The Study of Speech Acts in Online Discussion Study of ELT Classroom

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Abstract

This present study deals with the classification of speech acts produced by the students in an online discussion study of English department students at State University of Padang, Indonesia. This study is carried out by using a qualitative approach that describes the use of students' speech acts in the interaction of student-student, and student-lecture. 24 students engaged in the discussion study and participated as the source of the data. The instrument used by the researcher to collect the data was an observation sheet supported by video recording. The recording of the video was transcribed into a text which to examined by the researcher of their speech acts. The research findings show that there were assertive, directives, expressive, and commissives performed by English department students. The most frequent speech acts performed by the students were assertive with a total of 7 utterances, directive with a total of 9 utterances, and commissive with a total 0f 10 utterances. Assertive speech acts were performed to demonstrate the material of the discussion by the presenter and used to deliver the idea toward the discussion study by the other participants. Directive speech acts were produced to ask the question, request for answer the question, suggestion, command, and invite in the discussion. Last, expressive speech acts presently as the most dominant speech acts in the discussion study including the word thanking, appreciating, agreeing, praising, and apologizing.

Keywords: pragmatics, speech acts, online discussion study, elt

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang klasifikasi tindak tutur yang dihasilkan oleh mahasiswa dalam studi diskusi online di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang menggambarkan penggunaan tindak tutur mahasiswa dalam interaksi mahasiswa ke mahasiswa, dan mahasiswa ke dosen. Terdapat dua puluh empat mahasiswa yang terlibat dalam diskusi yang berpartisipasi sebagai sumber data. Insturmen yang digunakan peneliti adalah lembar observasi yang didukung oleh rekaman video. Rekaman video lalu ditranskip kedalam teks yang nantinya akan diuji oleh peneliti terkain tindak tutur yang dihasilkan siswa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdaoat empat jenis tindak tutur yang dilakukan oleh siswa pendidianbahasa Inggris, yaitu asertif, direktif, ekspresif dan komisif, sedangkan tindak tutur deklaratif tidak digunakan oleh siswa. Tindak tutur yang paling sering dilakukan oleh siswa adalah tindak tutur asertif dengan total 7 ucapan, direktif dengan total 9 ucapan, dan komisif dengan total 10 ucapan. Tindak tutur asertif dilakukan untuk mendemonstrasikan materi diskusi oleh penyaji dan digunakan untuk menyampaikan gagasan terhadap kajian diskusi oleh peserta lain. Tindak tutur direktif diproduksi untuk mengajukan pertanyaan, meminta jawaban atas pertanyaan, saran, perintah dan mengajak dalam diskusi. Terakhir, tindak tutur ekspresif hadir sebagai tindak tutur yang paling dominan dalam kajian diskusi meliputi kata berterima kasih, menghargai, menyetujui, memuji, dan meminta maaf.

Kata Kunci: *pragmatik, tindak tutur, forum diskusi*

1. Introduction

Language is intimately linked to human life; it serves as a means for humans to communicate their thoughts, feelings, hopes, ideas, and opinions to others. Language is a human communication system that consists of the organized grouping of sounds (or their written representations) into bigger units, such as morphemes, words, phrases, and utterances (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Language is also used to create intentional contact between the teacher and the students during the learning discussion process in the classroom. Teachers and students build proper communication through their speech to attain better learning outcomes. In higher education, students are typically the subject of the study. They are hoped to be active to participate in every activity provided by the lectures. Online discussion study is the activity that at once is the model of learning in the classroom at state university of Padang. The discussion study was conducted by the moderator that played by the students and the other students as the participants. In this activity, where the students dominantly communicated in front of the class, students practice their English to communicate in classroom interaction.

However, based on observation, it found that students encounter several indication problems while they attempt to understand the meaning of the utterance spoken by the speaker. They occasionally seemed to have unsimilar contexts when talking about something in the discussion study. It might be because they come from different areas and cultures that backgrounded their background knowledge in interpreting something. To speculate more deeply concerning how students understand the meaning in their communication. It is required to examine the use of the speech act used by English department students in online discussion study.

