

Directive Dominance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Business Conversation: A Pragmatic Classroom Interaction Study

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ABSTRACT

Classroom interaction in professional English learning is not merely a medium of instruction but a crucial site where learners' pragmatic competence is shaped, restricted, or expanded. However, previous studies on speech acts in EFL contexts have largely emphasized general classroom discourse, while limited attention has been given to Business Conversation classes in which management students are expected to perform context-sensitive professional functions such as negotiating, offering, agreeing, refusing, and committing. This study investigates the types, distribution, and communicative functions of speech acts in an EFL Business Conversation classroom involving 35 second-semester Management students. Using a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through classroom observation, audio/video recording, and verbatim transcription of classroom interaction. The utterances were analyzed using Searle's speech act taxonomy, covering assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative categories, followed by functional and contextual interpretation. The findings reveal that directive speech acts were dominant, representing 43.8% of the 210 analyzed utterances, followed by assertive (32.4%), expressive (13.3%), commissive (9.5%), and declarative (1%). This pattern indicates that classroom interaction remained strongly lecturer-controlled despite the use of communicative learning activities. The limited occurrence of commissive and expressive acts further suggests that students had insufficient opportunities to practice strategic and relational language functions required in business communication. The originality of this study lies in connecting pragmatic speech-act analysis with ESP-oriented Business Conversation pedagogy, offering empirical evidence for redesigning classroom interaction to support more authentic, student-centered, and professionally relevant English communication.

1. Introduction

In today's global academic and professional landscape, English is no longer learned merely as a grammatical system but as a strategic communicative resource for participating in discipline-specific and workplace-oriented interactions. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, this shift has changed the purpose of language learning from simply producing accurate sentences to using language appropriately, persuasively, and meaningfully across different social and situational contexts. Such ability is closely related to pragmatic competence, which refers to learners' capacity to interpret speakers' intentions and produce utterances that are suitable for particular

communicative situations (Taguchi, 2011). For students in higher education, especially those preparing for professional fields such as management and business, pragmatic competence becomes highly essential because successful communication depends not only on what is said but also on how, when, why, and to whom it is said.

Pragmatic competence is essential in Business Conversation learning because effective workplace communication requires grammatical accuracy, context-appropriate language use, and the ability to interpret meanings beyond literal forms (Huang, 2022; Ilina, 2023; Kramsch, 2021). This is especially important in intercultural professional settings, where

limited pragmatic knowledge can cause communication breakdowns and weaken intercultural competence (Kramsch, 2021). In globalized interaction, pragmatic success also depends on stance-taking, conversational sequentiality, symbolic power relations, meaning negotiation, and repair strategies when communicative norms differ (Amaliah, 2024; Lei & Qin, 2022). Therefore, business-oriented tasks should train learners to express opinions, request clarification, give instructions, negotiate decisions, offer solutions, agree, refuse politely, and make commitments. However, form-focused teaching and assessment may restrict real-life communicative ability, making systematic pragmatic instruction and teacher mediation necessary in EFL business-related courses (Pojprasat & Watcharapunyawong, 2022; Taglialatela & Tardi, 2020).

Although many EFL students may demonstrate adequate grammatical knowledge, they often encounter difficulties in using language pragmatically in real communicative situations (Taguchi, 2015). This condition shows that linguistic competence does not automatically lead to effective communication. Within pragmatics, speech act theory provides a strong analytical foundation for understanding how utterances function as actions. Austin (1962) introduced the idea that speaking involves doing, while Searle (1969) further classified speech acts into assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative categories. This framework allows classroom interaction to be examined not only as a sequence of linguistic forms but also as a set of communicative acts shaped by purpose, context, and participant roles.

Classroom-pragmatics research shows that speech act analysis can reveal how EFL teachers and learners construct meaning, manage interaction, and reproduce role-based participation through acts such as elicitation, directives, and feedback (Huang, 2022; Kramsch, 2021). In university EFL contexts, pragmatic competence requires attention to language function, context, authentic situations, interaction, and appropriateness beyond grammatical form (Ilina, 2023). However, classroom discourse often remains teacher-centred, with teacher-produced constatives, directives, and questions controlling turn-taking and limiting student-initiated negotiation (Huang, 2022; Kramsch, 2021). Although discourse markers support coherence and classroom management, they are often insufficiently addressed in materials and instruction (Amaliah, 2024; Taglialatela & Tardi, 2020). These findings highlight the need for scaffolded pedagogy and richer pragmatic input to expand learners' participation space and diversify their speech-act repertoires (Ilina, 2023; Pojprasat & Watcharapunyawong, 2022).

Recent discussions indicate that communicative classroom design does not automatically produce authentic or balanced interaction, particularly when pragmatic input is limited or correctness is prioritized

over cooperative meaning-making (Pojprasat & Watcharapunyawong, 2022; Taglialatela & Tardi, 2020). Although communicative approaches promote participation, they may remain superficial if learners mainly respond rather than expand their pragmatic repertoires (Littlewood, 2014), reducing opportunities for use and feedback (Pojprasat & Watcharapunyawong, 2022). Thus, classroom activities should be assessed through the interactional practices they generate (Nassaji, 2017). This is especially important in ESP, where instruction must reflect target-domain purposes, genres, discourse practices, and field-specific demands (Hyland, 2022; Muliati et al., 2022; Sándor, 2021). In business communication, BELF research frames English as emergent and negotiation-oriented, making acts such as offering, negotiating, refusing, and committing essential for workplace goals, relational work, politeness, and interpersonal alignment (Amaliah, 2024; Bonsu et al., 2023; Kim & Kim, 2020; Locher & Watts, 2005; Sándor, 2021).

