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A Usage-Based Analysis of Indirect Directives in English (1): A Preliminary Quantitative Survey

Hidemitsu TAKAHASHI

1. Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary report on my long-term research project *A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Indirect Directives in English* (or the CLAID project).[1] The term "directives" has been used by the British philosopher-linguist J. Austin 1962 and the American J. R. Searle (1969; 1975; 1979), followed by numerous other scholars (Panther and Thornburg 1998; 2007, Pérez Hernandez and Ruiz de Mendoza 2002 and Takahashi 2012). It refers to an utterance whose purpose is to get other people to act or do something. Numerous speech act classifications fall under the rubric of directives. Included are order, command, request, begging, suggestion, advice, among others. The imperative utterance "Tell me more about your family," for example, is a clear-cut instance of directive (or directive speech act), in that the speaker is attempting to cause the addressee to act (i.e. by giving her the kind of information she needs). In contrast, "Beautiful day, isn't it?" is not a directive, since this

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utterance is not intended to get the addressee to do anything at all.

Directives come in two types, either "direct" such as imperatives (e.g. *Tell me more about it*) or "indirect" as exemplified in such utterances as *Can you tell me about it?* or *I want you to call me tomorrow morning*. Furthermore, Indirect Directives fall into two subcategories, conventional vs. non-conventional. Consider the following pair (Sadock 1974: 78):

(1) Can you close the door?
(2) Are you able to close the door?

While both sentences are structurally interrogative, they can be used to convey requests (i.e. as directives or directive speech acts) to close the door. The fact remains, however, that there is an intuitive difference between (1) and (2). Speakers of English feel that (1) is "a straightforward instrument for making the request while the latter is sneaky" (Sadock 1974: 78). Sadock observes that sentence (2) "is truly indirect; and using such a sentence with the intent of getting someone to do something borders on dishonesty." I would say that this intuition arises from a difference between conventional vs. non-conventional kinds of Indirect Directives. Note below that only sentence (1) allows sentence-adverbial *please* to be inserted preverbally (Sadock 1974: 90):

(3) Can you please close the door?
(4) *Are you able to please close the door?

In short, sentence (1) is an instance of conventional ID but (2) non-conventional. In a similar vein, the declarative utterance "There's a bear in our midst" can convey a directive — but only in non-conventional terms.

Most languages including English are equipped with a rich variety of both conventional and non-conventional indirect directive strategies. The present paper is only concerned with the former kind of Indirect Directives: conventional (as opposed to non-conventional) ID constructions. Specifically, it attempts to provide a quantitative overview of 15 different conventional Indirect Directive constructions in English, with special focus on the relative frequency of each ID construction as well as the identifications of frequent verbs in frequently used ID constructions.

The next section (section 2) briefly introduces the background and main aims of this article. Section 3 presents the token frequencies of the fifteen ID constructions examined, followed by section 4 providing several tables indicating what kinds of verbs occur frequently in four frequent ID constructions. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. Background

In my recent volume (Takahashi 2012), I offered a comprehensive usage-based analysis of the English imperative conducted within a Cognitive Linguistics framework (For a brief Japanese version of this analysis, see Takahashi 2014). Some of the empirical findings made there include the following. First, not all "dynamic" verbs appear with English imperatives with equal frequency in my data of 1774 tokens. There is a group of verbs that consistently occur more frequently in four fictional stories from which data are taken. As Table 1 below illustrates, only four verbs appeared more than 100 times (out of 1774 tokens). They are *let's*, *tell*, *let* and *look*, followed by *come*, *get*, *take*, *be*, *go*, *give* and others, in this order.

Second, in the four fictional stories examined, the use of the imperative is approximately 15 times more frequent than the use of all types of

Table 1. 15 most frequent imperative verbs in 4 stories (1774 tokens)

(1) let's: 133 tokens (7.5%)	(6) get: 74	(11) do: 45
(2) tell: 106 (6.0%)	(7) take: 64	(12) forget: 34
(3) let: 105 (5.9%)	(8) be: 60	(13) listen: 35
(4) look: 98 (5.5%)	(9) go: 55	(14) wait: 29
(5) come: 78	(10) give: 47	(15) make: 22

(based on Table 2-1 in Takahashi 2012: 23)

Indirect Directives. This result is totally at odds with the commonly-held view among many pragmatic studies that speakers of English tend to avoid using the imperative in making requests because of the potential or even inherent impoliteness associated with this simple, direct directive construction (cf. Searle 1979: 36, Clark and Schunk 1980: 111, Levinson 1983: 2, Wierzbicka 2003: 30).

Third, some frequent transitive verbs in imperatives exhibited a preferred argument realization pattern. That is, *tell*, *let* and *give* strongly prefer to combine with a first-person pronoun (i.e. *me* or *us*) as an indirect object, as exemplified in such utterances as *Tell me about what happened*, *Let me put it this way, Alice*, or *Give me two days*. Interestingly enough, this is not the case with other frequent verbs in imperatives such as *get* and *take*, which occurred with *me* or *us* far less frequently. It was argued in Takahashi (2012: chapter 4) that the observed preference for first person object is a straightforward manifestation of imperative prototype, in which speakers tend to present a propositional content as desirable and beneficial either for either the speaker or addressee, or both.

Based on findings like these, I analyzed all the imperative utterances in my data within the framework of Force Exertion introduced in Takahashi (2012: chapters 3 and 4), a novel approach for a full characterization of every imperative utterance against the set of six separate

parameters (viz. DESIRE, CAPABILITY, POWER, COST, BENEFIT, OBLIGATION). Moreover, I discussed the question of what factors determine the choice between plain imperatives (e.g. *Tell me about it*.) and Indirect Directives (e.g. *Can you/Would you tell me about it?* or *I'd appreciate it if you could tell me about what happened*.) By looking at the tokens of several different types of Indirect Directives taken from the identical four fictional stories, I compared the contexts in which Indirect Directive constructions occurred with those in which imperatives appeared. This survey led to the following general (if not conclusive) principle:

(5) Principle on the avoidance of the imperative

Avoid using a plain imperative for your benefit when the required act involves a high COST and a low OBLIGATION at once – unless the situation is urgent.