Speech act is a branch of pragmatics (Renkema, 1993) that care about the use of language in social contexts and the ways people produce and understand meaning through language. Speech act is an action performed via utterances (Yule, 1996). Speech acts are those acts of making statements or questions, giving commands or orders, refusing, complimenting, apologizing, etc. (Rahmayani & Dwiyuliana, 2018). Speech acts were proposed by Austin in 1962 in his monograph entitled *How to Do Things with Words*. He believed that the power of utterance is not only to say something but more with to do something (Sadock in Horn & Ward, 2004). Austin put three ways of speech acts that were performed when someone produced language namely locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions. Locution or locutionary is the utterance that determines the sense and reference; illocutions or illocutionary is the utterance of a sentence such as an offer, promise, request, etc. containing force associated with them; perlocution or perlocutionary is the effect brought by the sentence form speakers to the interlocutors (Levinson, 1983).

In Levinson (1983) it noted that illocutionary is the interest focus of Austin that indicates exclusively to the concept of speech act. Illocutionary is the most crucial level in speech acts since it has forced to act desired by the speakers to the interlocutor (Hidayat, 2016). in a class situation when a teacher has the authority to order a student to do something, the teacher might say *your class is so messy*. As an illocutionary word, it does not only warn the students about the condition of their class further it means a request to the student to clean up their class. Another example of illocutionary force is when someone asks a question such as *is there any salt over there? It* can be understood as a question. On the other hand, it expresses a polite request (Mey, 1994).

Austin (1962) in Sadock in Horn & Ward (2004) introduced the classification of illocutionary acts into five-ways taxonomy involving assertive, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarative. First, assertive concerns with presenting the finding based on evidence (Chapman, 2011). It includes examples such as *state, suggest, boast, complain, claim, report, warn (that)*, etc. (Cruse, 2011). Second, directives are those kinds of speech acts that mean an

attempt by the speaker to attain the interlocutor to make a certain action (Huang, 2007) involving the word of *order, command, request, beg, beseech, advise (to), recommend, ask, ask (to)* (Cruse, 2011). Next is commissives, which are those type of speech acts that execute by the speaker to make some future action; it expresses the speakers' intention to do some object (Huang, 2007) by using the examples such as *promise, vow, offer, undertake, contract, and threaten* (Cruse, 2011). Next, expressive speech acts are those kinds of utterances that express mood or psychological attitude of the speaker such as joy, sorrow, like or dislike (Huang, 2007), for example, *apologize, thank, congratulate, welcome, etc.* (Horn & Ward, 2004). The last is declarative. Declarative is a kind of speech act said by the speaker that could change the world of the hearer in the sense of the reality of life is no longer the same after the speaker has said. For instance, when someone says resign, dismiss, divorce (in Islam), christen name, open (e.g. an exhibition), excommunicate, sentence, (in court), consecrate, etc. (Cruse, 2011).

The use of Speech acts can be in a formal or informal situation. In a formal situation, it can be employed by students and teachers in the classroom. The relationship between students and teachers can be running well if the intent of the utterance is properly understood by them. In this situation, the teacher and the learners should have similar backgrounds, have similar experiences, and be able to perceive the communication context. It is essential to have the same comprehension between the speakers and the listener, or between the authors and the readers, to fully comprehend the meaning of someone's utterances or words (Zulianti & Febriyanti, 2018).

Discussion is one of the activities in the teaching-learning process at the higher education level, particularly in speaking sessions where speakers and speech partners are involved. The speaker and the speech partner alternate roles in the conversation activities when expressing opinions or ideas. It is discovered that the students' statements in this instance express their viewpoints, ask questions, provide a refutation, provide orders, grant permission, and make offers, among other things. The simultaneous processes of communication are highly influenced by specific circumstances and occurrences.

The researcher is interested in this topic because of the phenomenon that there are still many students who do not pay attention to the meaning of speech acts in oral performance. Since speech acts are had a significant role in the quality of communication. It is required to examine the performance of speech acts by n2nd-semester students of English education department of State University of Padang. There are several studies conducted a study related to the topic of speech acts analysis. The first is Zulianti (2018) in her study states that the usage of Speech acts gives some impacts on the learning activity: (1) improving students' understanding of Speech acts, increasing the level of decency in communication; (2) and improving the class atmosphere and students' motivation, and building a good relationship between teacher and students.