Prior L2 pragmatics research, including Alung (2025), Economidou-Kogetsidis (2018), and Vu et al. (2018), shows sustained interest in how pragmatic resources shape meaning in additional-language use, while recent studies further position pragmatics as a key component of language ability and instruction (Huang, 2022; Ilina, 2023). However, much EFL speech-act research still focuses mainly on limited acts, especially requests, and learners' strategy choices across contexts, rather than how broader speech-act repertoires are enacted, distributed, and pedagogically mediated in disciplinary classrooms (Ilina, 2023; Kramsch, 2021). Teacher-focused studies also show that pragmatics remains insufficiently integrated into teacher preparation, limiting classroom application and students' opportunities for practice (Huang, 2022). These gaps justify investigating speech acts in Business Conversation classrooms for EFL management students, where professional goals require systematic engagement with multiple interactional actions beyond requesting (Huang, 2022; Ilina, 2023).

Despite the growing attention to speech acts, pragmatic competence, and EFL classroom interaction, a more specific gap remains at the intersection of pragmatics, ESP, and business-oriented classroom discourse. Most previous studies have examined speech acts in general EFL contexts, request strategies, politeness, or classroom interaction broadly. Fewer studies have investigated how speech acts are distributed and function within Business Conversation classes designed for management students. This gap is important because Business Conversation learning requires students to move beyond general speaking practice and develop professional pragmatic competence. The novelty of the present study lies in its focus on directive dominance and the broader distribution of speech acts in an EFL Business Conversation classroom. By analyzing actual

classroom interaction, this study provides empirical evidence of whether communication-based learning genuinely creates space for diverse speech act use or whether classroom discourse remains dominated by lecturer-controlled interaction.

This study is significant because it addresses both theoretical and pedagogical concerns in applied linguistics, pragmatics, and ESP. Theoretically, it contributes to speech act research by extending pragmatic analysis into a business-oriented EFL classroom context. Pedagogically, it offers insight into how classroom interaction supports or limits students' pragmatic competence, especially in relation to professional communication functions needed in business settings. The study is also relevant for lecturers, curriculum designers, and ESP practitioners because it highlights the need to design Business Conversation activities that reduce excessive lecturer dominance and promote richer student-student interaction, negotiation, relational expression, and professional commitment in English.

Based on the research gap above, this study aims to identify the types and distribution of speech acts used in EFL Business Conversation classroom interaction among management students, determine the dominant speech act type and its interactional meaning, and analyze the communicative functions of those speech acts in relation to students' pragmatic competence and professional English learning. To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What types of speech acts are used in EFL Business Conversation classroom interaction among management students, and how are they distributed?
- 2) Which speech act type is dominant in the classroom interaction, and what does this dominance reveal about lecturer control, student participation, and interactional patterns?
- 3) What communicative functions do the speech acts perform in the Business Conversation classroom, and how do they reflect students' opportunities to develop pragmatic competence for professional communication?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatics and Speech Acts in Linguistic Studies

Pragmatics is a central branch of linguistics that examines how meaning is created, interpreted, and negotiated through context, speaker intention, social relationship, and communicative purpose. Unlike semantics, which focuses on literal meaning, pragmatics explains how utterances function in actual communication (Faturrochman, 2021; Locher & Watts, 2005). This distinction is crucial in classroom interaction because one utterance may serve different

functions depending on the speaker, interlocutor, and situation. For example, a teacher's question may seek information, guide learning, manage turn-taking, evaluate comprehension, or control classroom participation (Seedhouse, 2009; Walsh, 2011). Within pragmatics, speech act theory offers a key analytical foundation by viewing language as action. Introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969), this theory explains that speakers do not merely produce words but also perform communicative acts. Searle (1969) classifies speech acts into five categories: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative, which help identify whether an utterance functions to state, request, praise, promise, declare, or perform another communicative act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

Contemporary speech act studies extend this framework by considering cultural context, social identity, institutional roles, and communicative goals. Speech acts are therefore not only linguistic forms but also pragmatic resources for constructing social relations, expressing intentions, and performing institutional roles in interaction (Locher & Watts, 2005; Locher & Watts, 2005; Taguchi, 2022). In second and foreign language learning, speech act analysis is important because learners must know not only grammatical forms but also how to use them appropriately across communicative situations. Susilawati and Bunau (2025) emphasize that language use is inseparable from sociolinguistic context, while most studies shows that classroom interaction reveals how illocutionary force operates between teachers and students. Previous studies also show that EFL learners often face pragmatic difficulties when producing contextually appropriate speech acts, especially when first-language norms influence their English use (Al-Gahtani & Roevers, 2012; Bardovi-Harlig, 2020; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018). This perspective is relevant to EFL Business Conversation classrooms, where management students are expected to explain business ideas, give opinions, negotiate decisions, offer solutions, respond politely, and make commitments. Thus, speech act analysis provides a strong basis for examining whether classroom interaction develops students' pragmatic competence in professionally oriented English learning.

2.2. Pragmatic Competence in EFL Learning

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use and interpret language appropriately according to context, intention, interlocutor, and social norms. In EFL learning, this competence is often difficult to develop because learners have limited exposure to authentic English use beyond the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig, 2020; Schauer, 2022). argues that pragmatic competence does not emerge automatically from grammatical knowledge but requires explicit learning, meaningful input, and continuous practice. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig (2020) explains that many second language learners can produce grammatically accurate

utterances but still struggle to perform pragmatically appropriate speech acts. Thus, linguistic accuracy alone is insufficient for successful communication, especially when learners must negotiate meaning, manage interpersonal relations, and respond to institutional expectations (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Taguchi, 2015).