Given all these findings mentioned above, we are left with the following important questions. To begin with, the term Indirect Directives covers a wide variety of constructions — some being structurally interrogative, others declarative. More than a dozen forms are identifiable as Indirect Directives, and they do not necessarily constitute a single category in semantic and/or functional terms as opposed to the imperative, but rather considerable variations can be perceived. One crucial question that naturally arises is, on what basis speakers of English choose one directive construction among the wide variety of options?

The primary focus of this paper is on the global, quantitative aspects of Indirect Directive constructions in English (as opposed to the imperative or "the direct directive"). It was found that at least 15 different types are identifiable as such ID constructions in English. Specifically, I address, but not fully answer, the following questions. First, what is the

token frequency of each indirect directive construction? Which constructions are more frequent? Second, what kinds of verbs appear more frequently in frequently used Indirect Directive constructions and why? Are frequent verbs with Indirect Directives identical to those with the imperative? If not, exactly how do they differ? To what extent do the sets of frequent verbs differ among different Indirect Directive constructions? Third, how are frequent verbs used in Indirect Directives and why? Are there any patterns parallel to those observed in the imperative? Questions like these are expected to help achieve the following overall aims of the present research project. First, to clarify both the commonalities and differences between Indirect Directives and the imperative. Second, to identify the commonalities and differences among different Indirect Directive constructions. Finally, to determine a set of central factors determining the choice of a particular directive strategy in ongoing conversations.

In the next section (section 3), I present several tables indicating the relative frequencies of different Indirect Directive constructions examined.

3. Token Frequencies of Indirect Directives in English

To identify the frequent verbs used in Indirect Directives, I used fictional stories as data source. In 3.1, I collected and analyzed all (15) types of Indirect Directives (Data A) taken from dialogues in 14 fictional stories written by several different contemporary American writers. In 3.2, to confirm the significance of the statistical findings made in 3.1 (or Data A), I collected data from additional 13 separate fictional stories (Data B).

I chose to use data from fictional stories for more than one reason.

First of all, the 27 stories contained a total of 901 tokens of various Indirect Directives constructions. More frequent constructions occurred more than 100 times so that this data size allows for preliminary meaningful (if not perfect) generalizations. Next, novels, as opposed to electronic corpora, offer complete contexts including the social relationship between communicants, in which a given Indirect Directive is chosen. This information is indispensable for determining whether a given construction counts as a directive or a genuine information question or factual statement. In addition, as I pointed out in Takahashi (2012: 22), full contextual information is crucial in interpreting a given directive in qualitative terms, which constitutes an important facet of the present research project.

For these reasons, I consider standard corpora as a secondary data source, used mainly for the confirmation of the validity of my initial statistical findings made based on fictional data, — just like the way I conducted my analyses of the imperative (Takahashi 2012: chapter 4).

3.1 Data A: Token Frequency

As an initial attempt to identify a set of frequent verbs in each Indirect Directive form, I employed the following 14 stories. They are *Dirty Blonde*, *Final Appeal*, *Daddy's Girl*, *Look Again*, *Save me* (Lisa Scottoline), *Nothing Lasts Forever*, *Angel of the Dark*, *If Tomorrow Comes*, *The Naked Face* (Sidney Sheldon), *Hotel Vendome*, *Betrayal*, *44 Charles Street* (Danielle Steel), *Dreams of Joy* and *Shanghai Girls* (Lisa See).

Before looking at the data, let me briefly describe how Indirect Directives were identified here. While there is no serious problem in the identification of imperatives (or direct directives) despite the inherent ambiguity between imperative and infinitive, the identification of Indirect

Directives sometimes presents a serious challenge for analysts. This is because the interpretation of an Indirect Directive gives rise to one kind or another of semantic ambiguity due to an inherent incongruity between the form of the utterance (or what the sentence means) and its function (or what the speaker means by it).

Consider the following use of the interrogative form *can you*:

(6) Context: S and A are university teachers and colleagues

"Except that Vice Dean McConnell isn't sure I can keep teaching the seminar, as much as I'd like to. I'd do it in addition to my other classes, as I have been."

"Oh, you must keep teaching it now. About the article, **could you expand it into a book, perhaps?**"

"I sure could." Nat relaxed. She wasn't going to get fired if she wrote a book. How hard could it be? Lots of clowns wrote books. She was a bookworm before she became a bad-ass. (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 306, No. 4847)

One might argue that the utterance "could you expand it into a book, perhaps?" here is three-way ambiguous. It conveys a request, suggestion/advice as well as a genuine information question (inquiry about the addressee's capability). In many instances of this construction, there is an inherent ambiguity between genuine information question and directive.

One basic rule of thumb is that the *can you* VP form classifies as a genuine question when it combines with a standard, non-deliberate verb like *believe*, as (7) below illustrates:

(7) ... His reputation as a stud was becoming legendary around the

hospital.

Paige, Kat and Honey were discussing him.

"**Can you believe all those nurses throwing themselves at him?**" Kat laughed. "They're actually fighting to be the flavor of the week!"

"You have to admit, he is attractive," Honey pointed out.

Kat shook her head. "No, I don't." (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 196, No. 2146)

Similarly, in (8) below, the combination of *can you* and *think* serves as an information question rather than directive:

(8) "Patients sometimes get grudges against doctors," Kat said. "**Can you think of anyone who...?**"

Paige sighed. "Dozens."

"I'm sure there's nothing to worry about."

Paige wished that she could believe it. (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 69, No. 790)

This does not mean, of course, that "dynamic verbs" necessarily make the whole utterances functionally directive when they appear with *can you* interrogatives. Context makes it apparent that the examples given below are interpreted in terms of information question instead of directive:

(9) a. Rather than answer, Branna changed angles. "**Can you read him?** Sense his thoughts?"

"I can't, no. He's blocked me out. He knows I've chosen my side. Sure he believes I can be turned still, and he'll pull at me. In dreams, and in waking ones."

"You don't block him." (*Dark Witch*, p. 169, No. 2404)

(9) b. He reached under the table and grabbed a two-gallon jug of generic peanut butter. "**Can you handle it?**"

"I'm an expert," I said.

