

LINGUISTICS AND VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS

INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS IN NEW INTERCHANGE 1, 2 AND 3

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ABSTRACT: This is a study of speech acts in the conversations of *New Interchange 1, 2, and 3*. The aim of the study is to examine *indirect speech acts* in the conversations investigated. Both the *quantitative* approach and *qualitative* approach are employed with the assistance of *descriptive*, *contrastive*, *analytic*, and *synthetic* methods to help work out the best possible findings. The data consist of a total of 784 turns in 97 conversations of *New Interchange 1, 2, and 3*. The study shows interesting results concerning *indirect speech acts*. To be more specific, *Indirect speech acts* just account for approximately 20%, reflecting the linear communication style of English speakers. However, the indirect speech acts vary with various patterns.

KEY WORDS: indirect speech acts; utterances; turns; New Interchange 1, 2 and 3.

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1. Introduction

This research contributes a specific investigation into different patterns of indirect speech acts realized in the conversations in New Interchange 1, 2 and 3, written by Richards et al., first published in 1997 and introduced to Vietnam in 2005. The reason for the special choice of the textbook series for my study lies in the fact that it is a popular textbook series having been widely used to teach English for international communication in plenty of schools and English centers in Vietnam. Thus, a better insight into the use and interpretation of indirect speech acts in the series is expected to facilitate teachers and students to use it. Also, it provides the researchers with sufficient spoken data necessary for a study of indirect speech acts. Besides, no studies of speech acts have been conducted with a focus on indirect speech acts with the sufficient data in the textbook series, as far as the researchers are able to know and get access to.

The study aims at investigating indirect speech acts in the conversations presented in the student's books of *New Interchange 1, 2, and 3* from the pragmatics perspective for the better understanding, teaching and learning of the textbook series. The research question is "*How frequently are indirect speech acts used and how are they realized in the conversations of New Interchange 1, 2 and 3?*". In this study, two key terms are "*indirect speech act*" and "*turn*". An indirect speech act is one in which there is an indirect relationship between a structure and its corresponding function. The term in this study also covers speech acts in which the speaker's intended meaning does not match the literal one. Turn is a suitable time when a speaker has the right to take his floor (i.e. right to speak) at any time in a conversation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Speech act and relevant concepts

According to Austin (1962), speech acts are actions intended to perform by a speaker on saying something. That means when a speaker produces utterances, he often intends to perform actions via those utterances. Typical speech acts are greeting, apologizing, disagreeing, thanking, complimenting, and so on. For example, when a speaker utters "*I'm sorry for being late*", not only does he produce a meaningful utterance but he also intends to do the act of apologizing.

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Austin's (1962) definition was later accepted and clarified by his followers, including Searle (1969, 1976), Yule (1996), among others. To some extent, they all seemed to agree that speech acts are actions intended to do by a speaker through utterances he performs in conversations with others.

According to Austin (1962), clarified by Searle (1969), Richards et al (1992), and Yule (1996), a speech act could be analyzed on three different levels, namely: "*locution*", "*illocution*", and "*perlocution*". A locutionary act is the act of saying something meaningful; an illocutionary act lies in what is intended by the speaker, or in other words, the intended meaning of the utterance; and a perlocutionary act means what is done by uttering words, or to be more exact, it is the effects of an utterance on the hearer or the hearer's reaction to an utterance.

2.2. Previous studies of speech acts, including indirect speech acts with data from the New Interchange series

To begin with, Nguyễn Thị Phương Loan (2010) examined the language in "*New Interchange Intro*" to adapt it to be usable in her teaching. However, only the first book of the *New Interchange* series with very simple, artificial language was investigated. Another relevant study was conducted by Moradi (2013) at Islamic Azad University in Iran for the purpose of evaluation of language functions in high school English textbooks, as compared to those in the *New Interchange* series. The series, thus, just served as a source of comparison, while the focus was on the high school textbooks for evaluation and adjustment. Recently, Nguyen Quang Ngoan and Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dung (2017) conducted a study of speech acts in the conversations of *New Interchange 1, 2, and 3*. The aim of the study is to examine *speech act types* in the conversations investigated. Both the *quantitative* approach and *qualitative* approach were employed to help work out the best possible findings. The data consist of a total of 784 turns comprising 8126 words in 97 conversations of *New Interchange 1, 2, and 3*. The study shows interesting results concerning speech act types. To be more specific, although there is a strong tendency for combination of different speech act types, single speech act groups are preferred with the predominance of *representatives*.

