have a look eh at [...] ehm, table nine*; and organizing the presentation, such as by introducing a topic shift (*so if we look at deontic expressions in the corpus data*). Other *if*-clause directives served to organize the presentation (*so, if we conclude then*) or guide the audience's thinking, by directing their reasoning (*if we consider individual functions*) or bringing back relevant information (*now, if you remember there are three sections in project one*).

3.1.3 | As-clauses

As-clause directives occurred four times more frequently in CPs—always combined with *see*—than in lectures, where they took up other predicates (*see, notice, recall, and remember*). In CPs, *as + see* directives would serve to “craft agreement” (Hyland, 2001), by inviting the audience to accept the speaker's interpretation of the facts and his/her conclusions (Fernández Polo, 2018). *As you/we can see* was a characteristic cluster in CPs, clearly preferred (22 out of 24 instances) to the impersonal passive alternative (*as can be seen*), frequently found in RAs (Hyland, 2008). Preference for personal forms may reflect conference speakers' efforts to reduce the psychological distance with the audience.

3.1.4 | Let's-imperatives

Let's-imperatives occurred almost twice as frequently in CPs as in lectures, despite their inherent pedagogical tone (Fløttum et al., 2006).⁴ According to Hyland (2002), *let's*-imperatives and other collective imperatives (*we will*) occur four times more frequently in textbooks than in RAs, a “less obviously imposing” alternative to first person *let me*-imperatives, more an invitation than a real demand on the audience.

Let's-imperatives—mostly with *see* and *look* predicates—are strategically used in CPs to draw the audience into the discussion and “avoid giving the impression of a monologue” (Webber, 2005, p. 165). They may be used: (1) to organize the presentation, signaling topic shifts or functioning as *new episode flags* (Swales & Malczewski, 2001) (*let's begin with; okay, let's now move on to our second type; let's turn to the non-academic book review*); (2) as attention getters (*let's see*); (3) to guide the addressee's thinking (*let's compare this with the instructors' views; let's consider the two functions of the plural pronoun*); and (4) to signal relevant information (<SLIDE>*let's see some examples; let's have a look at the research questions again*).

3.1.5 | Modal verbs

Modal verb directives account for almost 10% of all directives in CPs and less than 5% in lectures, always with cognitive act predicates: *consider, look, bear/keep in mind, take into account, note, assume, and (re)think*. Functionally, they behave as engagement markers, inviting the audience to “a shared journey of exploration” (Hyland, 2001, p. 560) as equals, able to partake in the research reasoning.

In CPs, modal directives were almost exclusively found in NS presentations and always with solidary *we* as subject (*we have to look what was the initial source of embarrassment*) or in impersonal constructions (*this term variety needs some quite important rethinking, okay?*), to mitigate the strong imposition in the modal. The choice of modal verb also seems oriented toward minimizing imposition, with *should* and *need to*, which express non-binding obligation, accounting for half the examples. Conference speakers also showed a preference for the *have to* (7) over the more forceful *must*, which only occurred once, a face-saving impersonal construction (*it must be noted that*).

Modal directives in lectures were comparatively more forceful, with *have to* and *gotta* accounting for half of the examples. They were also more frequently (7/12) combined with the non-solidary *you* and were comparatively more informal (*gotta, wanna*) than in CPs, arguably to connect with students (*you've gotta keep in mind; you also wanna think*).

3.1.6 | Imperatives

Imperatives occurred four times more frequently in lectures than in CPs, perhaps deemed too face-threatening for peers. Interestingly, in Hyland's (2002) data on RAs, imperatives were by far the most frequent directive form (almost 2/3), mostly *see*-imperatives referring readers to other text sections or introducing citations, two functions which are, however, irrelevant in the oral setting.⁵

In lectures, the most frequent predicates in imperatives were *remember* (25), *suppose* (16) (all in one single economics lecture presenting hypothetical situations, a common role in RAs (Swales et al., 1998)), *notice* (11) and *think* (11). The few imperatives found in CPs include instances of *note* (3), *compare*, *consider*, *keep (in mind)*, *imagine*, *look*, *remember*, and *see* (one example each), functioning as relevance markers (*note*, *keep in mind*) or as cognitive action verbs (*compare* two sets of data, *imagine* a situation, *consider* an example), a form of audience inclusion strategically used to enhance persuasion (Hyland, 2001).