He watched me work. The line was momentarily short; he wanted to talk."

"I thought you were a lawyer," I said, spreading peanut butter.

"I'm a human first, then a lawyer. ..." (*The Street Lawyer*, p. 77, No. 862)

(9) c. "I'm not sure I'm qualified."

"**Can you spread peanut butter on bread?**"

"I think so."

"Then you're qualified."

"Okay, where do I go?" (*The Street Lawyer*, p. 74, No. 823)

The ways in which verbs behave vary to some extent across different ID constructions, however. Consider the verb *think* again in (10) below:

(10) "Why? He's dead. You can't hurt himself by telling the truth. You can only hurt yourself by not telling it. **I want you to think about that**. You can't be loyal to a dead man, or to someone who hurt you very badly. Grace ..." ... "**I want you to think about this tonight**. And I'm going to come back and see you tomorrow. Whatever you tell me, I'll promise not to tell anyone else. (*Malice*, p. 54, No.750, 752)

The two examples of the sequence *I want you to think* above can be treated as functionally directive rather than genuine statements.

Table 2 (i) below presents the token frequencies of 9 Indirect Directive constructions that are structurally interrogative. Table 2 (ii) lists the token frequencies of 5 Indirect Directive constructions in declarative form plus one independently occurring *if*-conditional that is functionally a directive. It must be added that this paper only discusses what might

Table 2 (i). Token frequencies of 9 interrogative Indirect Directives in 14 fictional stories (Data A)

INDIRECT DIRECT-IVES (Interrogative)	*can you*	*could you*	*will you*	*would you*	*would you mind*	*can't you*	*won't you*	*why not*	*why don't you*
Dirty Blonde	7	1	1	4	1	0	1	0	4
Final Appeal	4	0	8	2	0	2	0	0	5
Daddy's Girl	11	1*	3	2	2	0	0	0	10
Look Again	7	0	2	4	1	3	0	1	2
Save me	24	0	2	2	0	3	0	0	9
Nothing Lasts Forever	7	4	12	12	2	1	1	0	7
Angel of the Dark	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	1
If Tomorrow Comes	3	5	6*	12	1	0	0	0	7
The Naked Face	4	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	11
Hotel Vendome	2	1	5	1	0	0	0	1	5
Betrayal	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	3
44 Charles Street	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Dreams of Joy	6	2	4	2	0	1	0	0	3
Shanghai Girls	3	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	3
TOTAL 413	85 20.5%	18 4.3%	53 12.8%	47 11.4%	8 1.9%	12 2.9%	3 0.7%	2 0.5%	76 18.4%

Table 2 (ii). Token frequencies of 5 declarative＋1 conditional Indirect Directives in 14 fictional stories (Data A)

Indirect Directives (declarative＋conditional)	*I want you to*	*I need you to*	*I'd (would) like you to*	*I wonder if you can/ could/ would*	*I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/ would*	*if you'll (will) 'd (would)*
Dirty Blonde	0	2	1 'd	0	0	0
Final Appeal	1	1	0	0	0	1 wouldn't 1
Daddy's Girl	1	1	1 'd	0	0	0
Look Again	1	1	0	0	0	0
Save me	2	0	0	0	1	1 'll 1
Nothing Lasts Forever	17	0	2 'd, 'w	2 could 1 would 1	4 could 2 would 1	4 'll 4
Angel of the Dark	3	4	0	0	1	3 'd 3
If Tomorrow Comes	9	0	0	2 could	1 could	3 'll 2 will 1
The Naked Face	10	0	2 'w	2 could 1 (woul')d 1	0	1 'll
Hotel Vendome	8	0	1 'd	0	0	0
Betrayal	6	0	1 'd	0		0
44 Charles Street	4	0	0	0	0	0
Dreams of Joy	2	0	0	0	0	0
Shanghai Girls	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL 413	66 15.9%	9 2.1%	8 1.9%	6 1.4%	7 1.7%	13 3.1%

be termed "addressee-oriented" ID constructions, by which is meant constructions in which the addressee serves as the actor-subject of the main verb, as in *Can you leave?* or *I want you to leave*. "Speaker-oriented" ID constructions such as *Can I have your email address?* or *Can I ask your name?* are not considered here, which are less frequent.

The results indicated in the two tables lead to the following observations:

(i) Among all the interrogative versions, the *can you* form is most frequent, accounting for 20.5% of the data (85 out of 413). In fact, this interrogative request form is the most frequent Indirect Directive in the data indicated in Table 2.

(ii) The second-most frequent is the (suggestion or advice) form with *why don't you*, which accounts for 18.4% of the data (76 out of 413), followed by *I want you to* (15.9%=66 out of 413), *will you* (12.8%=53 out of 413), and *would you* (11.4%=47 out of 413).

(iii) An interesting asymmetry in frequency can be discerned between *can you* vs. its past variant *could you* and *will you* vs. its past variant *would you*. The former pair exhibits a sharp frequency gap (85 (=20.5%) vs. 18 (4.3%), whereas the latter doesn't (53 (=12.8%) vs. 47 (=11.4%)).

(iv) The rest of the constructions distinguish themselves by their extreme infrequency: none of them constitute more than 3% of the data.

(v) Interrogative Indirect Directives with overt negation are very infrequent except *why don't you*, which is second-most frequent.

(vi) The iconicity principle "shorter the more frequent" (Haspelmath 2008) seems to work generally — though not completely. Thus, shorter ID constructions such as those with *can you* and *will you* are significantly frequent while in contrast longer ID constructions such

as those with *would you mind*, *I wonder if you can/could* and *I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/would* are all extremely rare.

(vii) Counterexamples to the "shorter the more frequent" iconicity include the declarative directive *I want you to*, which is bulky in size but third-most frequent. Compare the two other declarative directive constructions *I need you to* and *I'd like you to*, both of which are far less frequent.

In 3.2 below, we look at another set of data to confirm the empirical validity of these initial statistical findings.

