Pedagogical Research Journal
Vol. 2 No 2. December 2024, pp. 53-60
P-ISSN: Procces E-ISSN: Process, DOI:

AN ANALYSIS SPEECH ACT IN GROUP CHAT CONVERSATION AMONG EFL STUDENTS

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
keyword 1; Speech Acts
keyword 2; Type of Speech Act
keyword 3; Group Chat Interaction

Article history:

Received 2024-06-20
Revised 2024-11-12
Accepted 2024-11-28

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the use of speech acts in conversations among English department students. It aims to identify the various types of speech acts employed within this specific context. The study utilizes a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on analyzing the content of these conversations through textual examination. The study focused on the classification of speech acts in WhatsApp group chat among English department students at Lancang Kuning University. The findings showed that are five types of speech Acts that will be found in the group chat English department student and there are representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The initial type of speech acts is representative (6 Conversation), the second is expressive (5 Conversation), the third is directive (4 Conversation), the fourth commissive (2 Conversation), and the last is declarative (1 Conversation).

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1. INTRODUCTION

In college speaking classes, discussions are a key activity. Students take turns talking as speaker and listener, sharing ideas and opinions. These conversations involve a variety of speech acts, like expressing viewpoints, asking questions, disagreeing, giving instructions, allowing something, and proposing something. The specific situation and what's happening around them heavily influence how these communication exchanges unfold (Sarah, Madina, 2022). Classroom communication relies entirely on spoken words to get things done. Analyzing how teachers and students use language to learn and teach is called discourse analysis. (Christianto, D. 2020). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering communication extends beyond grammar and vocabulary. Speech act theory, introduced by J.L. Austin and John Searle, sheds light on how utterances perform actions and achieve

specific goals (Searle, 1979). Speech acts equip learners with the ability to discern the underlying message behind an utterance.

Online conversation provides a breeding ground for English department students to engage with academic ideas and refine their communication skills. These interactions are ripe with diverse speech acts, the building blocks of achieving communicative goals. Students utilize directives to request information, seek clarification, or initiate discussions. Representatives come into play when students share knowledge, present opinions, or summarize ideas. Commissive surface when students offer help, volunteer for tasks, or make commitments. Expressive are used for agreement, appreciation, or polite disagreement.

The informal and dynamic nature of these online chats fosters a unique blend of speech acts, tailored to the friendly yet academically inclined environment. Analyzing these conversations through the lens of speech act theory reveals how students leverage language to achieve various goals, such as negotiating roles, establishing rapport, and developing a sense of belonging. Politeness strategies and other pragmatic features further contribute to a supportive and engaging learning environment. A 2003 paper by Smith highlights the importance of speech act theories, particularly those developed by Searle in 1969, for comprehending communication within social contexts. By grasping these theories, we can improve our capacity to utilize speech acts efficiently in everyday interactions.

Furthermore, studying speech acts in online EFL conversations can provide valuable insights into how culture shapes communication. By examining how students from different backgrounds utilize speech acts, we can gain a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and develop more effective teaching strategies. Understanding speech acts can also empower EFL learners to participate more confidently and effectively in online discussions. By recognizing the different functions of language, students can select the most appropriate speech acts to achieve their communicative goals in a variety of online contexts.

In conclusion, speech act theory offers a valuable framework for analyzing and understanding communication in online EFL settings. By examining the diverse speech acts employed by students, we can gain insights into how language is used to achieve specific goals, navigate social dynamics, and foster a positive learning environment.

This research aims to explore the discourse phenomena related to the use and roles of speech acts in informal communication among EFL students.

We have formulated the following research question(s):

What types of speech acts are found in group chat conversations among EFL students?
Which types of speech acts is most prevalent in group chat conversations among EFL students?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach, specifically a descriptive method, to analyze speech acts within a specific context in group chat conversations among English Department students to explore how EFL students leverage speech acts for informal communication.

2.2 Data collection

In gathering the data for this research, a meticulous approach will be employed to ensure the collected information accurately reflects the use of speech acts within the group chat conversations. The primary data source will be the chat history of the selected WhatsApp group consisting of EFL students. Their informed consent will be obtained prior to utilizing the chat history for research purposes.

There are some procedures which the researcher done in the collecting data. First, the researcher will meticulously read through the chat conversations. Second, the utterances containing speech acts relevant to the research objectives will be identified. Third, each identified utterance will be categorized based on Searle's Speech Act Theory (declaratives, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives).

2.3 Analysis techniques

In analyzing the data, the researcher applied theory from Searle's Theory. In data analysis, the researcher analyzes the data through several steps below:

a. The researcher will classify the identified speech acts into their respective categories based on Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969).
b.
c. The researcher will analyze the identified speech acts to understand the underlying meaning and intentions behind the conversations they represent.
d. The researcher will discuss the findings in relation to the research question.