3.1.7 | Adjective/noun + complement to-clauses

These are mild directives by virtue of the implicit addressee (*a very important thing to bear in mind*), which only represent a small proportion of the directives in CPs (3.8%) and lectures (3.5%). Syntactically, these are extraposition and pseudo-cleft constructions (*it may be useful to look at other types; what's important to bear in mind is*). Functionally, they often behave as relevance markers (Deroey, 2015), focusing the audience's attention on important points.

3.1.8 | Ing-clauses

Ing-clauses function as mild directives (no addressee mentioned) when they express a request for the addressee to do something, e.g., *now, looking at it from the other side of the coin <ADDRESSING AUDIENCE AND SMILING>, what might be the interpersonal effect (...)?* This type of directives was extremely rare in either genre.

Summing up, a major finding in this section is the relatively high frequency of directives encountered in CPs, compared to lectures. The finding is the more surprising given the inherent imposition in directives, a risky choice before an audience of equals. A possible reason for this may be the increasing importance of visuals in today's conferences, where speakers are constantly urging audiences to attend to information on the screen. The analysis also revealed a marked preference in conference presentations for milder, less face-threatening directive expressions than in lectures, where directives tend to be more forceful, reflecting a position of authority hard to maintain in the conference setting.

3.2 | Directive predicates in CPs and university lectures

In this section, we compare verbs with directive force in CPs (Table 2) and lectures (Table 3) in terms of their relative frequency and discursive roles.

In both CPs and lectures, *see* was by far the most frequent directive predicate. *See* was also the most common directive in Hyland's (2002) and Swales et al.'s (1998) RA data, often functioning as *evidentials*, referring readers to other relevant studies, and *endophoric markers*, pointing at other sections of the text (Hyland, 2005). In contrast, in CPs and lectures, *see* directives were mostly employed (1) to direct the audience's attention to handouts, slides, etc. (*as you can see from the table*), (2) to highlight important information (*you see the topics that Baudelaire writes about*), or (3) to promote the presenter's interpretation of the data (*we see a balancing of symbols in the work as a whole*). Although

TABLE 2 Verb frequencies in conference presentations (native and non-native English speakers compared).

	NS		NNS		Total	
	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.
see	22	12.6	67	18.0	89	16.3
look (+ take/have a look)	13	7.4	21	5.6	34	6.2
consider	3	1.7	4	1.1	7	1.3
keep (in mind)	1	0.6	4	1.1	5	0.9
note	1	0.6	3	0.8	4	0.7
remember	1	0.6	3	0.8	4	0.7
bear (in mind)	3	1.7	0	0.0	3	0.5
take (into account)	2	1.1	1	0.3	3	0.5
say	0	0.0	2	0.5	2	0.4
compare	0	0.0	2	0.5	2	0.4
turn	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2
think	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.2
assume	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2
conclude	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.2
imagine	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.2
return	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.2
contrast, examine, figure out, guess, make sure, notice, observe, pay (attention), recall, remark, suppose, understand	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	50	28.6	109	29.3	159	29.1

these functional contours were sometimes fuzzy, the deictic role was particularly clear when accompanied by a deictic expression or gesture, like gaze, finger, or laser beam pointing at tables, graphs, examples, or quotations in slides. In this role, *see*-imperatives contribute by “thickening the semiotic span” (Charles & Ventola, 2002) between language and visuals, helping speakers integrate various modes into a coherent whole (Fernández Polo, 2018; Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005b). Functions 2 and 3 are cognitive act directives playing a key persuasive role (Hyland, 2008). In both CPs and lectures, *see* tends to monopolize all realizations of cognitive act directives, a convenient wildcard when production time is at a premium. Particularly in NNS presentations, this lexical simplification is also compatible with a general tendency observed in ELF to “overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality” (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 220).