3.2 Data B: Token Frequency

In this subsection, I present data indicating the token frequencies of 15 Indirect Directive forms in conversational interactions in a separate set of 13 fictional stories. They are *Malice* (Danielle Steel), *The Firm, The Pelican Brief*, *Sycamore Row*, *A Time to Kill*, *The Street Lawyer* (John Grisham), *The Sky is Falling* (Sidney Sheldon), *Gone Girl: A Novel* (Gillian Flynn), *The Gods of Guilt* (Michael Connelly), *Cross My Heart* (James Patterson), *King and Maxwell* (David Baldacci), *Dark Witch* (Nora Roberts), *Undone* (Karin Slaughter).

Table 3 (i) below offers the token frequencies of 9 Indirect Directive Constructions in interrogative form. Table 3 (ii) lists the token frequencies of five declarative Indirect Directive constructions plus one conditional ID form.

In Data B (i.e. Table 3 (i)-(ii)), one may observe a set of tendencies closely parallel to those discerned in Data A as indicated in Table 2 (i)-(ii).

Table 3 (i). Token frequencies of 9 interrogative Indirect Directives in 13 fictional stories (Data B)

INDIRECT DIRECTIVES (interrogative)	*can you*	*could you*	*will you*	*would you*	*would you mind*	*can't you*	*won't you*	*why not*	*why don't you*
Malice	4	1	5	2	0	0	0	2	12
The Pelican Brief	7	2	6	2	1	0	0*	0	9
The Sky is Falling	12	6	7	10	2	3	0	0	4
The Firm: A Novel	8	1	3	3	0	0	1	1	17
Gone Girl: A Novel	7	0	0	2	0	2	0	3	5
Sycamore Row	7	4	4	4	0	3	0	0	2
A Time to Kill	11	8	10	14	0	2	0 ...	0	18
The Street Lawyer	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	8
The Gods of Guilt	19	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	6
Cross My Heart	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
King and Maxwell	18	3	5	0	1	3	0	1	5
Dark Witch:	1	1	7*	3	1	0	0	1	1
Undone	13	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
TOTAL 488	112 22.9%	32 6.5%	53 10.9%	46 9.4%	5 1.0%	14 2.9%	2 0.4%	12 2.5%	94 19.2%

Table 3 (ii). Token frequencies of 5 declarative＋1 conditional Indirect Directives in 13 fictional stories (Data B)

INDIRECT DIRECTIVES (declarative＋conditional)	*I want you to*	*I need you to*	*I'd (would) like you to*	*I wonder if you can/ could/ would*	*I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/ would*	*if you'll (will) 'd (would)*
Malice	*5	0	0	0	0	0
The Pelican Brief	7	1	0	0	0*	1
The Sky is Falling	*8	0	4 'd 4	6 could 4 would like to 1 would be 1	4 could 1 would 3	0
The Firm: A Novel	7	2	0	0	0	0
Gone Girl: A Novel	0	4	0	0	0	0
Sycamore Row	3	0	0	0	0	0
A Time to Kill	17	0	0	0	1	0
The Street Lawyer	1	0	0	0	0	0
The Gods of Guilt	16	4	0	0	0	0
Cross My Heart	3	0	0	0	0	0
King and Maxwell	2	2	0	0	0	0
Dark Witch	2	0	0	0	0	0
Undone	1	7	0	0	0	0
TOTAL 488	82 16.8%	20 4.1%	4 0.8%	6 1.2%	5 1.0%	1 0.2%

(i) The interrogative form with *can you* is most frequent, accounting for 22.9% of the data (112 out of 488). Here again, the interrogative directive *can you* is the most frequent type of Indirect Directive.

(ii) The second-most frequent is the form with *why don't you*, which accounts for 19.2% of the data (94 out of 488), followed by *I want you to* (16.8%=82 out of 488), *will you* (10.9%=53 out of 488), and *would you* (9.8%=46 out of 488).

(iii) Here again, a considerable frequency asymmetry can be observed between the *can you/could you* pair vs. *will you/would you*. Only the former pair exhibits a sharp frequency gap (112 (=22.9%) vs. 32 (6.5%)); this is not the case with the latter (53 (=10.9%) vs. 46 (=9.4%)).

(iv) The rest of the constructions are very infrequent by comparison. None of them constitutes more than 3% of the data.

(v) Once again, interrogative Indirect Directives with overt negation are very infrequent, except *why don't you* which is second-most frequent.

(vi) The "shorter the more frequent" iconicity principle (Haspelmath 2008) is generally at work here as well. Shorter ID constructions (such as *can you* and *will you*) are significantly frequent while longer constructions such as *would you mind*, *I wonder if you can/could* and *I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/would* are extremely rare. Exceptions are also completely identical. That is, the *I want you to* form, for example, is very frequent despite its bulky size, though its structurally similar variants*I need you to* and *I'd like you to* are both rare.

In the next section, we identify a set of frequent verbs in frequent ID constructions, look at the ways in which they behave by comparing with the ways in which frequent verbs behave in imperatives.

4. Verbs in frequently used Indirect Directives

This section begins by looking at the token frequencies of 15 different types of Indirect Directives used in 27 fictional stories (Data A＋B). See Tables 4 (i) and (ii) below.

Table 4. Token frequencies of 15 types of Indirect Directives in 27 fictional stories (from Data A＋B)

(i) Interrogative

INDIRECT DIRECT-IVES interrogat-ive	*can you*	*could you*	*will you*	*would you*	*would you mind*	*can't you*	*won't you*	*why not*	*why don't you*
TOTAL 901 (413＋488)	197 21.9%	50 5.4%	106 11.8%	93 10.5%	13 1.0%	26 2.9%	5 0.5%	14 1.6%	170 18.9%

(ii) Declarative＋Conditional

INDIRECT DIRECT-IVES declarative＋conditional	*I want you to*	*I need you to*	*I'd (would) like you to*	*I wonder if you can/could/would*	*I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/would*	*If you 'll/will 'd/would*
TOTAL 901 (413＋488)	148 16.4%	29 3.2%	12 1.3%	12 1.3%	12 1.3%	14 1.6%

In the next step, we identify a set of frequent verbs in four frequent Indirect Directive constructions — three interrogatives variants *can you*, *will you* and *why don't you* and one declarative *I want you to*. Furthermore, we clarify the commonalities and differences in verb usage between Indirect Directives and imperatives in English.