All those studies, however, did not focus on various patterns of indirect speech acts, which is the aim of this present study.

2.3. Classification of speech acts by level of indirectness

Linguists divided speech acts into *direct* and *indirect* ones besides their functions. To put it simple, direct speech acts occur when the speaker says what he means, while in indirect speech acts, the speaker means more than what is communicated. Yule (1996:55) suggested we base on the relationship between the three structural forms (*declarative, interrogative, and imperative*) and the three corresponding communicative functions (*statement, question, and command/request*) to classify speech acts as being direct or indirect. According to the author, whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function, we have a direct speech act. Whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an indirect speech act (Yule, 1996: 55). For example, the declarative structure, "*I'm hungry.*" can function as a direct speech act if it is used to make a statement (*i.e. I hereby tell you that I am hungry.*), but it can also function as an indirect speech act if it is intended by the speaker to make a command/request (*i.e. I hereby request you that you give me something to eat.*).

However, sometimes the structure matches the function well but it is not a direct speech act but an indirect one. For instance, the response "*I live with my uncle.*" to the question "*Do you have a house?*" should be interpreted as "*I don't have a house*", thus being an indirect speech act rather than a direct one. As stated by Saville-Troike (1982:36), direct acts are those where surface form matches interactional function, while in an indirect speech, it does not.

In the present study, Yule and Saville-Troike's ideas are adopted as the theoretical frameworks of indirect speech acts.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Data sources

The source of the data is the *New Interchange series*, written by Richards et al., first published in 1997 and introduced to Vietnam in 2005. The version in Vietnam is printed and distributed by the system of Fahasa Bookshops. The course components include the Student's Books, Teacher's Editions, Workbooks, Videos, and so on. However, only the Student's books were used and only *New Interchange 1*, 2, and 3 were selected since the language in *New Interchange Intro* is too simple, artificial, and unnatural. From the three student's books selected, only the conversations were chosen for investigation. According to the introduction in those textbooks, "*the conversations introduce the new grammar of each cycle in a communicative context and present functional and conversational expressions*" (Richards et al, 2005a: iv).

3.2. Samples of the study

Sharing the same set of data in Nguyen Quang Ngoan and Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dung's (2017) study, this study consists of 784 turns in 97 conversations in *New Interchange 1*, 2 and 3, with *New Interchange 1* having 33 conversations and *New Interchange 2* and 3 having 32 each.

To be more specific, *New Interchange 1* consists of 33 conversations, of which two are performed by three speakers and the rest by two. The total turns are 280 (35.71%) and words are 2369 (29.15%). *New Interchange 2* consists of 32 conversations, of which one is performed by four speakers, five performed by three, and the rest by two. The total turns are 242 (30.87%) and words are 2720 (33.47%). *New Interchange 3* consists of 32 conversations, all performed by two speakers. The total turns are 262 (33.42%) and words are 3037 (37.38%). As a matter of fact, the number of turns in *New Interchange 1* is the biggest, accounting for 35.71% compared to 30.87% and 33.42%, but it is *New Interchange 3* and 2 that have more words in conversations than the first (33.38% and 33.47% versus 29.15%, respectively).

The language functions used in the *New Interchange series* are varied in each textbook and cross the series. The language proficiency levels range from low-intermediate to upper-intermediate level, covering conversations for various communicative purposes in a variety of contexts.

3.3. Data analysis

The theoretical framework for data analysis presented in Table 1 was based on and adopted from Yule's (1996) and Saville-Troike's (1982) theories.