The second most frequent directive predicate in CPs was *look*, nearly twice as frequent as in lectures, also attributable to the lesser role of visuals in the MICASE data. Together, *see* and *look* accounted for almost four in five directives in CPs, especially in NNS presentations, where slides may be used as a convenient “safety net” (Fernández Polo, 2018). In CPs, *look* also behaved as a wildcard, replacing verbs like *analyze*, *examine* (*it may be useful to look at other types of er formal expressions*) or *determine* (*we have to look what was the initial source of embarrassment*).

Remember and *think* directives were three times more frequent in lectures than in CPs. This is attributable to the different length of both events—an average of 50 and 20 minutes, respectively—which would render reminding participants of previous content more necessary in lectures than in CPs. In lectures, *remember* directives also play a major role as relevance markers (Deroey & Taverniers, 2012), flagging important information for students to notice (*and the first thing to remember again, when we think about this process, uh is [...] it begins with the process of conquest*). Lecturers may also need to remind students of content presented in previous lessons (*when we talked about warfare last time you remember*), as lecture series frequently span long periods and cover lots of information, which becomes accumulated

TABLE 3 Verb frequencies in lectures (small and large classes compared).

	SL		LL		Total	
	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.	Nr.	% ₁₀₀₀ W.
see	13	2.4	105	17.8	118	10.5
remember	14	2.6	23	3.9	37	3.3
look (+ take/have a look)	8	1.5	20	3.4	28	2.5
think	5	0.9	19	3.2	24	2.1
suppose	16	3.0	0	0.0	16	1.4
notice	4	0.7	9	1.5	13	1.2
keep (in mind)	1	0.2	8	1.4	9	0.8
turn	3	0.6	1	0.2	4	0.4
note	0	0.0	3	0.5	3	0.3
recall	1	0.2	2	0.3	3	0.3
imagine	1	0.2	1	0.2	2	0.2
consider	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.1
compare	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.1
understand	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
assume, bear (in mind), conclude, contrast, examine, figure out, guess, make sure, observe, pay (attention), remark, return, say, take (into account)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	67	12.5	193	32.8	260	23.1

knowledge and constantly needs to be made available to students. Additionally, students may also need to be reminded of practical aspects of school life (*please remember that there is another field trip coming up this Sunday*), the sort of “disciplinary” directives mentioned by He (2000). These inherently pedagogical roles make *remember* directives sound rather patronizing, therefore, potentially offensive to the specialist audience at conferences. The rare examples found in CPs correspond to directives that help the audience follow the reasoning process, by recalling methodological decisions (*now, if you remember there are three sections in project one...*), research objectives (*if you remember i wanted tools that were user-friendly*), or important conceptual distinctions made earlier (*remember that directive meaning is different from deontic meaning*).

Note and *notice* figure prominently on Swales et al.’s (1998) and Hyland’s (2002) lists of verbs with directive force in RAs, often functioning as “attention-getters” showing readers what to “pay attention to in the argument” (Hyland, 2002, p. 233). Both occurred far less frequently in our CPs and lectures, often replaced by general-purpose *see* (*you can see that we’re drawing on text histories*). They also occur comparatively more frequently in lectures than in CPs, probably because of the strong imposition associated with this type of thought-controlling verbs (Hyland, 2002), which might also explain lecturers’ preference for the more forceful *notice* over *note* (Swales et al., 1998), while no examples of *notice* are found in CPs.

Cognitive act directives like *consider*, *note*, *suppose*, and so on generally occurred far less frequently in our oral data than in academic writing (Hyland, 2002; Swales et al., 1998), probably because of the different constraints of speech and writing: writing allows for reader involvement in the construction of complex arguments to an extent that is not possible in speech, where processing time is more limited. Additionally, in the oral setting, some of these actions (*remember*, *notice*, etc.) may also be more efficiently performed paralinguistically, through intonation and gesture, rendering language superfluous. Finally, particularly some of the more formal verbs characteristic of academic writing

TABLE 4 Modalization in directive *see*-based collocations per nativeness and genre.