2.4 Data Presentation

The research findings will be presented in a clear and accessible manner using informal language. The analysis will be explained through the use of descriptive sentences and examples extracted from the collected data. This approach aims to ensure the research results are easily understood by a wider audience.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the types of speech acts employed by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students within their group chats. We aimed to answer the research question: "What types of speech acts are found in group chat conversations among EFL students, and which type is most prevalent?" By analyzing sample conversations, we aimed to shed light on the communicative purposes these students leverage language for within this informal digital environment.

The following sections present our findings and a discussion of their implications. We categorize the identified speech acts and analyze how they contribute to the overall functionality of these group chats. Here, we will showcase how the identified speech acts directly address the research question and provide evidence from the analyzed data samples.

Findings: Speech Acts in EFL Student Group Chats

DECLARATIVES

Data 1:

Rere: "Alright everyone, for the article, I'll handle the research on speech acts, and Nadia, you'll be in charge of the conclution."

This sentence is declarative. By declaring who will handle specific aspects of the article, Rere directly alters the state of the group project. Each member now has assigned responsibilities. In essence, Rere's statement declares a new state within the group by establishing responsibilities for the article project. This aligns perfectly with the core function of a declarative speech act.

REPRESENTATIVES

Data 1:

Arif: "Guys izin telat" (Guys I will be late)

This sentence is the representatives. This is an assertion where the speaker is

informing the listeners about a future event (their lateness). It reflects the speaker's belief about what will happen.

Data 2:
Divthry: “Kata anak sebelah online kan Weee. Tapi di kasih UTS di edlink orang tu batasnya jam 12.” (“Someone next door said it’s online, right. But they was given UTS in edLink, the deadline until 12 o’clock.”)
This sentence is the representatives. Because Divthry's statement represents a factual claim about the situation, mentioning the discrepancy between the expected online activity and the given UTS deadline.

Data 3:
Dwi: “Sir udah di kelas” (“Sir already in class”)
This statement is the representatives. This statement conveys information about the lecturer’s presence in class. It is an assertion about a factual situation and also serves as a description of the current state.

Data 4:
Maria: “Guys besok kelas statistic ganti ke pagi jam 8-9.30 di Pascasarjana” (“Guys, the statistics class has changed to the morning at 8 - 9.30 at Postgraduate.”)
This statement is the representatives. Maria's statement contains elements of both a statement of fact and an assertion. She informs her classmates that the Statistics class schedule has been changed. The speaker informs the listeners about their belief regarding a change in the class schedule, intending for them to understand this information.

Data 5:
Divthry: “Weee tempat kalian hujan deras?” (Guys is it raining heavily where you are?)
This sentence is a question, not a representative statement. However, it seeks information about a factual condition (whether it is raining), which, if answered, would be a statement of fact. But In this case, she asked a question to determine whether it was raining elsewhere because it was raining where she was.

Data 6:
Rika: “Aku disuruh nyebarin yah sama kating soalnya orang tu tadi di chat ma'am refika melalui grup mata kuliah beliau untuk menginfokan jam seminarnya di mulai.” (“I was told to share it with Kating because that person had chatted with Ma'am Refika through her course group to inform me about the time the seminar would start.”)
This sentence is representatives. In this sentence, the speaker is reporting on an event that has occurred, someone (has informed the group about the start time of a seminar. The speaker is simply passing on this information to others.

COMMISSIVES
Data 1:

Divthry: "Ketua @Haikal kalau hujannya masih deras aku izin telat lya" (“Leader Haikal, if the rain is still heavy, I will be late.”) This sentence is commissive. Because Divthry is committing to a future action (being late) due to the rain but be more specific towards refusal by including reasons and requests for

permission. In Divthry's case, while there is an element of commitment (permission to be late), the initiative for the delay was not of her own volition and there was an underlying reason. This is what makes the category more inclined towards refusal with an accompanying explanation.

Data 2:

Dwi: "Besok lah tak tanyain ke mam tu lagi" ("I will ask the ma'am again tomorrow.")

Dwi's utterance is categorized as a commissive speech act, specifically a voluntary offer. She voluntarily commits to the action of asking the 'ma'am' again in the future. The initiative to ask again came from herself and there was no element of coercion. This is what makes it classified as a voluntary offer

DIRECTIVES

Data 1:

Haikal: "Bantu donk yang bisa, besok aku masuk kerja pula" (Help out if you can, I have to work tomorrow)

This sentence is categorized as a request (directive speech act). Requests in directive speech acts are utterances that aim to ask someone to do something. In this case, the speaker is asking for help in a more polite or informal tone by using the word "dong" which is often used in Indonesian to convey a more casual or friendly impression. The speaker also provides a reason, "because I have to work tomorrow", to strengthen the request by providing context or urgency as to why the help is needed.