Table 1. Framework for the analysis of indirect speech acts

Type	Characteristic
+ <i>Declarative</i> - <i>Statement</i>	A declarative structure not for a statement but an exclamation, a question, or a command/request
+ <i>Exclamative</i> - <i>Exclamation</i>	An exclamative structure not for an exclamation but for a statement, a question, or a command/request
+ <i>Interrogative</i> - <i>Question</i>	An interrogative structure not for a question but a statement, an exclamation, or a command/request
+ <i>Imperative</i> - <i>Command/Request</i>	An imperative structure not for a command/request but a statement, an exclamation or a question
<i>Others</i>	The structure and function match, but the intended meaning and literal meaning are different; combinations of different indirect speech acts

For example, if an interrogative structure is used to make a question (e.g. *What's your name?*), it is a direct speech act. However, if it is used to make a command/request (e.g. *Could you close the door?*) or to make an exclamation, for example, the speaker's surprise (e.g. *Really?*), it is classified as an indirect speech act. Also, according to Saville-Troike (1982: 36), in an indirect speech act, a

surface form does not match its interactional function. For instance, (1) is a short conversation between two poor students who are close friends having known each other for a long time.

(1) - A: *You know. I've bought a villa by the sea.*

B: *Yeah! And I'm the President of the USA.*

It is obvious that in (1), B's utterance, "*And I'm the President of the USA*", is a declarative structure used for making a statement. However, it is evident from context that B's intended meaning is "*I don't believe it*" rather than "*I'm telling you I'm the President of the USA*". Thus, it is an indirect speech act though the structure is declarative and its function is a statement. This was seriously taken into consideration in our classification of an utterance as an indirect speech act.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Frequencies of indirect speech acts in New Interchange 1, 2 and 3

In this study, the percentage of indirect speech acts is worked out from their frequency in comparison to the number of turns in the whole series as well as in each separate textbook.

4.1.1. Proportion of indirect speech acts out of turns

Table 2 presents the proportion of indirect speech acts across the New Interchange series. As shown in Table 2, in the whole series, there are 150 indirect speech acts out of 784 turns, accounting for 19.1%. This supports the common belief that English native speakers prefer directness to indirectness and make use of the linear communication style, realized in the predominance of being direct, as stated by Kaplan (1972).

Particularly, the highest rate of indirect speech acts goes to New Interchange 3 at 21.4%, closely followed by that in New Interchange 2 at 19.8% and the one in New Interchange 1 at 16.4%.

Table 2. *Proportion of indirect speech acts out of turns*

	Number of indirect speech acts	Number of turns	%
New 1	46	280	16.4
New 2	48	242	19.8
New 3	56	262	21.4
Total	150	784	19.1

4.1.2. Share of indirect speech acts by volume

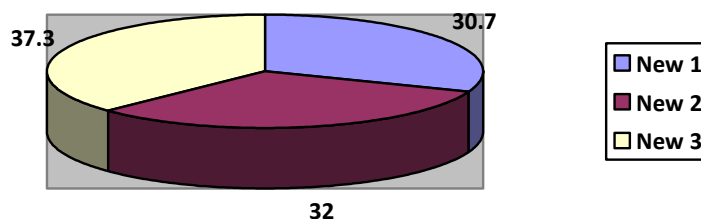


Chart 1. *Share of indirect speech acts by volume*

Chart 1 reveals the share of indirect speech acts in percentage by volume. As can clearly be seen from the chart, New Interchange 1, 2, and 3 in turn take 30.7%, 32.0%, and 37.3% of the whole

series. It is obvious that the bigger the volume number is, the higher the percentage seems to be. From the researchers' point of view, this phenomenon reflects the fact that when the level of proficiency in a textbook is higher, it is designed to allow speakers of English to express their illocutionary forces in a more indirect way. It is because the three textbooks are, as stated, designed to help learners develop their language proficiency from low-intermediate to intermediate to upper-intermediate level.

4.2. Realizations of indirect speech acts

Table 3 presents the distribution of different types of indirect speech acts in the whole series of New Interchange as well as in each particular textbook. As shown in Table 3, there are five groups of realized indirect speech acts, namely: +*Declarative-Statement*, +*Exclamative-Exclamation*, +*Interrogative-Question*, +*Imperative-Command/Request*, and *Others*.

+ *Declarative-Statement* consists of all the cases in which the speech act structure is declarative, while the function is not a statement, but a question, an exclamation, or a command/request instead.

+ *Exclamative-Exclamation* includes all the cases in which the speech act structure is exclamative, while the function is not an exclamation, but a statement, a question, or a command/request instead.

