

A Comparative Pragmatic Study of Directive Speech Acts Used by Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials in TikTok Makeup Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

Although speech act theory has been widely applied to advertising discourse, few studies have examined how directive speech acts function as a strategic branding tool for individual social media influencers, whose personal persona shapes persuasive style within short-form, algorithm-driven platforms such as TikTok. This gap is particularly evident in the beauty advertising context, where influencer credibility and platform culture jointly influence directive choice. To address this gap, the present study compares the directive speech acts used by two prominent beauty influencers, Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials, in their TikTok makeup advertisements. The research aims to (1) identify and categorize the directive speech acts employed by both influencers, and (2) compare their levels of directness within the context of digital advertising discourse. Using a qualitative descriptive-comparative design, data were collected from TikTok videos uploaded in September 2025, transcribed using Clideo, and analyzed based on Searle's (1975) taxonomy of directives. The findings show that while both creators draw on the same five directive categories instructing, advising, persuading, requesting, and warning they prioritize them differently. NikkieTutorials predominantly uses direct instructional directives to convey clear, step-by-step guidance, reflecting her persona as an educator. In contrast, Mikayla Nogueira favors emotionally charged persuasive directives, aligning with the entertainment-driven nature of TikTok. Both influencers show similar patterns in advising, whereas requesting and warning appear minimally. By linking directive choice to influencer persona and platform affordances, this study extends speech act theory to the domain of influencer marketing and offers new insight into the pragmatics of social media advertising.

Keywords: Directive, Speech acts, TikTok advertising, Pragmatics, Beauty influencers

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is a multidimensional field concerned with how meaning is shaped by context and communicative intention. In linguistics, it examines how speakers interpret language beyond its literal form, considering factors such as tone, social norms, and purpose (Manna Dey & Others, 2023). As defined by

(Kytö et al., 2012), pragmatics is essentially the study of meaning in relation to its situational context an approach that is highly relevant to persuasive communication, where language aims to influence behaviour rather than simply convey information.

Language is a fundamental tool for human interaction that not only conveys information but also shapes social behavior, relationships, and perceptions (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). It enables people to influence one another thoughts and actions, functioning as a vehicle of persuasion, cooperation, and negotiation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Within communication, speakers often employ different linguistic strategies to achieve their goals, and one of the most powerful among these is the use of speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976).

A central component of pragmatic study is Speech Act Theory. (Austin, 1962) proposed that speech is a form of action, and (Searle, 1975) later refined this into five illocutionary categories, each defined by its communicative function and psychological orientation. Among these, directive speech acts are particularly important for persuasion. They encompass linguistic moves intended to get the hearer to act such as commands, requests, suggestions, and advice (Huang, 2014; Saifudin & Others, 2019; Tamara & Others, 2015). Their indirectness and context-sensitivity make them especially powerful in modern advertising.

Advertising itself functions as strategic persuasive communication: a paid, nonpersonal message designed to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors (Kerr & Richards, 2020; Susanto, 2010). The Hierarchy of Effects model further explains how advertising guides audiences through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stages toward action (Wijaya, 2011).

In today's digital media environment, these principles are transformed by platforms like TikTok. As a short-form video space built on participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) and algorithmic recommendation (Bishop, 2019), TikTok enables users to simultaneously consume and create content (Toffler, 1980). It fulfils needs for entertainment, expression, and social interaction (Katz et al., 1974) and functions as a dynamic networked public (boyd, 2014). Empirical research shows that TikTok advertising significantly boosts purchase intention, especially among younger audiences (Annisa & Others, 2024).

Within this context, the present study analyzes directive speech acts in TikTok makeup advertisements by two leading beauty

influencers, Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials. These two influencers were purposively selected because they offer a controlled yet contrastive case for comparison: both hold equivalent professional authority as beauty entrepreneurs and command comparably large TikTok followings, which minimizes the likelihood that differences in directive use simply reflect differences in credibility or audience reach. At the same time, they represent markedly different communicative personas within the same product category (makeup) Nogueira as an expressive, entertainment-oriented creator and NikkieTutorials as a tutorial-based, educator-style creator allowing the study to examine how individual persona, rather than product type or platform context, shapes the choice and directness of directive speech acts.

Mikayla Nogueira is not only a prominent TikTok beauty creator but also the founder of Point of View Beauty, a brand that reflects her professional credibility in the beauty industry. Her achievements, combined with her substantial social media presence 17.3 million followers and 1.9 billion likes on TikTok (September 2025), @mikaylanogueira) significantly enhance her persuasive power and audience influence.