4.1 Frequent verbs with can you

Let us begin with *can you*. Table 5 presents a group of frequent verbs that occurred with this interrogative directive.

Table 5. Frequent verbs with *can you* (197 tokens)

(1) tell 29 (14.5%)	(6) give 9 (4.5%)
(2) help* 14 (7.0%)	(7) be 8 (4.0%)
(3) get 13 (6.5%)	(8) explain* 6 (3.0%)
(4) come 11 (5.5%)	(8) find* 6 (3.0%)
(4) do 11 (5.5%)	(10) talk* 5(2.5%)

The commonalities between frequent verbs with *can you* and those with the imperative can be summarized as follows. To being with, a wide variety of dynamic verbs appear. Some of the verbs very frequent in the imperative also appear with the *can you* interrogative; included are *tell*, *get*, *come*, *do*, *give*. Among these 10 most frequent verbs, 9 verbs are common dynamic verbs. Here are illustrations:

(11) a. "Do you feel well enough to speak with us? Did you want to go to the hospital or anything?"

"No, thanks." Nat raised a hand, in the blanket. "First, **can you tell me what happened in there?** Is it really over?"

"Absolutely." The trooper slid a Bic pen from his inside pocket. "The disturbance took only sixteen minutes to put down. (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 53, no. 991)

(11) b. "Mom, don't forget the bag from the bookstore."

"I'll get it later." ...

"But I want my books."

"Then **can you get the bag?**" Rose checked over her shoulder. ..."

(*Save me*, p. 167, no. 2640)

(11) c. Maybe he is for real. "What do you want anyway?"

"**Can you come out?** I need to talk to you. I don't have much time...."

"Why do I have to come out? Why can't we talk like this?"

(*Final Appeal*, p. 129, no. 1804)

(11) d. "... Have dinner with me tonight, So we can stop with the phone tag."

"I can't." ... "A younger man, like three years old. I babysit tonight."

"Funny way to earn a few bucks. Aren't the taxpayers paying you enough?"

"It's my godchild."

"Oh, **can you do it another night?** I'm not free Friday. Got a late meeting."

(*Dirty Blonde*, p. 140, no. 2272)

(11) e. "My husband and I haven't moved down yet, and I wanted to see the preschools in the area."

"I see." ...

"I'm not sure when I can get back. **Can you give me the quick version of the tour?** We can chat as we walk."

"Sure, okay." Janice smiled. (*Look Again*, p. 176, no. 3101)

The sole exception is the verb *be*:

(12) a. "How's trial prep going?"

"Not bad. I have a ton to do, but I'm on it."

"Melly gets discharged at noon. **Can you really be there?**"

"Yes, I planned on it. I don't want you running that gauntlet of press alone."

"Thanks." (*Save me*, p. 93, no. 1462)

(12) b. "Good job. Here's forty bucks." Mitch looked at his watch. "It's almost one. **Can you be here at exactly two-thirty?**"

"No problem, mon." (*The Firm*, p. 175, No. 2398)

(12) c. "Did you find any?"

"Yes, I found a C.O. coming out of a room. I asked him to help, and he came."

"**Can you be more specific?**" (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 55, No. 1021)

Obviously, the verb *be* in these sentences has gone through aspectual conversion — from stative to nonstative.

Next, it was observed in Takahashi (2012: chapter 2) that the three frequent verbs *tell*, *let* and *give* in the imperative strongly prefer to combine with a first person pronoun. Here, we can see that the two verbs *tell* and *give* behave exactly the same way, in that both verbs combine predominantly with a first person pronoun. Specifically, the combination *tell me* appears 17 times, as illustrated in (2a), and *tell us* 5 times. The combinations *tell me* and *tell us* account for 75.9% of all the tokens of *tell* (22 out of 29 tokens).

As for *give*, the combination *give me* (7 tokens), as exemplified in (11e) above, and the combination *give us* (2 tokens) combine to account for all the nine tokens of this verb.

This does not mean, however, that the set of frequent verbs with the *can you* interrogative are completely identical to that with the imperative. In particular, the following two facts are worthy of notice. First, while

let is a verb most strongly attracted to the imperative (cf. Stefanowitch and Gries 2003, Takahashi 2012: chapter 2), the verb rarely occurs with *can you* interrogatives. Only one example was found:

(13) "Plus anything you say can look like an admission of guilt, later."

Leo frowned. "Let it go. **Can you let it go?**"

Rose had been here before. She could never let anything go. She didn't even know what letting go meant.

"Listen." Leo rubbed her arms, and John stirred, but stayed asleep. (*Save me*, p. 70, no. 1113)

Second, as Table 4 suggests, the verb *help* is very frequent and other verbs *explain*, *find* and *talk* are also common with *can you* directives. However, none of these verbs were particularly frequent with the imperative, according to a survey conducted in Takahashi (2012: chapter 2). The examples of (14) below illustrate the uses of these verbs with *can you*:

(14) a. "Frank, thanks for getting back to me. My extern program is on hiatus, and I need a litigator to get me a continuance from Padova today, at two. **Can you help?**" (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 114, no. 1935)

(14) b. Nat whispered, "Bill?"

"I'm awake," he said, popping off his hand with a start. He reached automatically for his cap, but Nat waved him into stillness.

"**Can you help me out?** I need a car and I can't rent one because I don't have a license. Can I please borrow your car, just for the day? I'll pay you."

"Okay, professor. ..." (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 211, no. 3448)

(14) c. ..., a photographer shouted, one of the mob outside her apartment building the next morning. "Ms. Greco, any comment?" ... "Nat, what did you have to do with stopping Williams's escape?" "The Chester County D.A. says you were integral to their law enforcement efforts. **Can you explain?**"

Nat raised a hand as she hurried into her building.

(*Daddy's Girl*, p. 302, no. 4773)

(14) d. "It's a long story, but I'm wondering if you could help me." Rose leaned on the desk. "There's another little girl who was caught in the fire. Her name's Amanda Gigot, and I was wondering how she's doing it. Last I heard, she was in Intensive Care with a head injury. **Can you find out how she is?**"

"Hold on." The nurse turned to a computer keyboard and pressed a few keys. "She's still in Intensive Care." (*Save me*, p. 52, no. 839)

(14) e. He called her on her cell phone on Friday afternoon on the set. ...