This present study is along with Santosa et al., (2021) who conduct a case study on consent to the speech act on teacher talk in EFL classrooms. It focuses on the teacher's speech during class communication by administering classroom observation and employing recording. The purposes of the study are to classify the type of speech employed by the teacher in the classroom and figure out the reason why the particular category is chosen by the teacher. The result of the study shows that assertive speech act is the most frequent category used by the teacher in which the teacher instructs the students to complete a test practice and discuss it later on. Finally, it is

said that certain speech act classification chosen by the teacher affects the teaching approach and vice versa.

In line with Santosa et al., (2021), Andewi & Waziana (2019) examine the types and functions of the Speech acts produced by the teacher. The most commonly used speech is a directive that proposes a need statement, bald imperative, embedded imperative, permission directive, and question directive. Both of these researches were analyzed in a quantitative approach. Hence, the results tend to be comprised of the amount of the speech act instead of the deepening interpretation of each speech act produced by the teacher.

Septiani (2020) investigates the types of Speech acts produced by English lecturers. The lecturer reported showing five kinds of Speech acts involving declarative, representatives, expressions, directives, and commissives. The lecturer's most common type of speech act was representational, accounting for 54% of the total. What types of Speech acts were performed and which predominant type of speech act was performed could be the issue of discussion? Finally, the lecturer should explain more for the students could get the point of the discussion.

Based on the preceding explanation, this research intends to analyze the type of speech act used by students in online classroom studies. Five classifications of speech acts including declarative, representatives, expressions, directives, and commissives were examined by the researcher to see how the students employ them in their communication. This is interesting to study in-depth because the performance of students' speech act could be different according to their cultural understanding. Finally, this present study hopefully covers literature on Speech acts used in the classroom context, gives insights on how speech act classifications affect the teaching-learning process and classroom interaction, and contribute to improving the student speaking skills.

2. Method

In this present study, the researcher adopted descriptive qualitative research. It was suitable to systematically record all linguistic phenomena under their nature. The data was collected in an online discussion study that proceed authentically. There were 24 students in the n2nd semester of English Education Student in the University of Padang who participate as the informant of the study. The observation was helped by a video used as the instrument of the research. Besides, the researcher was the main instrument since it makes direct observations to collect data that meets the standards for research data, such as observation rules, recording devices, and notes.

In this study, the researcher reported, observed, evaluated, and interpreted how students used speech acts during online discussion activities. The researcher analyzed and described the data using theories of speech acts. The following were the data analysis methodologies used in this study:

a) Convert recorded information into written form.

b) Recognizing speech acts in the utterance that have been written down in the written form. The name of students will be written in the form of abbreviations. For example, Geovani Putra will be written as GP in the extract of Speech acts.

c) Marking speech acts according to the classification of speech acts

d) Describing the data based on the classification of the speech acts in the form of narrative information

e) Give the conclusion of the data

3. Results and Discussion

This section serves the findings and results of the research. The findings were carried out from one observation in one meeting which was taped from a recording video. Based on data analysis from one discussion study the researcher found and 28 utterances that can be classified as speech acts. The classification of speech acts found in the discussion consists of four types specifically assertive, directives, commissive, and expressive utterance. The detailed information will be illustrated in the following passage.