Similarly, NikkieTutorials is widely recognized as the founder and curator of Nimya, a skin-prep brand offering colorful cosmetics and skincare products designed for achieving well-prepped, healthy skin before makeup application. Backed by over 15 years of beauty expertise, she brings professional authority that strengthens the perceived reliability of her content. Her TikTok presence 9.1 million followers and 282.3 million likes (September 2025 @nikkietutorials) positions her as a highly influential figure whose recommendations are trusted by a global audience.

These comparable levels of professional credibility and audience influence, set against their contrasting communicative styles, make Nogueira and NikkieTutorials a particularly instructive pair for investigating how influencer persona shapes directive speech act choice in TikTok advertising. Therefore, this study aims to (1) identify and categorize the directive speech acts used by both influencers, and (2) compare their levels of directness. The findings are expected to deepen understanding

of how pragmatic features operate in social media advertising and shape consumer engagement and trust.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive comparative design within the field of directive speech acts. The qualitative approach is applied to analyze how directive speech acts function in naturally occurring discourse specifically, spoken language in TikTok makeup advertisements. The data were collected in September 2025, covering TikTok advertisements uploaded by both Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials during that month. The comparative component allows the researcher to identify both similarities and differences in the directive strategies employed by the two influencers.

The data collection procedure involved watching the selected TikTok advertisements on their official accounts and transcribing the spoken content. Transcription was carried out using Clideo, an online tool that facilitates accurate conversion of audiovisual material into text. After the data were obtained, each utterance was grouped and categorized based on (Searle, 1979) directive speech act types using domain analysis. This analytical process allowed for systematic classification and interpretation of command, request, suggestion, advice, and other directive forms present in the advertisements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section outlines and analyzes the study's results by addressing the two main objectives: to identify and categorize the directive speech acts used by both influencers and to compare the degree of directness observed in their TikTok makeup advertisement videos. The findings are further interpreted by relating them to the supporting theories and by providing illustrative examples from the dataset.

Findings

This findings section presents the results based on the two main objectives of the study identifying and categorizing the types of directive speech acts used by Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials in their TikTok makeup advertisements, and comparing the

levels of directness used by both influencers. The analysis of NikkieTutorials' TikTok content shows five principal categories of directive speech acts: instructing/demonstrating, advising/suggesting, persuading/encouraging, requesting/inviting, and warning/prohibiting revealing how she directs, guides, and engages with her audience. These categories, along with their frequencies and examples, are presented in the table below to provide a clearer understanding of how directive strategies function within her advertising discourse.

Table 1: Frequency Directive Speech Act
NikkieTutorials

Directive Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage	Typical Examples
Instructing / Demonstrating	12	34%	"Let me show you..." / "You place it here..."
Advising / Suggesting	8	23%	"This is how you should do it..."
Persuading / Encouraging	11	31%	"You NEED this." / "Trust me..."
Requesting / Inviting	2	6%	"Don't throw out the cap."
Warning / Prohibiting	2	6%	"Don't smile." / "Don't throw it away."

The table shows that NikkieTutorials most frequently uses Instructing/Demonstrating directives (34%), relying on clear, step-by-step expressions such as "Let me show you..." or "You place it here...", which reflect a direct teaching style aimed at guiding viewers through each makeup step. This is followed by Persuading/Encouraging (31%), where strong evaluative phrases like "You NEED this." Or "Trust me..." create emotional pressure and enthusiasm, indicating her intent to convince viewers of a product's value. Advising/Suggesting

(23%) appears in softer, expert-driven recommendations such as “This is how you should do it...”, showing a less forceful but still authoritative form of guidance designed to support viewers’ decision-making.

Meanwhile, Requesting/Inviting and Warning/Prohibiting (each 6%) appear in brief directives like “Don’t throw out the cap.” Or “Don’t smile.”, which function only as situational instructions rather than persuasive tools, explaining why they play a minimal role in her overall communicative strategy.

The second table displays how Mikayla Nogueira uses different types of directive speech acts in her TikTok makeup advertisement videos from September 2025. From analyzing her content, the researcher identified 35 directive statements and classified them using (Searle, 1975) framework. The results indicate that Mikayla’s communication style emphasizes emotional appeal and persuasion over step-by-step technical guidance. This approach matches her persona as an energetic beauty influencer who connects with her followers through animated and passionate presentation.