The development of pragmatic competence is strongly shaped by classroom interaction. Garton (2012) shows that learner initiative is important for communicative development, although teacher-fronted interaction may limit students' opportunities to initiate and sustain communication. Nguyen et al. (2018) further found that pedagogical intervention and corrective feedback support L2 pragmatic acquisition, confirming that pragmatic ability can be developed through systematic classroom practice. Studies of instructed pragmatics also emphasize the need for exposure, feedback, reflection, and repeated opportunities to use speech acts in meaningful interaction (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2018; Nguyen, 2019; Schauer, 2022; Taguchi, 2015). Therefore, pragmatics should not be treated as a secondary aspect of EFL learning but as a central component of communicative competence.

In Business Conversation learning, this competence is even more crucial because students must use English in professional situations that require appropriateness, politeness, persuasion, and relational sensitivity. Taguchi (2022) argues that pragmatic norms should be understood in relation to English as a lingua franca contexts, while Hyland (2022) stresses that English learning in academic and professional settings must respond to real communicative needs. For management students, Business Conversation classrooms should therefore provide opportunities to practice varied speech acts, including requesting, offering, agreeing, disagreeing, refusing, promising, and negotiating in contextually and professionally acceptable ways (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2014; Locher & Watts, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2018; Taguchi, 2015).

2.3. Classroom Interaction in Communication-Based Language Learning

Classroom interaction is central to communication-based language learning because it provides the space for learners to practice language, negotiate meaning, and develop communicative competence. The communicative approach views language as a tool for meaningful interaction rather than merely a system of rules to be memorized (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Littlewood, 2014). In discussing the contributions to language learning and teaching, Panahi et al. (2024) emphasize that language development is dynamic, interactional, and shaped by classroom conditions. This view aligns with Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013), who argue that language teaching should create opportunities for

meaningful language use. Thus, classroom interaction becomes an important site for examining whether communicative learning is genuinely practiced rather than only claimed pedagogically (Nassaji, 2017; Walsh, 2011).

However, classroom discourse research shows that EFL interaction often remains teacher-centered. Seedhouse (2009) explains that language classrooms commonly follow an institutional pattern of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback, while Walsh (2011) notes that teacher interactional choices may either support or restrict learner participation. Schauer (2022) further highlights the pedagogical value of pragmatics instruction because classroom interaction can expose learners to contextually appropriate language use. Yet, when students mainly respond to teacher prompts, they have limited opportunities to initiate speech acts, develop extended turns, negotiate meaning, or perform strategic communicative functions (Darong, 2024; Garton, 2012; Seedhouse, 2009; Walsh, 2011). This concern is reinforced by studies showing that classroom control patterns often restrict learner participation. Linares & Lyster (2014) indicates that classroom context influences interlanguage pragmatic development, Garton (2012) emphasizes learner initiative in teacher-fronted classrooms, Darong (2024) shows that classroom speech acts reveal teacher-student interactional functions, and Alung (2025) highlights the pedagogical relevance of politeness strategies in EFL interaction. These studies suggest that communicative activities do not automatically create student-centered interaction. In Business Conversation classes, this issue is crucial because students need frequent opportunities to perform professional speech acts, not merely answer teacher questions or follow instructions.

2.4. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Business Communication, and the Present Study

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a language teaching approach designed to meet learners' academic, disciplinary, and professional needs. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) state that ESP instruction should be grounded in the communicative purposes, contexts, and discourse practices of specific fields. In higher education, ESP is important because students need English not only for general communication but also for field-related tasks (Hyland, 2016, 2022). Hyland (2016) emphasizes that language use must be understood within disciplinary contexts, while Hyland (2022) argues that ESP should respond to changing academic and professional communication demands. For management students, English learning should therefore prepare them for business presentations, meetings, negotiations, marketing discussions, and professional decision-making

(Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2014; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2022).

Since business communication is strategic, persuasive, interpersonal, and goal-oriented, speech acts such as offering, negotiating, agreeing, refusing, promising, and persuading function as professional actions that require sensitivity to context, purpose, and norms (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2014). Locher and Watts (2005) further stress relational work, showing that speakers must manage interpersonal relations while achieving communicative goals. Thus, Business Conversation learning should train students to perform appropriate professional actions, particularly through commissive and expressive acts such as making commitments, offering cooperation, expressing appreciation, managing disagreement, and maintaining professional relationships (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2014; Locher & Watts, 2005; Taguchi, 2022).

From these theoretical and empirical perspectives, a clear research gap remains. Although previous studies have examined pragmatics, speech acts, classroom interaction, and ESP, limited attention has been given to how speech acts are distributed and function in EFL Business Conversation classrooms among management students (Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Bardovi-Harlig, 2020; Darong, 2024; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018; Taguchi, 2015). Many studies focus on general EFL interaction or specific speech acts, while fewer examine whether business-oriented classroom interaction provides sufficient opportunities for students to practice varied professional speech acts.

This study therefore offers novelty by focusing on directive dominance in EFL Business Conversation classroom interaction and connecting Searle's speech act taxonomy with ESP-oriented business communication pedagogy (Austin, 1962; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hyland, 2022; Searle, 1969). Its implication is that lecturers, curriculum designers, and ESP practitioners should design Business Conversation activities that reduce excessive lecturer control and create more opportunities for students to initiate interaction, negotiate meaning, offer solutions, express professional stance, and make commitments in English.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design supported by simple frequency analysis to examine speech acts in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Business Conversation classroom. This design was chosen to identify the speech acts produced in classroom interaction and interpret their communicative functions based on speaker intention, classroom context, participant roles, and business-oriented tasks. The qualitative approach allowed utterances to be analyzed as pragmatic actions, while

frequency analysis showed the distribution and dominance of each speech-act category.

The utterance was used as the main unit of analysis because each utterance represented a communicative act within classroom discourse. The analysis was guided by Searle's (1969) speech act taxonomy, which classifies utterances into assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative categories. This framework was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine how lecturers and students performed communicative functions such as explaining, asking, instructing, praising, offering, promising, agreeing, and declaring during Business Conversation activities.