+ *Interrogative-Question* comprises all the speech acts in which the structure is interrogative, whereas the function is not a question, but a statement, an exclamation or a command/request instead.

+ *Imperative-Command/Request* stands for all the speech acts, of which the structure is imperative, whereas the function is a statement, a question, or an exclamation instead of a command/request.

The *others* group represents two cases. One includes all the cases in which the structure matches the function (e.g. a declarative structure for a statement or an interrogative structure for a question), but the speaker's intended meaning is different from the literal meaning, with clear evidence from the context. The other case comprises all the utterances in which two or more indirect speech acts of different types co-exist in one turn.

Let's now take a closer look at the distribution of those groups of indirect speech acts in both the whole series and each specific volume, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Distribution of indirect speech acts in detail*

	+Declarative -Statement		+Exclamative -Exclamation		+Interrogative -Question		+Imperative -Command/ Request		Others		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
New 1	5	10.9	0	0.0	23	50.0	0	0.0	18	39.1	46	100
New 2	2	4.2	1	2.0	22	45.9	0	0.0	23	47.9	48	100
New 3	5	8.9	0	0.0	26	46.4	0	0.0	25	44.7	56	100
Total	12	8.0	1	0.7	71	47.3	0	0.0	66	44.0	150	100

As the whole series is taken into concern, +*Interrogative-Question* is the predominant group of indirect speech acts which accounts for as high as 47.3%. The *others* group takes the second position at 44.7%, but it consists of several minor groups combined together rather than just a single type. Ranking the third is +*Declarative-Statement* which is amounted to a modest rate of just 8.0%. As it can be predicted, there is only one case of +*Exclamative-Exclamation* and no case of +*Imperative-Command/Request* in our collected data.

As regards each specific volume, the distribution of indirect speech acts in all the three textbooks almost follows the same mode of the whole series. Specifically, in *New Interchange 1*, +*Interrogative-Question*, *others*, and +*Declarative-Statement* in turn make up 50.0%, 39.1%, and

10.9%. The corresponding rates for those groups in *New Interchange 2* are 45.9%, 47.9% and 4.2%. Likewise, in *New Interchange 3*, 46.4% goes to *+Interrogative-Question*, 47.4% to *others*, and the last 8.9% to *+Declarative-Statement*.

As clearly shown in Table 3, the highest percentage of *+Declarative-Statement* goes to *New Interchange 1* with 10.9%, the highest percentage of *+Interrogative-Question* is also shared by *New Interchange 1* with 50.0%, while the highest percentage of *others* is contributed by *New Interchange 2* with 47.9%.

Following is a description of those groups of indirect speech acts in detail with relevant instances for illustration taken from the conversations being investigated.

4.2.1. A declarative structure not for a statement

Not frequently used with only 8.0% in total, declarative structures can be used to express other functions, making themselves become indirect speech acts.

a. A declarative structure for a suggestion/advice

Example (2) is a representative case showing how a *declarative* structure can be used to make a suggestion/advice. The direct one for Karen's utterance should be "*Bring a small gift*" functioning as an advice to Marta. Common structures of this types include "*You can/could/should/d' better do something*".

(2) - Marta: *Yes, but what do you do when you're invited to someone's house here?*

- Karen: *Well, it's the custom to bring a small gift.* (New Interchange 3, Unit 5, p. 28)

b. A declarative structure for a command/request

A declarative structure can also be used to make a command/request. As a representative, example (3) shows that Mr. Field's intended meaning via the utterance "*I know. But it is very loud*" is to ask Jason to turn down the TV. Jason reveals his successful inference of Mr. Field's intended meaning by replying: "*OK. I'll turn it down*".

(3) - Mr. Field: *Jason ...Jason! Turn down the TV a little, please.*

- Jason: *Oh, but this is my favorite program!*

- Mr. Field: *I know. But it's very loud.*

- Jason: *OK. I'll turn it down.* (New Interchange 2, Unit 6, p.34)

c. A declarative structure for an invitation/offer

Indirect speech acts also occur when a declarative structure is used to make an invitation/offer. For instance, in (4), Ted's utterance should be interpreted as an invitation "*Would you like to go to Saenger Theatre with me?*".