"**Can you talk to Brigitte about it?**" she asked, sounding distracted. (*Betrayal*, p. 50, no. 598)

These findings imply that the *can you* directive is not just a slightly more polite request strategy than the imperative as is commonly assumed. Rather, there are some fundamental differences in propositional content in addition to discourse or communicative function. Moreover, they also imply that argument realization patterns are sensitive not only to different sentence types but to different speech acts as well.

4.2 Frequent verbs with *will you*

Next, Table 6 lists a group of frequent verbs with the *will you* form.

Table 6. Frequent verbs with *will you* (106 tokens)

(1) come 12 (11.3%)	(6) do 4 (3.7%)	(11) answer 2
(2) be 8 (7.5%)	(6) look 4 (3.7%)	(11) give 2
(3) help* 7 (6.6%)	(6) marry* 4 (3.7%)	(13) let 2
(4) tell 6 (5.6%)	(6) take 4 (3.7%)	
(5) have* 5 (4.7%)	(10) make 3 (2.8%)	

We find the following commonalities between the directive form *will you* and the imperative regarding frequent verbs. Just like the form with *can you*, some of the common verbs in imperatives seem to be common with *will you* directives as well — included are *come*, *be*, *tell*, *do*, *look*, *take* as well as *give* and *let*. Here are some illustrations:

(15) a. She fumbled the phone to her ear. "H'lo?"

"Dr. Taylor, **will you come to Room 422**, stat?" (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 290, No. 3195)

(15) b. '**Will you be there, too?**' Dana squeezed his hand. 'I'll be there.' (*The Sky is Falling*, No. 766)

(15) c. She put her hand inside her jacket and withdrew her PI license. In the dark she hoped it would look legit enough. She flashed it.

"**Now will you tell me what this is about?** Maybe I can help you." ... "Nobody can help me." (*King and Maxwell*, No. 317)

(15) d. "Yeah. You have to go to Europe. Do me a favor. Go to Paris ... and when you eat that steak and drink that champagne, I want you

to think of me. **Will you do that?**"

Paige said slowly, "I'll do that one day." (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 305, No. 3360)

(15) e. She said, smiling, "Very perceptive of you. I wish all our clients were as prepared as you."

"So **will you guys look into it for me?** I don't know how much you charge, but I can pay you. ..." (*King and Maxwell*, No. 678)

(15) f. "We'd both have tonight, whatever comes. ...It's not breaking a promise if I ask you to throw it away. **Will you take me to bed?** Will you let me stay till morning?" (*Dark Witch*, p. 318, No. 4383)

Next, *help* is third-most frequent with *will you*, occurring 7 times (out of 106). Recall that the verb is not very frequent with the imperative but second-most frequent with *can you*:

(16) And he had no doubt that she would do it brilliantly.

"**Will you help me when I screw up?**" she asked, as she leaned against him and he held her close.

"Yes, but you won't. You're not going to need a lawyer to help you run it, ..." (*Hotel Vendome*, p. 316, No. 4160)

A few tokens of *give* as well as *let* were found with *will you*, though these verbs were not as frequent as in the imperative:

(17) a. "Tell you what. Would you give Amy my email address and have her contact me?"

"Okay."

"Thanks." ... "What if she doesn't email me back? **Will you give me her email?**"

"Cross your fingers." (*Look Again*, p. 103, No. 1799)

(17) b. "They can help you, Dad!"

"They led those men right to us."

"That wasn't their fault."

"There's no room for mistakes, Tyler."

"**Will you let them help?**"

"I don't think I can," said Wingo. (*King and Maxwell*, No. 3861)

(17) c. "We'd both have tonight, whatever comes. I think we'd be stronger for it. It's not breaking a promise if I ask you to throw it away. Will you take me to bed? **Will you let me stay till morning?**" (*Dark Witch*, p. 318, No. 4383)

Finally, the verb *marry* occurred only with *will you* (four times) in the form *will you marry*. In addition, a few tokens of *will you forgive me* were found, though no token of *can you forgive me* was found. Conversely, while several tokens of the sequence *can you explain/describe* occurred, no token of *will you explain/describe* appeared in the data examined.

(18) a. And then he grew serious too. "**Will you marry me, Natalie?**" He slipped the ring on her finger as he asked her and then kisses her. "Yes, I will," ... (*Hotel Vendome*, p. 198, No. 2607)

(18) b. "There are things for us, Branna. Words to be said. **Will you forgive me, at last, when this is done?**"

"I can't think about that now. ..." (*Dark Witch*, p. 326, No. 4489)

In summary, once again it was found that a specific group of verbs have a strong tendency to occur frequently with a first person object. They are *help*, *tell*, *marry*, *give*, *let* and *forgive*. Another finding is that *help* is frequent with both *can you* and *will you* directives, though the verb is not frequent with the imperative. There seem to be subtle differences between directives with *can you* and those with *will you* regarding frequently used verbs, though the findings made here need be tested against larger corpora.[2]

4.3 Frequent verbs with *why don't you*

We turn to *why don't you*, a construction normally associated with conveying suggestion, which was second-most frequent Indirect Directive. Table 7 presents a list of frequent verbs with this construction.

Table 7. Frequent verbs with *why don't you* (170 tokens)

(1) go 21 (12.2%)	(6) ask 10 (5.8%)	(11) give 4 (2.3%)
(2) tell 16 (9.3%)	(7) call 9 (5.2%)	(11) leave 4 (2.3%)
(3) come 14 (8.1%)	(8) see 6 (3.5%)	(11) sleep 4 (2.3%)
(4) take 12 (7.0%)	(8) sit 6 (3.5%)	(14) let 3 (1.7%)
(5) get 11 (6.4%)	(10) relax 5 (2.9%)	(14) lie 3 (1.7%)

To begin with, the directive with *why don't you* shares not a few frequent verbs with the imperative. They are *go*, *tell*, *come*, *take*, *get*, *give* and *let*:

[2] Though fifth-most frequent (96 tokens), this article does not provide a separate treatment of the *would you* form, because no significant difference was observed betwen *will you* and this past variant. Let me point out, however, that the combinations *would you care to* and *would you like to* were most frequent. However, I prefer to classify these two as separate (though extended) peripheral constructions here.