3.2. Participants and Research Context

The participants of this study were 35 second-semester students from the Management study program who were enrolled in a Business Conversation course. They were selected purposively because they represented an appropriate participant group for investigating pragmatic performance in early professional English learning. As management students, they were not only learning English as a general language subject but also as a communicative resource for business-related purposes, such as presenting ideas, responding to questions, discussing marketing strategies, offering suggestions, and making simple professional commitments. Their English proficiency varied from basic to intermediate classroom performance, which created a natural range of pragmatic production during interaction.

The research context was a Business Conversation classroom in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, where English was mainly used within formal learning activities rather than in everyday communication. The classroom was interactionally rich because it combined lecturer-led explanation, pair work, group discussion, presentation, feedback, question-and-answer exchanges, and simple business simulation. This context was methodologically relevant because the study did not aim to examine isolated language forms, but to observe how speech acts emerged when students and the lecturer used English to organize learning, express opinions, respond interpersonally, and perform business-oriented communicative actions. Therefore, the classroom was treated as a pragmatic space in which institutional roles, learning tasks, and professional communication goals shaped the production of speech acts.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through classroom observation, audio/video recording, field notes, and verbatim transcription. The observation was conducted during four classroom meetings of the Business Conversation course. Each meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes, resulting in about 360 minutes of classroom interaction data. The observed

meetings were selected because they represented major learning activities in the course, including lecturer instruction, student responses, peer discussion, business presentation, feedback, and simple business-role simulation.

Audio and video recordings were used as the primary data source to capture the verbal interaction, speaker roles, turn-taking patterns, and classroom context. Before recording, the lecturer and students were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of recordings, and the confidentiality of their identities. A recording device was placed in a stable position to capture whole-class interaction, while additional field notes were written during observation to record contextual information such as the type of activity, speaker role, interaction pattern, and relevant classroom situation.

After each meeting, the recordings were replayed and transcribed verbatim. The transcription focused on utterances produced by both the lecturer and students during classroom interaction. Non-verbal behavior was noted only when it helped clarify the communicative function of an utterance, such as laughter, hesitation, or a response gesture. Repeated, unclear, incomplete, and non-communicative fragments were excluded from the final corpus. After this selection process, 210 utterances were identified as analyzable data. These utterances became the main unit of analysis because each utterance represented a complete or contextually meaningful communicative act in the classroom discourse.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher read the transcripts while listening to the recordings repeatedly to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the classroom context. Second, the transcripts were segmented into utterance units. An utterance was defined as a spoken unit that carried a recognizable communicative function within a particular interactional context. Third, each utterance was coded using [Searle's \(1969\)](#) five speech-act categories: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative.

The coding process was based on communicative function rather than linguistic form alone. For example, an utterance was coded as assertive when it functioned to state, explain, inform, or describe; directive when it functioned to ask, instruct, request, command, or guide; expressive when it functioned to thank, praise, apologize, or show attitude; commissive when it functioned to promise, offer, agree, or commit to future action; and declarative when it functioned to change or confirm an institutional condition within the classroom. Each utterance was also coded according to its specific function, interaction type, and learning context. Interaction type referred to lecturer-student or student-student interaction, while learning context referred to

discussion, presentation, feedback, question-and-answer session, or business simulation.

After the coding process, the frequency and percentage of each speech-act category were calculated to identify the dominant pattern of classroom interaction. The quantitative distribution was then interpreted qualitatively to explain how speech acts reflected lecturer control, student participation, pragmatic competence, and the quality of Business Conversation learning. Particular attention was given to directive dominance because the results showed that directive speech acts were the most frequent category in the data. The analysis also examined the limited occurrence of expressive and commissive acts because these categories are important for professional business communication, especially in expressing appreciation, managing interpersonal relations, offering cooperation, and making commitments

3.5. Trustworthiness, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was strengthened by treating the data as an interactional chain rather than isolated utterances. Observation notes, audio/video recordings, and verbatim transcripts were compared so that each speech act was interpreted based on classroom context, speaker role, and communicative purpose. Coding consistency was guided by [Searle's \(1969\)](#) taxonomy, while reliability was improved through repeated transcript reading, coding revision, and intra-coder checking to ensure consistent classification across the data set. Ambiguous utterances were examined through linguistic form, surrounding turns, learning activities, and interactional intentions to reduce researcher bias and keep the analysis grounded in actual classroom discourse. Ethical procedures were also followed by informing participants that classroom interactions would be observed and recorded for academic purposes, ensuring confidentiality, replacing names with neutral labels, and presenting excerpts selectively without revealing participants' identities.

4. Result

This section presents the findings from the analysis of 210 utterances produced in a Business Conversation classroom involving 35 second-semester Management students. The analysis focused on the types of speech acts, their distribution, their communicative functions, and their implications for students' pragmatic competence in an EFL business-oriented learning context.

The findings reveal that classroom interaction was dominated by directive and assertive speech acts. This pattern indicates that the classroom provided opportunities for communication, but the interaction was still strongly shaped by lecturer guidance and task-oriented responses. Meanwhile, expressive and commissive speech acts appeared less frequently, suggesting that students had fewer opportunities to

practice the relational and strategic language functions required in authentic business communication.

LS = Lecturer–Student interaction

For excerpt presentation, the following short qualitative tags are used:

L = Lecturer *CI = Classroom Interaction*
S = Student *BC = Business Conversation*
SS = Student–Student interaction *EX = Excerpt*

4.1. Overview of Speech-Act Distribution

The distribution of speech acts provides an initial overview of the pragmatic structure of the classroom interaction. The data show that directive speech acts were the most frequent category, followed by assertive, expressive, commissive, and declarative acts.