	CPs					
	NS		NNS		LECTURES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>you/we can see</i>	20	100	39	63.93	37	47.44
<i>you/we see</i>	0	0	22	36.07	41	52.56
TOTAL	20	100	61	100	78	100

(e.g., *note, recall*) might sound excessively stiff in the oral context, with other informal equivalents like *bear* or *keep in mind* being preferred instead.

The analysis in this section reveals important differences in the nature of the directive predicates in CPs and lectures. Directives have proved to be highly sensitive to contextual differences between the two genres, concerning the relative expertise and authority of participants or the role of audiovisuals as a meaning-making resource. However, the analysis has also revealed interesting similarities between the two oral genres and how they differ from academic writing. The conditions imposed by the oral context, with its inherent time constraints and urgency to connect with the physically present audience, leads both conference speakers and lecturers, in general, “to take a discursive stance characterized by a higher degree of personal involvement” (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005b, p. 61).

3.3 | Directives in NS and NNS conference presentations

As we have seen (Section 3.1), NS and NNS conference speakers share a clear preference for mild directives (e.g., *if*-clause directives) over more forceful directive forms, particularly imperatives, which abound in lectures. NS and NNS conference presenters demonstrate a shared perception of the nature and expectations of their audiences and make similar rhetorical choices to adjust their speech. Therefore, as far as the choice of directive expressions is concerned, genre constraints seems to override the effect of the speaker’s language background.

In other areas, however, the NNS conference speakers in our study show characteristic lexical and phraseological features that define them as a distinct group (Mauranen, 2010): They do much the same things as NSs but using somehow different language.

Both groups show distinct preferences for specific directive forms. For instance, *let’s*-imperatives are a favorite with NNSs: they use them over twice as frequently as NSs,⁶ who might arguably find them excessively patronizing (Fløttum et al., 2006, p. 207) vis-à-vis the conference audience. Paradoxically, the rather strong category of modal directives is far more popular with NSs than with NNSs. However, NS presenters frequently seek to mitigate the inherent face threat of the modal verb, either by using solidary pronouns (inclusive *we*) as subject (9/10) or by favoring low-imposition modals, like *should* or *need to*. Finally, *as*-clause directives are a highly distinctive feature in NNS talks, rarely encountered in NS presentations: *As you/we can see* is a characteristic lexical bundle in the NNS presentations, irrespective of the speaker’s lingua-cultural background, a characteristic ELF feature candidate (Seidlhofer, 2004) in CPs.

The group of NS presenters in this study also place comparatively more emphasis on minimizing the inherent imposition of directives than NNSs do. For instance, they show a very clear preference (Table 4) for the modalized, more restrained version (*and then you can see a fairly even distribution of occurrences*) of a very popular pair in the data, *you/we can see* versus *you/we see*, while NNS talks contain a relatively high proportion of examples of the unmodulated, forthright expression too (*you see it’s a fairly infrequent er use*). Interestingly, in this, NNS talks resemble lectures.

Deference to the audience and minimizing imposition may also explain another clear difference between directives in NS and NNS conference talks regarding the way speakers address their audiences. The choice is between *you* (*now*

TABLE 5 Personal pronouns in directives per genre, nativeness, and class size.

	CPs				LECTURES					
	NS		NNS		SL		LL		SL&LL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
you	17	43.6	54	65.1	15	83.3	75	56.0	90	59.2
we	21	53.8	27	32.5	3	16.7	59	44.0	62	40.8
impersonal	1	2.6	2	2.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	39	100	83	100	18	100	134	100	152	100

if you look at the constraints what you get is), which suggests “stark detachment” (Hyland, 2001, p. 557), and inclusive *we*, which, conceptualizes speaker and audience as equals, as members “of a disciplinary in-group” (so if we look at deontic expressions in the corpus data we find). Instances of *you* and inclusive *we* in directives allowing for addressee specification (declaratives, *if*-clauses, *as*-clauses, and modals) were counted in both NS and NNS talks and compared with lectures (Table 5).