(19) a. “I don’t think you should go to the office today. **Why don’t you go home and get some rest?**”

“I can’t,” Burke whispered, his voice filled with despair. (*The Naked Face*, p. 54, No. 635)

(19) b. “I haven’t seen it yet, so I don’t know that. **Why don’t you tell me what I’m going to see?**”

She tosses her hair back. “I have a better idea. **Why don’t you tell me what I saw that night in Armen’s office**. ...” (*Final Appeal*, p. 90, No. 1285, 1286)

(19) c. “So, **why don’t you come over here, now that we’re all safe?**”

“No, thanks. I feel better, away from it all.” (*Dirty Blonde*, p. 233, No. 3903)

(19) d. Deidre shoved Angus’s arm playfully. “That’s sexist.”

“Really? Guess what? You flunk.” Angus smiled wearily. “Deidre, **why don’t you take everybody to the vending machines and give me a few minutes with Professor Greco**.”

“Woot, woot!” hooted one of male students, ... (*Daddy’s Girl*, p. 152, No. 2542)

(19) e. “Look, you’re a very lovely lady, but you’re wasting your time with me. It’s still early. You’ve got plenty of time to pick up a real stud.”

“You’re cute.”

The hand was back, and Mitch breathed deeply. “**Why don’t you get lost**.”

“I beg your pardon.” The hand was gone. “I said, ‘Get lost.’” ...

"I have an aversion to communicable diseases. Get lost."

"**Why don't you get lost**."

"That's a wonderful idea. I think I will get lost. Enjoyed dinner." (*The Firm*, p. 160, No. 2192, 2195)

(19) f. "What?" He stared at her a moment, then smiled sheepishly. "I guess not."

Kat said gently, "Then **why don't you let us handle it?**"

"Okay. You know something? I like you."

"I like you, too. ..." (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 261, No. 2899)

Next, the strong preference of the verbs *tell*, *give* and *let* for a first person object we observed with the imperative can be observed with *why don't you* as well, as (19b), (19d) and (19f) above illustrate.

Third, some frequent verbs with *why don't you* were not very frequent with the imperative — nor were they particularly frequent with other directives. They include such verbs as *ask*, *call*, *see*, *sit*, *relax*, *leave*, *sleep* and *lie*.

(20) a. ... "So what?" A tough nut. "**Why don't you ask her to sit**, like Miss Waxman taught her?" "She won't do it for me." "How do you know? you never tried. Give her a chance."

Maddie looks at me, then at Bernice. "Now you sit!" she shouts. (*Final Appeal*, p. 325, No. 4432)

(20) b. ... Nat sipped her cooling tea. "I dread going out there again."

"Then **why don't you just call?** Tell her over the phone."

"I told her I'd go back." (*Final Appeal*, p. 106, No. 1805)

(20) c. He just didn't wan her to sell it if she loved it and wanted to stay.

"**Why don't you sleep on it and see how you feel about it in the morning?**" he said, and she nodded, and then ... (*44 Charles Street*, p. 315, No. 3578)

(20) d. "**Why don't you just sleep?**" Brigitte suggested. "You can read the changes tomorrow morning. I'll drive you back. ...

"Thanks," Tallie said gratefully. (*44 Charles Street*, No. 3792)

(20) e. "Hey, Willie," Angus said quickly, shaking the man's hand. "**Why don't you go sit down**, and I'll be right over."

"No sweat." The inmate left for an informal meeting area near the classroom. (*Daddy's Girl*, p. 120, No. 2031)

(20) f. "But I'm sure they'll have it fixed in a few minutes, Harrison. **Why don't you lie down and relax?**" ... "That's better," he said loudly. "Just make yourself comfortable." (*The Naked Face*, 103, No. 1197)

(20) g. '... I'm sure Dana misses you. So please, **why don't you just leave, darling?**'

Jeff looked at her a moment and nodded. 'Right.' (*The Sky is Falling*, No. 3907)

Finally, the verbs *look* and *be* were frequent in imperatives but no token of either verb was found here. In addition, no token of *help* occurred in the data, though the verb was frequent with both *can you* and *will you* constructions.

4.4 Frequent verbs with *I want you to*

In 4.4, we turn to the third-most frequent Indirect Directive construction in English. Table 8 below lists a group of frequent verbs in this construction.

Table 8. Frequent verbs with *I want you to* (148 tokens)

(1) go 13 (8.7%)	(6) see 6 (4.0%)	(11) come 4 (2.7%)
(2) stay 8 (5.4%)	(7) do 5 (3.3%)	(11) talk 4 (2.7%)
(2) take 8 (5.4%)	(7) get 5 (3.3%)	(12) follow 3 (2.0%)
(2) tell 8 (5.4%)	(7) keep 5 (3.3%)	(12) leave 3 (2.0%)
(5) be 7 (4.7%)	(7) think 5 (3.3%)	(12) meet 3 (2.0%)

Let me point out first that no verb accounts for more than 10% of the data (148 tokens). The most frequent verb *go* occurred 13 times, accounting for only 8.7% of the data. Nevertheless, the *I want you to* form share not a few frequent verbs with the imperative. Included are *take*, *tell*, *be*, *do*, *get*, *come* as well as *go*, as the examples in (21) below illustrate:

(21) a. "I must be sick," she said. "Oh, God, I'm sick. Please help me, Judd. Help me!"

Judd walked over to her. "You've got to help me help you."

She nodded her head, dumbly.

"**I want you to go home and think about how you feel**, Teri. ... Think about why you want to do them. ..." (*The Naked Face*, p. 89, No. 1040)

(21) b. ...Dinetto was waiting for her.

"Thanks for coming, Dr. Hunter," he said. "I appreciate it. A friend of mine had a little accident. **I want you to take a look at him**."

"What are you doing with Mike?" Kat demanded. (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 142, No. 1578

(21) c. Warden Brannigan nodded understandingly. 'I understand your fear, but I can't allow the inmates to run this prison. ... but I'll need your testimony. I'll see that you're protected. Now **I want you to tell me exactly what happened and who was responsible**.'