Table 4.1. Distribution of Speech Acts in Business Conversation Classroom Interaction

Speech Act Type	Frequency	Percentage	Main Function in the Classroom	Pragmatic Implication
Directive	92	43.8%	Giving instructions, asking questions, directing activities, managing classroom flow	Indicates strong lecturer control over participation and interactional direction
Assertive	68	32.4%	Expressing opinions, explaining ideas, giving information	Shows students' emerging ability to communicate business-related ideas
Expressive	28	13.3%	Showing agreement, appreciation, and positive response	Indicates limited interpersonal engagement in classroom communication
Commissive	20	9.5%	Making offers, promises, plans, and commitments	Reveals limited practice in strategic and future-oriented business communication
Declarative	2	1.0%	Closing or formalizing classroom activity	Reflects the limited need for status-changing utterances in classroom interaction
Total	210	100%		

Table 4.1 shows that directive speech acts formed the largest proportion of the data, representing 43.8% of all utterances. This finding suggests that classroom interaction was still largely organized through instructions, questions, and lecturer-led prompts. Assertive speech acts, which accounted for 32.4%, indicate that students were also actively involved in expressing ideas and opinions, especially in relation to business topics. However, the lower percentages of expressive and commissive speech acts show that interpersonal and strategic dimensions of communication were less visible in the classroom discourse.

This distribution suggests that the classroom was communicative at the level of participation, but not yet fully communicative at the level of pragmatic complexity. Students were given opportunities to speak, but the range of speech acts they used remained concentrated on responding, explaining, and giving opinions rather than negotiating, committing, appreciating, or managing professional relationships.

4.2. Directive Speech Acts: Lecturer Guidance and Interactional Control

Directive speech acts were the most dominant category in the data. These utterances were mainly produced by the lecturer to organize learning activities, direct students' participation, ask for clarification, and maintain the flow of classroom interaction. Their dominance indicates that the lecturer played a central role in structuring classroom communication.

One clear example appears in the lecturer's instruction:

"Please discuss this with your partner."

[EX-01/L/CI-BC/Directive/Pair Discussion]

This utterance did not merely ask students to perform an activity. It also determined the interactional arrangement of the classroom by moving students into pair work. In this sense, the directive functioned as a tool for managing participation. The lecturer decided who should interact, how the interaction should occur, and what kind of activity students should perform.

A similar pattern can be seen in the following utterance:

"Can you discuss this problem with your group?"

[EX-02/L/CI-BC/Directive/Group Problem-Solving]

Although grammatically formed as a question, the utterance functioned pragmatically as an instruction. It invited collaboration, but the initiative still came from the lecturer. This shows that collaborative learning was present, yet it remained lecturer-initiated and lecturer-framed.

Other directive utterances also show how the lecturer encouraged students to elaborate their responses:

"Please explain your answer clearly."

[EX-03/L/CI-BC/Directive/Clarification Request]

"Can you explain your argument?"

[EX-04/L/CI-BC/Directive/Argument Elaboration]

These utterances are pedagogically useful because they push students beyond short answers and require clearer reasoning. However, they also reveal that deeper explanation was often prompted by the lecturer rather than initiated independently by students. The dominance of directive speech acts therefore has two meanings. On one hand, directives supported classroom organization and helped maintain active participation. On the other hand, their high frequency indicates that students' communicative involvement was still largely dependent on lecturer control. The classroom may have used communicative activities, but the interactional authority remained strongly centered on the lecturer.

Interpretive highlight: Directive speech acts reveal that the classroom was communicative in activity design, but still lecturer-centered in interactional control.

4.3. Assertive Speech Acts: Emerging Student Voice in Business-Oriented Discussion

Assertive speech acts were the second most frequent category, accounting for 32.4% of the data. These utterances were mostly produced by students when expressing opinions, explaining ideas, and presenting information during discussions or presentations. Their presence indicates that students were beginning to use English to communicate business-related content.

For instance, one student stated:

"I think this product is effective for teenagers."

[EX-05/S12/CI-BC/Assertive/Product Evaluation]

This utterance shows an attempt to evaluate a product in relation to a target consumer group. It is important because the student was not simply practicing grammar, but using English to express a

business-related judgment. The student connected the product with a possible market segment, which reflects an emerging ability to use English in a professional or disciplinary context.

Another student commented:

"I think online promotion is more effective nowadays."

[EX-06/S07/CI-BC/Assertive/Marketing Opinion]

The use of the phrase "I think" signals personal stance and allows the student to present an opinion in a relatively cautious and acceptable way. This utterance reflects participation in business-themed discussion, but it remains general because it does not include supporting reasons or evidence.

The same pattern appears in the following statement:

"This strategy can increase customer interest."

[EX-07/S18/CI-BC/Assertive/Business Outcome]

Here, the student was able to connect a business strategy with a possible customer response. This indicates an emerging understanding of cause-and-effect reasoning in marketing communication. However, the utterance still lacks elaboration. It does not explain why the strategy would increase customer interest, which customer group would be affected, or how the strategy would be implemented. Other assertive utterances further show students' ability to express relevant business ideas:

"I believe social media marketing is very important today."

[EX-08/S21/CI-BC/Assertive/Digital Marketing View]

"This product has a good target market."

[EX-09/S15/CI-BC/Assertive/Market Potential]

These statements demonstrate students' awareness of business-related topics such as digital marketing and target-market suitability. However, most of these assertive acts remained descriptive rather than analytical. Students were able to state what they believed, but they did not consistently develop those beliefs into persuasive arguments. In lecturer-student interaction, the assertive pattern was also visible:

Lecturer: *"What is your opinion about this strategy?"*

Student: *"I think it is effective for online business."*

[EX-10/LS-L1-S09/CI-BC/Directive-Assertive/Opinion Elicitation]

This exchange shows that the student gave a relevant response, but the interaction was initiated by the lecturer. The student participated meaningfully, yet the communicative opening still depended on lecturer prompting.