NSs show a slight affinity for inclusive *we* (53.8%), while NNSs clearly prefer *you* (65.1%). In this, NNS talks are again similar to lectures, where *you* also prevails (59.2%). This tendency in the MICASE data had also been noticed by Lee (2009), especially in small classes, where affective and physical distance are shorter and there is “less of a need to maintain positive politeness” (p. 50). In contrast, both in Lee’s and in our corpus of large-class lectures, *we* seems to be preferred “to create a friendlier environment (...) a sense of community.” A finer analysis shows that *you* is especially rare in both NS and NNS CPs in combination with strong directives, particularly deontic modals, where inclusive *we* subjects (85.7%) (*we have to bear that in mind*) and impersonal constructions (14.3%) (*it must be noted*) are clearly preferred.

In sum, forms of address in CPs and lectures seem to be influenced by (1) perceived power and status differences among participants (high in lectures, low in CPs), (2) physical and affective distance (high in large classes, low in small ones), and (3) relative weight of the imposition in the directive form (strong vs. mild directives). When addressing a group of equals (CPs), speakers would show a greater readiness to mitigate the inherent imposition of directives by using inclusive *we* to stress solidarity and underplay authority, particularly when a strong imposition is made. The same speakers, in their lecturing role, especially when the audience is small, would feel less pressed to hedge impositions (Fortanet, 2004). One factor that seems to blur this difference between CPs and lectures observed in our data is the language background of the speakers. Some idiosyncratic ways that NNSs use directives in their talks show similarities with classroom practice: compared to NSs, NNSs at conferences show a clear predilection for *you* over *we* when addressing the audience, for characteristically pedagogical expressions like *let’s* (and *let me*) imperatives and for unmodalized directives, suggesting an assumption of a closer relationship with the audience, one that does not require much facework.

4 | CONCLUSIONS

The differences in the frequency and role of directives in CPs and ULs (RQ1) revealed by this study corroborate the existence of two distinct genres. The roles played by directives and, especially, the relationship between participants in both events are basically different. By deploying indirectness, creating audience involvement, and stressing communal membership, conference speakers make the intrinsic imposition in directives more palatable for the peer audience. In lectures, redressing the potentially face-threatening imposition seems to be less impelling, given the communally accepted position of authority of lecturers vis-à-vis students.

This finding has significant practical implications. Hyland (2002) observes that “perceptions of audience influence rhetorical choices” (p. 218). With academics engaging in a wide variety of communicative practices (Swales, 2004), it is crucial to gauge the nature of the audience and adapt their rhetorical choices, including the number and relative forcefulness of directives, to the expectations of different audiences (expert peers vs. students), a fact that should be underscored in EAP courses.

The study also shows how differences in directive usage in academic speech and writing may result from subtle differences in the communicative situation. For instance, *see* directives clearly play different roles in CPs and RAs: directing readers to other text sections or to relevant literature, the primary role of *see* directives in RAs, is clearly irrelevant in CPs, where other roles gain prominence instead. Context of production may also impact the form of directives in academic writing and speech, which may account, for instance, for some forms of language simplification observed in CPs and lectures, attributable to the time constraints of the spoken medium.

The study also reveals interesting differences between directives in NS and NNS CPs (RQ2). Some NNSs’ directives are slightly patronizing, imposing a reasoning or an interpretation much like teachers do in lectures (RQ3), a form of genre hybridization in the “overpopulated” generic world of academy (Swales, 2004), where individuals must constantly switch between researcher and teacher roles. More positively, the observed differences may also result from an enhanced audience orientation in ELF (Mauranen, 2010). Whether this violates community expectations and has a negative impact on the reception of NNS talks goes beyond the possibilities of this research. However, given the vast number of NNSs in present-day conferences, one of those “contexts in which the tables are turned, (...) and the native speakers might well be perceived as the outsiders” (Seidlhofer, 2009, p. 198), the significance of native norms may be justifiably questioned.