Classification of speech acts

Based on data analysis, below is the percentage of speech acts that occurred in the discussion study:

Table 1. Percentage of speech acts occurred in online discussion study

No	Classification of speech acts	Number of utterances	Percentage
	Assertive	7	25%
	Directive	10	36%
	Commissive	2	7%
	Expressive	9	32%
	Total	28	100%

3.1 Assertive speech act

Assertive Speech acts are those that inform the speaker that what he is saying is true. Of all varieties of illocutionary act, speech types of assertive illocutionary act dominate. Searle in Levinson (1983) states about assertive illocutionary acts are categorized into some functions or types namely asserting, reporting, explaining, showing something, suggesting, and refusing. According to the data analysis, there are eight examples of utterances detected as assertive Speech acts:

1. The honorable lecturer and my beloved friends, *today I will present you a topic about metaphor. My explanation will be divided into two parts, the first is about conceptual metaphor and the second is about the previous studies on metaphor.*

2. *So here we see the definition of metaphor according to Lakoff and Johnson.*

3. *You don't move any slides; I couldn't see your slide.*

4. *We can see the relationship between time and money*, their relationship is the abstract one we just can imagine and can't touch.

5. *When we use the metaphor in the learning process it can make students interested in the learning and then add motivation.*

6. *Using metaphor can stimulate the abstract meaning of the words and makes us more creative in thinking about the language.*

7. To conclude this explanation, I quote the sentences from Lakoff and Jhonson: A metaphor is a word or phrase in for a real thing it can help us begins to understand an unfamiliar concept by relating to a more familiar one. *It allows us to understand abstract thought and feelings that cannot be directly seen, heard, touched, smells, or taste.*

In extract number (1), the speaker reported some information before beginning the material in the class. The information reported by the speaker is that the explanation of the discussion will ve to have three sections consisting of the concept of metaphor and some previous studies on metaphor. Reporting is one of the functions of assertive illocutionary act that aims to inform something that has been done (Hornby, 1995). In this case, the reporting is informing the students of the topic that will be discussed in the learning process.

Meanwhile, in extract number (6), the speaker tried to explain her opinion concerning the use of metaphor. She stated that the abstract meaning of words in metaphor is adequate to help the speaker to be more creative. Explaining is the way to tell something in detail (Hornby, 1995). Explaining in this datum was intended to tell the students about the material in more detail and the speaker gave additional explanations after explaining the main course of the material.

Extract numbers (2) and (4) showed assertive speech acts by inviting the students to see something. Showing something is the way how the speaker indicates something (Hornby, 1995). In the extracted number (4) the speaker showed the students the relation between time and money in the form of their characteristics. He/she used assertive speech acts directly by saying 'see'. In addition, extract number (2) showing something is also directly uttered by the speaker. The speaker said 'so here we see' which means that she began to explain the notion of metaphor by showing the definition of metaphor by one expert.

Next, in extract number (3), the utterance is categorized as informing. The speakers informed the presenters that the slides had by presenter did not move or show the same image or slide. Informing is similar to asserting in which the speaker delivers one fact or information to the interlocutor.

Furthermore, the form of asserting on the utterances number (7) and (8) is asserting. (Hornby, 1995) defined asserting as the act of conveying information about the truth and fact. In this case, the speaker tried to state the truth about the material that will be learned. Through the speaker's utterance, the other students derived the meaning from what the speaker said that they will not learn another kind of topics except those two kinds that have been mentioned.

3.2 Directive Speech acts

Directives are those kinds of Speech acts that speakers use to get someone else to do something (Yule, 1996). In this kind of Speech act, the speaker expresses what he or she wants. The function of a directive can be a command, order, request, or suggestion. Based on the data analysis, the researcher found 8 data of directive Speech acts. Here are the explanations:

1. So now, *have you ever heard about metaphors before?*

2. *Can you now describe what is time?* The participants can you describe to us what is time

3. You don't move any slide; I couldn't see your slide.

4. *I don't think you need to ask your friends but you have to present it.* Not to ask a question

5. *If you have any questions, comments, suggestions for me, or additional information you may raise your hand.*

6. Okay, *Mr. Doris time is yours.*

7. *Can I ask one more question moderator?*

8. Miss Helmi? You look like have something to say, *maybe you have some additional information for us related to this material* .