Interpretive highlight: Assertive speech acts show that students were willing and able to express business-related ideas, but their responses remained more descriptive than persuasive or analytical.

4.4. Expressive Speech Acts: Limited Relational Engagement

Expressive speech acts appeared less frequently, representing 13.3% of the data. These utterances were used to express appreciation, agreement, and positive response. Although they contributed to the interpersonal dimension of classroom interaction, their limited occurrence suggests that relational communication was not yet strongly developed.

One student responded to a peer's idea by saying:

"That's a very interesting idea."

[EX-11/S04/CI-BC/Expressive/Appreciation]

This expression shows a student giving appreciation to a peer's contribution. In a Business Conversation context, such language is valuable because professional communication often requires speakers to acknowledge others' ideas before agreeing, disagreeing, or offering alternatives.

Another student expressed agreement:

"I agree with your opinion."

[EX-12/S16/CI-BC/Expressive/Agreement]

This utterance shows interpersonal alignment and indicates that the student was responding to another speaker's view. However, the expression remains basic. It does not include elaboration, such as why the student agrees, whether the agreement is complete or partial, or how the idea could be developed further.

A similar expressive function appears in the following feedback:

"That's a good presentation."

[EX-13/S23/CI-BC/Expressive/Presentation Feedback]

This utterance reflects positive feedback and shows that students could use English to appreciate a peer's performance. However, like the previous examples, the response remains general. A more developed expressive act would include specific feedback, such as praising the clarity of the presentation, the strength of the argument, or the relevance of the business strategy.

In peer interaction, expressive and assertive functions appeared together:

Student A: *"Do you agree with this marketing idea?"*

Student B: *"Yes, because it can attract more customers."*

[EX-14/SS-S11-S19/CI-BC/Directive-Assertive/Peer Agreement]

This exchange shows student-student interaction and indicates that students could respond to each other's ideas. However, the response remained brief and did not develop into deeper negotiation or discussion.

The limited use of expressive speech acts indicates that students were not yet regularly practicing the interpersonal language needed in professional communication. Business interaction is not only about exchanging information; it also involves maintaining relationships, showing respect, softening disagreement, appreciating contributions, and building trust.

Interpretive highlight: Expressive speech acts reveal a relational gap in the classroom. Students could show agreement and appreciation, but their interpersonal responses remained limited, general, and formulaic.

4.5. Commissive Speech Acts: Underdeveloped Strategic Business Communication

Commissive speech acts accounted for only 9.5% of the data. Although their frequency was low, they are highly significant in the context of Business Conversation because they involve future actions, promises, offers, plans, and commitments. These functions are central to workplace and professional communication.

One student stated:

"We will improve our marketing strategy next month."

[EX-15/S05/CI-BC/Commissive/Marketing Plan]

This utterance shows a future-oriented commitment. It reflects business planning because it refers to improvement, strategy, and a specific future time. However, it remains broad and does not specify what aspect of the marketing strategy will be improved or how the improvement will be carried out.

Another student made a more specific commitment:

"I will prepare the presentation for the next meeting."

[EX-16/S14/CI-BC/Commissive/Task Responsibility]

This utterance shows the student accepting responsibility for a future task. Pragmatically, it resembles authentic workplace communication because it involves task ownership and future commitment. In business meetings, such utterances are important because they clarify responsibility and indicate accountability.

The following excerpt shows a strategic business offer:

"We can offer a discount for new customers."

[EX-17/S02/CI-BC/Commissive/Business Offer]

This utterance functions as a business proposal. It shows that the student was able to use English not only to describe a situation but also to suggest a strategic action. This is closer to authentic business communication because it involves offering a possible solution to attract customers. A further example reflects professional follow-up:

“I will contact the client tomorrow.”

[EX-18/S28/CI-BC/Commissive/Client Follow-Up]

This utterance includes a future action, a business-related participant, and a time reference. It is highly relevant to Business Conversation learning because it trains students to use English for responsibility, follow-up, and professional coordination.

Another student expressed group commitment:

“We will improve our business strategy next semester.”

[EX-19/S31/CI-BC/Commissive/Group Commitment]

This utterance shows collective responsibility through the pronoun “we.” However, like some other commissive acts, it remains general and requires further elaboration to become a stronger professional commitment. Despite these meaningful examples, the overall low frequency of commissive speech acts indicates that students had limited opportunities to practice strategic business communication. They were more frequently engaged in stating opinions than in making commitments, negotiating responsibilities, offering solutions, or planning future actions.

Interpretive highlight: Commissive speech acts show the strongest connection to real business communication, but their limited occurrence suggests that students need more opportunities to practice negotiation, planning, offering, and professional commitment.

4.6. Declarative Speech Acts: Rare but Contextually Expected

Declarative speech acts were the least frequent category, appearing only twice or 1.0% of the data. This low occurrence is understandable because declarative acts usually require institutional authority and are less common in ordinary classroom discussion.

One example is the lecturer’s closing statement:

“The discussion is closed.”

[EX-20/L/CI-BC/Declarative/Activity Closure]

This utterance formally changes the status of the classroom activity from ongoing to finished. It is declarative because the act is performed through the utterance itself. The lecturer has the authority to close the discussion, and the statement marks the official end of the activity.

The rarity of declarative speech acts does not indicate a weakness in students’ pragmatic competence. Rather, it reflects the nature of the classroom context. Business Conversation classrooms usually require instruction, response, discussion, agreement, and planning more frequently than formal declarations.

Interpretive highlight: Declarative speech acts were rare because the classroom context did not frequently require utterances that formally changed institutional or interactional status.

4.7. Interaction Patterns in Classroom Communication

In addition to speech-act types, the analysis also examined the interaction patterns between lecturer and students. The findings show that lecturer–student interaction accounted for 55%, while student–student interaction accounted for 45%.