Tracy looked him in the eye. 'I was. I fell off my bunk.' ... 'Are you quite sure?' (*If Tomorrow Comes*, p. 96, No. 1244)

(21) d. Mike was going on. "I'm sending you some cash, Kat. Your friend arranged for me to get a job. It pays real good money."

Your friend. Kat was nervous. "Mike, listen to me. **I want you to be careful**.

She heard him laugh again.

"Don't worry about me. ..." (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p. 141, No. 1569)

(21) e. Jean Louis stared at the beams with dismay. ...

'**I want you to do just as I tell you**,' Tracy said. She stepped round the back of him and put her arms tightly around his waist. 'Now, walk with me. Left foot first.' (*If Tomorrow Comes*, p. 403, No. 5279)

(21) f. Moody hauled his large bulk up out of the big rocker. "**I want you to get a nice early start tomorrow**," he said, "so you can get up there before dark. Can you leave about seven in the morning?"

"I...I suppose so. ..." (*The Naked Face*, p. 162, No. 1405)

(21) g. 'If you have any special problems,' Warden Brannigan said, 'I mean, if I can help you in any way, **I want you to come and see me**."

Even as he spoke, he knew how hollow his words were. She was young and beautiful and fresh. (*If Tomorrow Come*s, p. 73, No. 969)

Next, there are some subtle yet interesting differences between the imperative and the *I want you to* directive. While the verb *tell* is very frequent with the former and so-so frequent in the latter, *give* seems infrequent with the latter. No token occurred in my data. Conversely, while the verbs *stay*, *see* (cf. example 21g), *think* (cf. example 21a) were not very frequent with the imperative, they are somewhat more frequent with the *I want you to* construction:

(22) "If you get hurt, young lady, your father will kill me. **I want you to stay here**." He knew the directive was useless. Heloise never stayed in one's place for long. (*Hotel Vendome*, p. 13, No. 192)

5. Conclusion

By examining data taken from a total of 27 fictional stories, this paper has looked at fifteen different Indirect Directive constructions in English in quantitative terms. First, we obtained the following general picture.

(i) Among the 15 different types of English Indirect Directives examined here, the interrogative directive *can you* is most frequent, accounting for 21.9% of the data (197 out of 901 tokens). Second-most frequent is the *wh*-interrogative directive *why don't you*, which accounts for 18.9% of the data (170 out of 901). The declarative directive *I want you to* is third most frequent, accounting for 16.4% of the data (148 out of 901), followed by the interrogative *will you*, which constitutes 11.8% of the data (106 out of 901).

(ii) A considerable frequency asymmetry was observed between the *can you/could you* pair vs. the *will you/would you* pair. The former pair exhibits a sharp frequency gap (197 (=21.9%) vs. 50 (=5.4%), whereas no such significant frequency gap was observed in the latter — 106 (=11.8%) vs. 93 (10.5%).

(iii) The rest of the ID constructions were extremely infrequent by comparison. None of them accounts for more than 4% of the data including three ID constructions with overt negation: *can't you*, *won't you*, and *why not*, although *why don't you* was extremely frequent (see (i) above).

(iv) The "shorter the more frequent" iconicity principle as argued in Haspelmath (2008: 8) generally works for the phonological sizes of ID constructions — though not without exceptions. For example, shorter ID constructions such as *can you* as well as *will you* are among the most frequent while "bulkier" ID constructions such as *would you mind*, *I wonder if you can/could* and *I'd (would) appreciate it if you could/would* are all very rare. However, the *I want you to* construction was very frequent despite its bulky size, although its functionally similar phonologically larger constructions *I need you to* and *I'd like you to* are both rare.

Next, by looking into frequent verbs in frequently used ID constructions, we obtained the following findings:

(i) Just like the imperative, a wide array of nonstative verbs occur. Some of the verbs frequent with the imperative were also common with frequently used ID constructions. Included are *tell*, *come*, *go*, *do*, *get*, among others. The verb *tell* deserves special attention, since this is the only verb that is not only frequent with the imperative but

also with all the frequent ID constructions examined here. It can be said that *tell* is a verb strongly preferred by all types of directive constructions, direct and indirect alike.

(ii) However, some frequent verbs in imperatives were not necessarily frequent in all types of ID constructions examined here. *Let*, for example, was extremely frequent in the imperative but not as frequent in most ID constructions — in fact, very infrequent with the *can you* construction (only 2 out of 197 tokens). *Give* was also very frequent with the imperative but infrequent with the *I want you to* construction. No instance of *give* was found in the 148 tokens, though the verb was relatively frequent with other ID constructions.

(iii) The preference of the verbs *tell*, *give* and *let* for *me* or *us* as a grammatical object was in general observed in frequent ID constructions as well, though the overall frequencies of these verbs in frequent ID constructions are significantly lower than in the imperative.

(iv) The verb *go* prefers to combine with *why don't you* and *I want you to* constructions a great deal more than with other ID constructions such as those with *can you* or *will you*.

(v) Some ID constructions have special preference for a certain group of verbs. The verb *help* is second-most frequent with *can you*, accounting for 7.0% of the data and third-most frequent with *will you*, accounting for 6.6% of the data. However, *help* was used far less frequently with *why don't you* as well as *I want you to* constructions. In a similar vein, the *why don't you* construction seems to combine somewhat more frequently with the verbs *ask*, *call*, *sit*, *see*, *lie* and *relax* and the *I want you to* construction occurs more readily with *see* and *think* than other ID constructions.

Needless to say, all the findings made above need be tested against

larger corpora to confirm their empirical validity. However, they at least suggest that different directive constructions differ from one another not only in communicative function but also in propositional content. There might be fundamental differences in propositional contents conveyed between ID constructions and the imperative as well as those among different ID constructions.

Furthermore, there is good reason to suppose that argument realization patterns, as exhibited in the frequent occurrences of *me* and *us* with a specific class of verbs, are sensitive to illocutionary act classifications as well as sentence types. We turn to these issues by characterizing each ID construction in subsequent papers.

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