(4) - Brenda: *Well, I haven't been to the theater in a long time.*

- Ted: *Oh, OK, I hear there's a terrific show at the Saenger Theatre.*

- Brenda: *Great! Let's make a reservation* (New Interchange 1, Unit 10, p. 60)

d. A declarative structure for a decline/refusal

The last case of making an indirect speech act by a declarative structure in the examined data is to use it as a refusal. For example, in (5), Bob's utterance "*I love it, but I'm not really in the mood for it today*" should be interpreted as an indirect refusal to Sandy's indirect suggestion.

(5) - Sandy: *Well, what do you think of Indian food?*

- Bob: *I love it, but I'm not really in the mood for it today.* (New Interchange 1, Unit 13, p. 80)

4.2.2. An exclamative structure not for an exclamation

While there is no indirect speech act realized with an imperative structure in the present study, there is one case of exclamative structure not really being used for exclamation. In example (6), it is evident that Jason's utterance "*Oh, but this is my favorite program!*" is an indirect refusal to Mr. Field's direct command.

(6) - Mr. Field: *Jason ...Jason! Turn down the TV a little, please.*

- Jason: *Oh, but this is my favorite program!* (New Interchange 2, Unit 6, p.34)

4.2.3. An interrogative structure not for a question

The basic function of an interrogative structure is, of course, asking a question to find out necessary information. However, more often than not, interrogative structures are used for other intended purposes, resulting in indirect speech acts. In the study, this type of indirect speech acts account for a very high percentage, at 47.3%.

a. An interrogative structure for a command/request

It is very common that an interrogative structure is used to make a command/request. Indirect speech acts of this type are usually realized with structures like “*Can/Could/Would/Will you do something?*” or “*Would you mind doing something*”. To illustrate, (7) can serve as a good example.

(7) - Erica: *Excuse me. Could you tell me where the bank is?*

- Man: *There's one upstairs, across from the duty-free shop.* (New Interchange 2, Unit 2, p.11)

b. An interrogative structure for a suggestion/invitation/offer

An interrogative structure can also be used to make a suggestion or an invitation. This type of indirect speech acts is normally realized with structures like “*Would you like (to do) something?*”, “*Do you want (to do) something?*” “*What do you think of (doing) something?*”, and “*What/How about (doing) something?*”. Example (8) is given as a typical case of this type.

(8) - Anne: *Excuse me. How much is this jacket?*

- Sue: *It's \$ 499. Would you like to try it on?* (New Interchange 1, Unit 3, p.17)

c. An interrogative structure for a statement

Interrogative structures for a statement are usually manifested as rhetorical questions intentionally asked not for an answer but for asserting a point of view or assessment. In (9), Carla's utterance “*How can they do that? Isn't that against the law?*” should be interpreted as the indirect assertion “*They certainly can't do that as it is surely against the law.*”.

(9) - Andy: *You know, there's factory outside town that's pumping chemicals into the river.*

- Carla: *How can they do that? Isn't that against the law?* (New Interchange 3, Unit 7, p.43)

d. An interrogative structure for an exclamation

This type of indirect speech acts is usually realized with interrogatives in form of a word or a phrase orally produced with a rising intonation to express a speaker's strong emotion including surprise, joy, interest, excitement, or admiration. Example (10) can be considered as its representative.

(10) - Sue: *Well, my sister is a lawyer.*

- Rita: *Really? Does she live here in Seattle?* (New Interchange 1, Unit 5, p.29)

4.2.4. Other cases of indirect speech acts

Other cases of indirect speech acts make up as high as 44.7% of the total. However, they are mainly realized with exclamatives and combinations.

a. An exclamative structure for an exclamation which conveys a different intended meaning from the literal meaning

An exclamative is normally used to express the speaker's strong emotion. Nevertheless, the speaker's intended meaning is much more than what is said. Thus, basically, this is the case in which the speaker's intended meaning does not match the literal one. For example, Maria's utterance in (11) can be interpreted as “*I'm too surprised, and even too disappointed that it is too expensive!*”.