Data 2:

Nana: "Selebihnya cepat ya ke kampus Haikal udah nunggu" ("Everyone else, please hurry to the campus. Haikal is already waiting.")

This sentence is an example of a directive in speech act theory because it contains an instruction that is expected to be followed by the receivers of the message. In this case, the speaker is asking the listeners to quickly go to the campus because Haikal is already waiting.

Data 3:

Dwi: "Guys, please hurry up!! Sir is already waiting in the classroom."

This sentence can be categorized as a directive in speech act theory because it contains an order or instruction that is expected to be followed by the receiver of the message. In this case, the speaker is asking the listeners to speed up their actions, which indicates an intention to influence the actions of others.

Data 4:

Dwi: "Kayak biasa aja nggak sih? tulis tangan dibikin pdf abis tu di upload ke drive" (Isn't it like usual? Write it by hand, convert it to PDF, then upload it to the drive)

This sentence can be categorized as a directive in speech act theory because it's aim to influence the hearer's behavior in some way. In this case, the speaker is suggesting a course of action (writing by hand, converting to PDF, and uploading). While the sentence doesn't explicitly use directive words like "should" or "must," the phrasing "Isn't it like usual?" implies a preferred way of doing things for the exam. It suggests a reminder or recommendation rather than a direct order.

EXPRESSIVES
Data 1:

Divthry: "Aduhhh lupa beli materai lagi." (“Oh no, I forgot to buy another stamp.”)

This sentence can be categorized as expressive speech acts, Divthry's utterance would be categorized as an expression of regret or frustration. In this case, divthry regrets forgettingto buy a stamp.

Data 2:

Dea: “Ok thank you.”

This sentence can be categorized as expressive speech acts, Dea's utterance would be categorized as an expression of appreciation or gratitude, conveying positive feelings towards something that has been done or given to someone.

Data 3:

Rere: "Duh mendadak ya" (“Oh, that's so sudden.”)

This sentence can be categorized as expressive speech acts, Rere's utterance would be categorized as an expression of surprise or dismay about the short notice.

Data 4:

Edo: “Maaf aku ga pandai yen” (“Sorry, I Can’t bro.”)

This sentence can be categorized as expressive speech acts, Edo's utterance would be categorized as an expression of this show that Edo feels bad because he is unable to fulfil a request or expectation.

Data 5:

Dea: “Astagaaaa” (“Oh my gosh!”)

This sentence can be categorized as expressive speech acts, because it expressed dea’s surprise. The exclamation “Astaga” ("Oh my gosh") generally indicates surprise at something that has happened.

Discussion: Speech Acts in EFL Student Group Chats

Our findings revealed that assertions or Representatives in speech act theory are the most prevalent speech act employed in these group chats. This aligns with the understanding that these platforms serve as a vital hub for sharing information relevant to academic life.

Messages like "Guys I will be late" (Arif) informing others of an upcoming delay and " Sir already in class " (Dwi) indicating the lecturer's arrival exemplify this function. Students rely on assertions to keep each other updated on important details that impact their academic lives. This ensures everyone is aware of potential delays, schedule changes, or the lecturer's presence in class.

Directives encompass various forms of influencing behavior within the chat. Students utilize requests to seek assistance with tasks or clarifications. Requests for help or clarifications demonstrate how students rely on the group for academic support. Instructions aim to influence immediate actions, ensuring everyone arrives on time or completes a task promptly. The presence of directives underscores the group chat's utility in coordinating actions, seeking and offering help, and potentially reminding each other about established procedures.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the types of speech acts employed by English department students within their WhatsApp group chats. Utilizing Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) as a framework, the research identified five categories of speech acts present in the analyzed conversations: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The use of Representatives (assertions) in group chats reflects the significance of timely information in academic life. With the presence of a speech act directive, students not only share information but also seek and provide assistance in their academic tasks. Expressive and commissive speech acts contribute to the formation of close-knit communities and relationships within the group chat. This fosters a supportive environment where students feel comfortable interacting on a more personal and emotional level. The presence of declaratives within EFL student group chats serve to establish new realities, set expectations, and ultimately contribute to a more organized and efficient group dynamic for completing academic tasks.

In the context of learning a foreign language, such as EFL, the use of speech acts in group chats also illustrates students' efforts to practice and understand the appropriate use of language in various situations. This reflects active and practical language learning beyond the traditional classroom setting. The success of interpersonal communication in EFL student group chats depends not only on information exchange but also on the ability to manage social and emotional relationships. By utilizing various speech acts, students can build supportive relationships and facilitate a more effective and enjoyable learning process.

Future research directions could involve: (1). Expanding the data set, analyzing conversations from a larger group of participants or across different EFL programs. (2). Investigating the influence of topics, examining how the subject matter of the conversation impacts the choice of speech acts used. (3). Considering cultural variations, exploring how cultural backgrounds might influence the use of speech acts within online EFL student interactions.

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