Table 4.2. Interaction Patterns in Business Conversation Classroom

Interaction Pattern	Percentage	Dominant Character	Communicative	Pragmatic Interpretation
Lecturer–Student	55%	Lecturer-initiated questions, instructions, and guided responses	questions,	Students participated actively, but the lecturer often controlled the opening and direction of interaction
Student–Student	45%	Peer discussion, agreement, brief opinion exchange, and collaborative response	brief	Peer interaction was present, but exchanges often remained short and needed deeper negotiation
Total	100%			

The slightly higher proportion of lecturer–student interaction confirms that the lecturer remained central in organizing classroom discourse. As shown in EX-10, the student gave a relevant response to the lecturer’s

question, but the interactional opening came from the lecturer. This pattern shows that students were able to participate, yet their participation often depended on lecturer prompts.

Student–student interaction was also present. As shown in [EX-14](#), students interacted directly with each other and exchanged business-related ideas. However, the response remained brief and did not develop into extended negotiation or deeper discussion.

This finding shows that the classroom was in a transitional stage. It was not fully lecturer-fronted, since peer interaction occurred quite frequently. However, it was not yet fully student-led either, because student–student communication often lacked depth, elaboration, and sustained interaction.

Interpretive highlight: The classroom showed emerging peer interaction, but student-led

communication still needs to be expanded into longer, more analytical, and more negotiation-based exchanges.

4.8. Functional Pattern of Speech Acts

The functional analysis shows that speech acts served different communicative purposes across the classroom interaction. Directive acts were mainly used to organize activities and request responses. Assertive acts were used to express ideas and explain business-related opinions. Expressive acts were used to show agreement and appreciation, while commissive acts were used to make plans, offers, and commitments.

Table 4.3. Functional Pattern of Speech Acts

Speech-Act Type	Dominant Functions	Typical Classroom Use	Depth of Performance	Pragmatic
Directive	Instructing, questioning, prompting, managing	Lecturer guides students through discussion, group work, and clarification	Strong in classroom management, but indicates lecturer-centered control	
Assertive	Stating opinions, explaining ideas, describing strategies	Students express business-related views during discussion and presentation	Moderate; students participate, but arguments often remain brief	
Expressive	Agreeing, appreciating, praising	Students respond positively to peers' ideas or presentations	Limited; interpersonal responses are present but not deeply developed	
Commissive	Offering, promising, planning, committing	Students propose actions or accept responsibility for future tasks	Limited but important; closely connected to authentic business communication	
Declarative	Closing or formalizing activity	Lecturer ends or formalizes classroom activity	Minimal; contextually expected due to classroom setting	

The functional pattern shows that the classroom was more strongly oriented toward instruction and explanation than toward negotiation, interpersonal relationship-building, and strategic decision-making. This finding is important because Business Conversation requires learners to perform complex pragmatic functions. Students need to do more than answer questions or state opinions; they also need to offer alternatives, commit to actions, respond diplomatically, disagree politely, and negotiate meaning.

4.9. Integrated Interpretation

The findings show that the Business Conversation classroom supported basic communicative participation, but the pragmatic range of interaction remained limited. Directive speech acts dominated the classroom, indicating that the lecturer continued to organize the flow of communication. Assertive speech acts showed that students were beginning to express business-related ideas, but their responses were often general and insufficiently developed. Expressive speech acts revealed limited relational engagement,

while commissive speech acts showed that students had not yet received enough opportunities to practice strategic professional communication.

This pattern suggests that the main issue was not the absence of communication, but the limited complexity of communication. Students were speaking, responding, and presenting ideas. However, their speech acts were still concentrated around classroom-based participation rather than authentic business interaction. They were learning to express ideas, but not yet consistently learning to negotiate, persuade, commit, appreciate, disagree diplomatically, or manage professional relationships through English.

The findings therefore suggest that Business Conversation learning needs to move beyond guided discussion and presentation-based activities. It should provide more opportunities for students to engage in role-play, business meetings, client simulations, negotiation tasks, peer-led discussions, and problem-solving activities. Such activities would allow students to practice a wider range of speech acts and develop more authentic pragmatic competence.

5. Discussion

The findings show that directive speech acts were the dominant pragmatic feature in the EFL Business Conversation classroom, representing 43.8% of the 210 utterances. This dominance indicates that classroom interaction was communicative in form but still strongly regulated by lecturer control. Utterances such as “Please discuss this topic with your group,” “Please continue your discussion,” and “Can you explain your argument?” did not merely function as classroom instructions; they also organized activities, directed attention, controlled turn-taking, and sustained the flow of learning. This pattern supports [Seedhouse’s \(2010\)](#) view that classroom interaction is institutionally structured through teacher control, instruction, and interaction management, and [Walsh’s \(2011\)](#) argument that teachers’ interactional choices can either expand or limit learners’ participation.

The prominence of directives confirms that the lecturer remained the central agent in shaping classroom discourse. This finding is consistent with the lecturer’s role as a “classroom manager” ([Katili, 2021](#)), the initiation–response–feedback pattern in lecturer–student discourse ([Fatma et al., 2020](#)), and the view of directives as “power language” associated with control and dominance in educational contexts ([Salim et al., 2019](#)). It also reflects teacher dominance when classroom interaction is directed mainly by the instructor rather than shared among learners ([Farahat, 2020](#)). Although directive acts are pedagogically useful for organizing procedures, inviting responses, and supporting purposeful communication ([Fatma et al., 2020](#); [Katili, 2021](#); [Lestari & Mutiaraningrum, 2023](#); [Marsevani et al., 2024](#)), their excessive use may reduce student-initiated communication, maintain lecturer–student asymmetry, and create pressure or confusion, especially when direct questioning is repeated frequently ([Fatma et al., 2020](#); [Fitriyah, 2023](#); [Katili, 2021](#)). Since other studies report assertive acts as dominant, speech-act distribution may vary according to discipline, classroom goal, learning modality, and interactional design ([Lestari & Mutiaraningrum, 2023](#); [Marsevani et al., 2024](#)). In this study, however, directive dominance suggests that the classroom was communicative in activity format but not yet fully student-centered in interactional practice, confirming that communicative activities do not automatically produce authentic communication when students remain positioned mainly as respondents to lecturer prompts ([Littlewood, 2014](#); [Nassaji, 2017](#); [Seedhouse, 2010](#); [Walsh, 2011](#)).