9. *Maybe you can share again with the other participant miss Madina.*

10. *May I present?*

Looking at the extracts above, directive speech acts produced by the speaker are in the form of requesting, asking, suggesting, and inviting. Extract numbers (9) and (10) showed directive acts in the form of asking. Asking act is directly uttered by the speakers by delivering the question tag such as *"Can you now describe what is time?"* and *"have you ever heard about metaphor before?"*. *In extract number (9) the question sentence is pointed by the word "can" at the beginning of the sentence. The speaker wanted the interlocutor to describe to the class the notion of the time. Besides, it also happened in extract number (8) emphasized by the word "have" at the beginning of the sentence. The speakers asked the interlocutors whether they ever heard about metaphors before joining the class.*

Next, in extract number (11) the speaker provided the suggestion by saying 'I don't think you need to…' which can be classified as giving a suggestion. The speaker suggested the students do something. Suggesting is the act to say something to be chosen. In this type of assertive, the speaker usually conveys an idea or a plan to be considered by the hearer (Hornby, 1995). This form of speech acts includes direct suggestion. The speaker suggested what the students should do directly by giving them one choice. Besides, the extract number (12) shows that the speaker offered to the member of the discussion to raise their hand if they have something to say. The utterance performed by the speaker is categorized as a suggestion is signed out by the word "may" in "you may raise your hand."

The next directive act produced by the students is requesting. Requesting indicated in the extract number (15), (16), and (17) by using the word "Maybe you can," *"Maybe you can share again with the other participant miss Madina,"* and "May I presenter." *In extract number (15),* requesting signed out by the word "maybe" present in the extract number (15). In this context, the speaker requested if miss Silvia was willing to convey her ideas about the topic they had in the discussion.

Next, the context requested by the speaker in extract number (16) is whether the presenter could give the chance to another participant to answer a related question discussed them at that time. Last, in extract number (17), the speaker requested to offer herself to get a chance to share her idea in the discussion forum.

3.3 Commissive Speech acts

Commissive is the kind of speech act that speakers use to commit themselves to some future action (Yule, 1996). The whole point of commissive is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action (Austin, 1962). (Cutting, 2002) adds that promising, threatening, refusing, pledging, offering, vowing, and volunteering are some examples of illocutionary forces that fall under the category of commissive. According to the result of the analysis, the researcher found the commissive speech acts uttered by the speakers are in the form of promising and offering. Here are the examples:

1. *We can wait for another participant* because I am still thinking about my question for you.

2. Okay, um to wait for the other participant to give the additional information or question related to this material *I will try to answer* these two questions from Mr. Doris and Miss Muhriza.

Extract number (18) showed the use of the offering. The speaker contributed the idea to the presenter to wait for other participants so he/she can deliver the question to the presenter. It cannot be classified as promising although the speaker commits to doing something in the future. On the other hand, it is classified as an offering because the one authorized to set the discussion is the presenter and not the speaker. Next in the extracted number (19), the speaker put herself forward to answer the questions from the participants to provide a time for the other participants to deliver their reaction and responds as an addition to the material that has been presented by the presenter. Those kinds of speech acts perform a future action from the speaker in the discussion forum.

3.4 Expressive Speech acts

Expressive is a kind of Speech act in which the speaker's utterance expresses what the speaker feels. They express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes joy, or sorrow (Yule, 1996). In addition, (G. N. Leech, 1983) states that the illocutionary force of these acts can be in the forms of apologizing, condoling, praising, congratulating, thanking, and the like.

1. *The honorable* our lecturer and my beloved friends

2. *Well, thank you* Mr. Doris that's a good question.

3. *Well thank you* to the presenter for the chance, I will try to answer Mr. Doris' question about the impact of using metaphors in the learning process for teachers and students

4. You said that if we use metaphor in our class the atmosphere or the vibes of the situation will be joyful and fun and rich the quality of the sentence may be. Okay, *thank you Miss Ikhlimah*

5. Okay, presenter, *actually I'm in line* with Ikhlimah's information but here I want to give some information about it

6. Yes, Miss Fatma, *I do agree* with you because when we use metaphors, we can be more creative and we can strengthen our words

7. Okay presenter *I appreciate* that all of your explanation just now that's clarifying everything related to the impact of metaphor

8. *Thank you very much*, ma'am, correct me if I'm wrong

9. How about we wait for the other participants so you can add your question one more. If later we have more time, I will invite you again Miss Muhriza. *I'm sorry*