Table 2: Frequency Directive Speech Act Mikayla Nogueira

Directive Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage	Typical Examples
Persuading / Encouraging	14	40%	“You HAVE to try this.” / “This is insane.”
Advising / Suggesting	9	26%	“This is how I recommend...”
Instructing / Demonstrating	7	20%	“Step 1: the lip liner...”
Requesting / Inviting	3	9%	“Let me show you...”
Warning / Prohibiting	2	5%	“Don’t throw away the cap.”

The table shows that Mikayla Nogueira’s most dominant directive type is Persuading/Encouraging (40%), expressed through high-energy statements such as “You HAVE to try this” and “This is insane,” which

rely on emotional intensity to excite viewers and stimulate immediate product interest. This strong persuasive tone reflects her animated persona and her strategy of influencing audiences through enthusiasm rather than explicit instruction. The second most frequent category, Advising/Suggesting (26%), appears in softer, recommendation-based phrases like “This is how I recommend...”, indicating her role as a friendly beauty guide who offers expert input while maintaining a casual, approachable tone. Instructing/Demonstrating (20%) includes procedural cues such as “Step 1: the lip liner...”, showing that while she occasionally provides step-by-step guidance, it is not central to her communication style. Meanwhile, Requesting/Inviting (9%), seen in expressions like “Let me show you...”, helps foster a sense of collaboration and involvement between Mikayla and her viewers. The least frequent category, Warning/Prohibiting (5%), reflected in brief cautions like “Don’t throw away the cap,” occurs minimally because such restrictive directives would disrupt the energetic, motivational atmosphere she consistently aims to create in her TikTok content.

Discussion

The discussion section elaborates on the findings of the study by addressing the two main research objectives, namely (1) categorizing the directive speech acts used by both influencers and (2) comparing the influencers’ levels of directness. Each part of the discussion integrates the results with relevant theories and provides supporting examples from the data.

1. Categorize the directive speech acts used by both influencers

The analysis of the two frequency tables indicates that even though Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials draw on the same five directive categories identified by Searle (1975) instructing, advising, persuading, requesting, and warning they apply these categories in distinct ways.

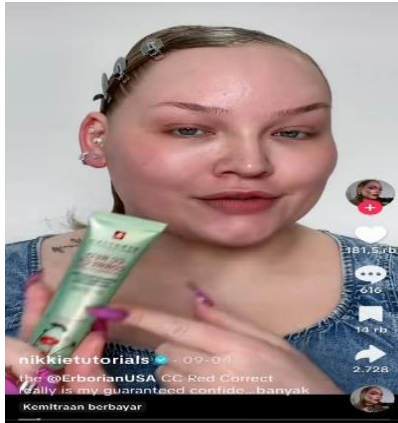


Figure 1. NikkieTutorials demonstrating makeup application in TikTok advertisement (04 September 2025)

For NikkieTutorials, the most prevalent category is instructing/demonstrating (34%). Utterances such as “Let me show you...” (Video, 14 September 2025) and “You place it here...” (Video, 20 September 2025) exemplify highly direct directives in which the intended meaning is conveyed

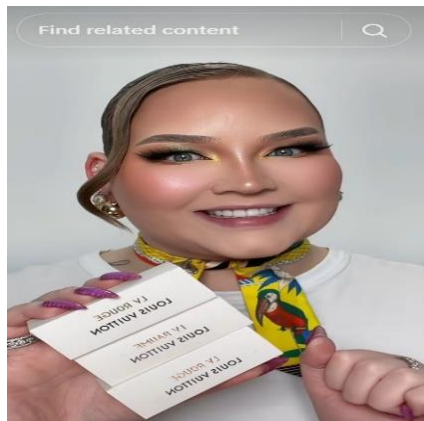


Figure 2. NikkieTutorials demonstrating makeup application in TikTok advertisement (12 September 2025)

explicitly. This linguistic pattern aligns with her persona as an educator who emphasizes precision and clarity in presenting makeup techniques.

Both influencers, however, display comparable use of advising/suggesting 23% for Nikkie and 26% for Mikayla. This type of directive reflects a moderate level of forcefulness that offers guidance in a polite manner (Searle, 1975) and aligns with positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Their similar frequency

in using advice suggests that both position themselves as knowledgeable and supportive beauty guides.