(11) - Steve: *The blue one right here. How much is it?*

- Maria: *It's \$42! That's expensive!* (New Interchange 1, Unit 3, p.14)

b. A combination of several indirect speech acts of different types

The second sub-type of the *others* group is concerned with all the possibilities of combination of different indirect speech acts. Example (12) shows a typical combination of two indirect speech acts, with the former being an interrogative structure to express an exclamation and the latter being a declarative structure to express a suggestion/advice.

(12) - Joan: Really? That's too bad! You should be at home in bed. It's really important to get a lot of rest.

- Craig: *Yeah, you're right.* (New Interchange 1, Unit 12, p.72)

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1. Conclusions

- In general, there are 150 indirect speech acts out of 784 turns, accounting for 19.1%. This supports the common belief that the English prefer directness to indirectness and make use of the linear communication style as stated by Kaplan (1972), realized in the predominance of direct speech acts.

- As a matter of fact, indirect speech acts are distributed a little bit differently by volume. Particularly, the highest rate of indirect speech acts goes to New Interchange 3 at 21.4%, closely followed by that in New Interchange 2 at 19.8% and the one in New Interchange 1 at 16.4%.

- If we turn our minds to the contribution of each volume to the whole series, New Interchange 1, 2, and 3 in turn take 30.7%, 32.0%, and 37.3% of the total, which confirms the fact that the higher the proficiency level is, the bigger the percentage of indirect speech acts seems to be.

- As regards the realizations of indirect speech acts, in the whole series, *+Interrogative-Question* is the predominant group taking as high as 47.3%. The *others* group takes the second position at 44.7%, but it consists of several minor groups combined with each other rather than just a single type. Ranking the third is *+Declarative-Statement*, amounted to a modest rate of just 8.0%. In each specific volume, the distribution of indirect speech acts in all the three textbooks almost follows the same fashion of the whole series, reflecting a good textbook design.

- As found in the study, *indirect speech acts* can be realized in *a declarative structure not for a statement, an exclamative structure not for an exclamation, an interrogative structure not for a question*, and *other cases* including indirect speech acts in which the intended meaning is different from the literal meaning, and those in combination with another indirect speech act of a different type.

5.2. Implications

As regards designers of English textbooks, the proportion and patterns of indirect speech acts should be designed in accordance with the level of proficiency on the basis that the higher the level is, the bigger proportion and more various patterns of indirect speech acts should be added.

As for English teachers, they are expected to be aware of the important role of speech act analysis in their teaching job, especially their teaching of conversations. It is because good knowledge and skills of speech act analysis are believed to help English teachers do a better job in teaching English in general and teaching conversations in particular. Analysis of speech acts should include the analysis of indirect speech acts. Especially the significant role of context should be taken into concern when speech acts, especially indirect speech acts, are analyzed and interpreted. It is because the same utterance in different contexts may convey different intended meanings which may be far different from its literal meaning.

When it comes to learners of English, they are suggested bearing in mind that good knowledge of and regular practice in speech acts, especially indirect speech acts certainly help them better their understanding, interpretation, and performance of speech acts in English. It is for this reason that the researchers suggest they study the analysis of linguistic features of indirect speech acts and practise applying them to interpreting and performing speech acts in their study and communication in English.

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Hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp trong hội thoại của giáo trình New Interchange 1, 2, 3

Tóm tắt: Bài báo trình bày kết quả nghiên cứu kiểu hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp trong hội thoại từ bộ giáo trình New Interchange 1, 2 và 3. Mục đích của nghiên cứu là nhằm khảo cứu hành vi ngôn ngữ trong các hội thoại được khảo sát. Nghiên cứu tiếp cận theo cả hai hướng định tính và định lượng với sự vận dụng các phương pháp thống kê, mô tả, đối sánh và tổng hợp. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu gồm 784 lượt lời trong 97 mẫu đàm thoại thu thập từ bộ giáo trình New Interchange. Nghiên cứu đã đưa ra những kết quả thú vị về hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp. Cụ thể là hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp chỉ chiếm khoảng chừng 20%, cho thấy sự ưa chuộng kiểu diễn đạt trực tiếp của người nói tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp lại được thể hiện khá đa dạng.

Từ khóa: hành vi ngôn ngữ gián tiếp; phát ngôn; lượt lời; Giáo trình New Interchange 1, 2, 3.