It can be seen that in extract number (20) the speaker produced expressive speech acts in the form of praising as an opening to start a presentation. Next, there are 4 extracts in which the speakers commit to express their emotions in the form of thanking the other speaker. Those thanking of speech acts can be indicated by the words *'thank'* in every extract. The speaker expresses his feeling because the students have done something good to the speaker's questions. Meanwhile, in extract number (28) the speakers as presenter express her apology by saying *'sorry'* to one participant. The presenter offered to that one participant to attempt for waiting to the other participants so she can add her question. It can be seen that the presenter limited the question from participants. If only there are no longer participants who want to ask a question the presenter will invite this participant to call for her question. The last expressive speech act produced by the students is agreeing. There are two extracts involving the kind of expressive speech act. In extract number (24) agreeing is indicated by the word 'in line' by the speaker to deliver additional answers to a question in the discussion. Meanwhile, in extract number (25) agreeing is indicated by the word 'I do agree' by the speaker to present her agreement and emphasize the information from the previous participant.

3.5 Declarative Speech acts

It is found that the students did not utter any declarative word that can change the word of the hearer in the discussion classroom as Yule (1996) demonstrated that declaration speech acts are the utterance that can change the world via utterance. Besides, Searle (1977) in Mey (1994) mentioned that Declarative actions cause a change in the status or aspect of an object or objects exclusively as a result of the declaration's successful implementation. In this case, the speaker needs to have the authority or to have a special role to change the world of the hearer. The

changing world of the hearer means that the situation which is changed from him/her/them caused by a speaker is not easy to be avoided or broken or left (Santosa et al., 2021).

In the results and discussion, the data showed the dominant type of speech act performed by the lecturer was assertive, directive, and expressive. This could be proven by the result of observations conducted by the researcher. There were 28 utterances found by the researcher. 7 utterances were classified as assertive speech acts; 9 utterances were directive speech acts; 2 utterances belonged to commissive speech acts; 10 utterances were expressive speech acts, and no utterances is found can be classified as declarative speech acts. The assertive, directive, and expressive showed as the dominant type of speech acts performed by students.

Based on video observation, researchers believe that assertiveness was one of the dominant types of speech acts used to demonstrate the material of the discussion by the presenter and used to deliver the idea toward the discussion study. After that, there were directive speech acts covering 9 utterances that were used to *ask* the question, *request* for answer the question, *suggestion, command, and invite* in the discussion. Those are the interaction that is commonly found in an active discussion forum where the member of the discussion attempt to deliver and respond to the question by using a proper word related to speech acts utterances. Last, expressive speech acts presently as the most dominant speech acts in the discussion study including the word *thanking, appreciating, agreeing, praising, and apologizing.*

The students chose the proper speech act to be delivered to this class. The students performed the chosen utterances that will be understood easily by the other students and the lecturer. They took a suitable way to participate in the discussion to make the discussion study process could run well. This was to minimize misunderstanding and misinterpreting among the students and lecturer in the class.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded the students in the second semester of English Education Student in the University of Padang have performed the proper speech acts in the communication of their online discussion study. There were four types of speech acts performed by the English students, namely assertive, directives, expressive, and commissives, whereas declarative was not utilized by the students. The most frequent speech acts performed by the students were assertive with a total of 7 utterances, directive with a total of 9 utterances, and commissive with total 0f 10 utterances. Assertive speech acts were performed to demonstrate the material of the discussion by the presenter and used to deliver the idea toward the discussion study by the other participants. Directive speech acts were produced to *ask* the question, *request* for answer the question, *suggestion, command, and invite* in the discussion. Last, expressive speech acts presently as the most dominant speech acts in the discussion study including the word *thanking, appreciating, agreeing, praising, and apologizing.*

This present study may have several limitations due to the source of the data, scope of the study, or instrument used to collect the data. It is hoped for the future scholars to compute the gaps left by the researcher. Several topics that can be suggested for the future research are the similarities and differences of speech acts performed by the students, speech acts based on cultural understanding, and explicit course on speech acts.

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