Figure 3. Mikayla Nogueira promoting a beauty product using persuasive language on TikTok (16 September 2025)

In contrast, Mikayla Nogueira predominantly employs persuading/encouraging directives, which constitute 40% of her data. Examples such as “You HAVE to try this” (Video, 11 September 2025) and “This is insane”

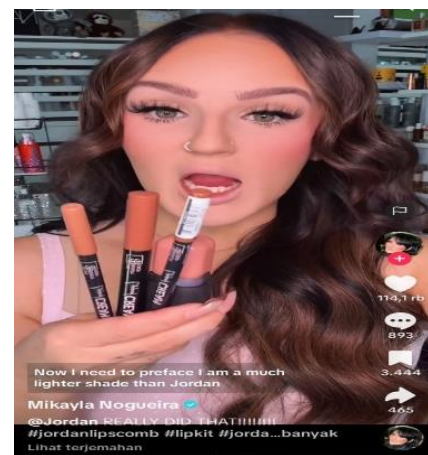


Figure 4. Mikayla Nogueira promoting a beauty product using persuasive language on TikTok (28 September 2025)

(Video, 18 September 2025) demonstrate emotionally driven persuasive expressions.

As Huang (2014) explains, these represent indirect directives because they rely on evaluative language rather than straightforward commands. This style corresponds with TikTok’s entertainment-oriented nature, where expressive

enthusiasm plays a key role in attracting audience engagement.

Meanwhile, requesting and prohibiting emerge only rarely within both datasets. These directive forms appear primarily in specific contexts that require brief instructions such as “Don’t throw out the cap” (Nikkie, 22 September 2025) and “Don’t throw away the cap” (Mikayla, 16 September 2025) rather than functioning as major persuasive techniques.

2. Comparison of Levels of Directness

NikkieTutorials exhibits a greater degree of directness through her instructional style. The clear, sequential commands she uses correspond to Searle’s (1975) concept of direct illocutionary acts, in which the linguistic form directly expresses the intended function.

Conversely, Mikayla tends to employ more indirect strategies that rely on expressive and persuasive language. Her emotionally driven utterances illustrate indirect directives, where the desired action is suggested rather than openly instructed. This communicative style is consistent with the Hierarchy of Effects model (Wijaya, 2011), which highlights the importance of emotional stimulation in influencing consumer responses.

Overall, the contrasting directive patterns demonstrate how each influencer’s linguistic choices reflect their individual persona, branding approach, and adaptation to the platform. While Nikkie prioritizes clarity and technical precision, Mikayla focuses on emotional resonance and the entertainment-oriented nature of TikTok.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that Mikayla Nogueira and NikkieTutorials employ directive speech acts in distinct ways that reflect both their personal branding and the communicative dynamics of TikTok as a digital advertising platform. Addressing the first objective, the analysis shows that although both influencers draw on the same five directive categories namely instructing,

advising, persuading, requesting, and warning their preferences differ notably: NikkieTutorials relies primarily on direct instructional language that reinforces her identity as a skilled makeup educator, whereas Mikayla Nogueira favors persuasive and emotionally expressive directives that align with TikTok’s entertainment-oriented culture. Advising appears consistently across both creators as a way of offering expert recommendations, while requesting and warning are used only sparingly, given their limited relevance to persuasive marketing. Addressing the second objective, NikkieTutorials demonstrates a markedly higher degree of directness through her sequential, instruction-based style, while Nogueira relies more heavily on indirect, affect-laden persuasion. These findings address the gap identified at the outset of this study by showing that directive speech act choice in influencer advertising is not solely dictated by product category or platform norms, but is actively shaped by individual persona. In doing so, the study extends Searle’s (1975) taxonomy beyond its traditional application to face-to-face or institutional discourse, demonstrating its analytical value for short-form, algorithm-driven social media advertising. Practically, the findings suggest that beauty brands and content creators may benefit from aligning directive strategy with creator persona direct instructional forms for educator-type creators, and affect-driven persuasive forms for entertainment-oriented creators to maximize audience engagement and trust.

These conclusions should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The data were limited to a single month (September 2025) and two influencers, which restricts generalizability to the broader population of beauty content creators. In addition, the categorization of utterances into Searle’s (1975) directive types was conducted by the researchers without a formal inter-rater reliability check, which may introduce a degree of interpretive subjectivity. Future research addressing these limitations is outlined in the following section.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, future research may: 1). Expand the dataset by analyzing a longer time period or additional influencers to identify broader patterns in directive use on TikTok. 2). Examine how audience comments respond to directive speech acts to better understand interactional effectiveness. 3). Explore multimodal elements (e.g., gestures, visual editing, sound effects) to complement verbal directive analysis. 4). Compare directive use across social media platforms (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram Reels) to investigate platform influence on persuasive strategies.

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