The present study has several limitations that should be addressed in future work. Although not exceptional in research on academic speech, our corpora are rather small and heterogeneous. To enhance comparability, future work should increase the homogeneity of the materials both inside and across genres, controlling the effect of subtle variables which have been demonstrated to have a significant effect on directive usage, such as the relative importance of illustrative materials and audiovisual support in both types of events. Furthermore, the CP corpus is rather biased in terms of the linguo-cultural background of the speakers, both native and non-native speakers, underplaying the possible significance of linguo-cultural differences in this type of events. Finally, the MICASE data in this study are becoming outdated and perhaps not fully representative of current pedagogy. Since its compilation, there has been a consistent move toward more participatory learning styles, which is likely to significantly impact the nature of directives in lectures.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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ENDNOTES

¹This is partly coincident with Hyland’s predicative adjective + *to*-clause constructions, but slightly broader: it has the advantage of not excluding structures consisting of *to*-clauses complementing a noun, which are both syntactically and pragmatically very similar.

² Per thousand words of the specific sub-corpus (see Section 2).

³ Despite conference presenters using more directive expressions than lecturers in our data, there were no significant differences between the means of both groups as regards their use of directives in their talks ($t(26) = -0.977, p = 0.338$). One major reason for this may be the high internal variation in both groups of data, particularly in the lecture corpus, where subtle differences in the context of production, notably the presence/absence of illustrative materials like photographs, graphs, text, and so on, had a major impact in lecturer-student interaction, therefore, in the use/non-use of directives.

⁴ Only *let's* imperatives with the verbs in Appendix 2 were counted. When all *let's* imperatives in both corpora are counted, irrespective of the head verb, frequencies are higher in lectures (0,58%), especially in small class lectures (0,87%), than in CPs (0,46%).

⁵ The CP corpus contains one single instance of a *see*-imperative, an interesting “hybrid” that combines a citational role, characteristic of writing, with a deictic role, characteristic of academic speech: *erm this requires substantial substantial reconceptualization of important conventional terms of reference*<GESTURE: TURNS TO SCREEN>*see, for example, a recent paper by Seidlhofer in the World Englishes journal.*

⁶ A similar preponderance of *let-me* imperatives in ELF academic speech is reported by Mauranen (2010).

⁷ Speaker expertise was established on the basis of the number of years with at least one significant publication in Google Scholar (conference proceedings excluded) previous to the year of the conference. + = less than 5 years; ++ = between 5 and 10 years; +++ = more than 10 years.

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APPENDIX 1: MATERIALS

1. CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION	NATIONALITY	NR. OF SPEAKERS	GENDER	EXPERTISE ⁷
NNS1	Turkey	2	F/F	+/++
NNS2	Italy	1	F	+
NNS3	Spain	1	F	+++
NNS4	Spain	1	M	+++
NNS5	Belgium (Flemish)	1	F	+
NNS6	Hong Kong	1	F	+
NNS7	Spain	1	F	+
NNS8	Spain	1	F	++
NNS9	Spain	2	F/F	++/+
NNS10	Estonia	1	F	+
NNS11	Spain	1	M	+
NNS12	Belgium (Flemish)	2	M/M	+++/>++
NS1	British	1	M	+
NS2	British	1	M	+
NS3	British	1	M	+
NS4	British	2	F/F	++/>++
NS5	Australian	1	M	+

2. MICASE LECTURES

CLASS SIZE	NATIVE SPEAKER		DISCIPLINARY AREA	INTERACTIVITY LEVEL	MINUTES	WORD COUNT
	STATUS					
SMALL	Native—N. American		SOC. SC. & EDU	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	49	5843
SMALL	Native—N. American		SOC. SC. & EDU	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	77	12,560
SMALL	Native—N. American		SOC. SC. & EDU	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	52	8375
SMALL	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	99	16,104
SMALL	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	69	12,841
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	44	8676
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	83	13,545
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	81	11,102
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	MOSTLY MONOLOGIC	41	6246
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	HIGHLY MONOLOGIC	71	12,958
LARGE	Native—N. American		HUMANITIES & ARTS	HIGHLY MONOLOGIC	50	8332

APPENDIX 2: VERB LIST

assume	keep (in mind)	say
bear (in mind)	look (+take/have a look)	see
compare	make sure	suppose
conclude	note	take (into account)
consider	notice	think
contrast	observe	return
examine	pay (attention)	turn
figure out	recall	understand
Guess	Remark	
imagine	remember	