The second key finding is the relatively high occurrence of assertive speech acts, which accounted for 32.4% of the data. Assertive utterances appeared when students expressed opinions, explained ideas, or provided information, as in “I think this strategy can improve product sales” and “I believe social media marketing is very important today.” This indicates that

students had begun to use English to communicate business-related ideas, especially during discussions and presentations. In this sense, the Business Conversation classroom supported some pragmatic development through opinion-giving, explanation, and information-sharing. This supports [Darong’s \(2024\)](#) view that classroom communication can promote pragmatic development when learners receive contextual input, feedback, and opportunities to practise speech acts with cultural awareness ([Fitriyah, 2023](#); [Lestari & Mutiaraningrum, 2023](#)). Nevertheless, EFL speech-act production is shaped by institutional roles and power relations, and teacher–student status differences may restrict learners’ turns and communicative agency ([Farahat, 2020](#); [Fatma et al., 2020](#)). Many assertive acts in this study remained descriptive and information-focused, which is consistent with evidence that display or contingency questions often produce brief student responses rather than extended discourse ([Salim et al., 2019](#)). Therefore, lecturers should vary questioning practices and design tasks that encourage reasoning, elaboration, divergent responses, referential questions, and pragmatically appropriate requests ([Farahat, 2020](#); [Marsevani et al., 2024](#); [Salim et al., 2019](#)).

Although assertive speech acts indicate emerging student voice, their limited complexity suggests that learners were more accustomed to stating propositions than developing ideas dialogically. Classroom speech-act research shows that assertives often function to clarify, explain, or transmit content, particularly in EMI contexts where lecturer talk is dominated by explanatory assertives ([Lestari & Mutiaraningrum, 2023](#)). At the learner level, interaction may also remain limited to basic information-giving rather than broader interactional purposes ([Lestari & Mutiaraningrum, 2023](#); [Panggabean et al., 2023](#)). Such participation is valuable because learners practise adapting speech acts to social contexts and communicative purposes ([Panggabean et al., 2023](#)). However, from a Freirean perspective, classroom dialogue should also support criticality through claim-testing, alternative viewpoints, and co-constructed understanding ([Chambers, 2019](#)). Thus, assertive participation should be viewed as a positive but incomplete indicator of pragmatic development. Students need structured opportunities to transform simple opinion-giving into persuasive reasoning, problem-solving discussion, and decision-oriented interaction. This supports [Taguchi’s \(2015, 2022\)](#) argument that pragmatic competence requires repeated practice, explicit instruction, and contextualized use rather than mere exposure to communicative activities.

The third important finding is the low frequency of commissive speech acts, which represented only 9.5% of the utterances. This is significant because commissive acts, including promising, offering, volunteering, agreeing to take responsibility, and committing to future action, are central to professional

business communication. Utterances such as “We will improve our business strategy next semester,” “We can offer a discount for new customers,” and “I will contact the client tomorrow” show that students could produce commissive forms, but only in limited numbers. This suggests that students were not yet sufficiently trained to use English for strategic professional purposes such as negotiation, persuasion, agreement-building, and decision-making. These functions require pragmatic competence beyond grammatical accuracy because speakers must consider social meaning, contextual variables, and interactional consequences (Shishan, 2020; Tabatabaei, 2019). This finding aligns with Bardovi-Harlig (2020) and other studies showing that EFL pragmatic development is often constrained by oversimplified input, decontextualized metapragmatic information, and insufficient attention to extra-linguistic factors in instructional materials (Azizi et al., 2020; Tran & Yeh, 2020). Since learners’ speech-act strategies vary across social contexts and pragmatic meaning often involves implied intent, explicit instruction and guided practice are necessary (Shishan, 2020; Tabatabaei, 2019). Interactive approaches, especially peer collaboration, can further help learners identify pragmatic errors, judge their severity, and correct them appropriately (Chiu et al., 2022; Zhang & Papi, 2024).

The limited use of commissive acts also reveals a mismatch between the expected goals of Business Conversation learning and the pragmatic repertoire produced in the classroom. In ESP-oriented business learning, students are expected to practise offering assistance, proposing solutions, promising follow-up actions, accepting responsibility, negotiating commitments, and making professional decisions. Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2014) emphasize that business discourse is shaped by professional purposes and complex communicative practices, while Hyland (2022) argues that ESP instruction should respond to the communicative demands of specific academic and professional fields. Therefore, the low frequency of commissive acts suggests that the classroom requires stronger task designs that ask students to perform business-like actions rather than merely discuss business-related topics. Role-play, negotiation simulation, meeting-based problem solving, client-service scenarios, and project pitching can increase students’ production of commissive speech acts in more authentic and professionally meaningful contexts.

The fourth key finding is the limited use of expressive speech acts, which accounted for 13.3% of the data. Expressive acts appeared in utterances such as “That’s a good presentation,” “That’s a very interesting idea,” and “I agree with your opinion.” These utterances are pragmatically important because they express appreciation, agreement, interpersonal alignment, and relational engagement. However, their relatively low frequency suggests that classroom

interaction was more task-oriented than relationship-oriented. This is consistent with evidence that L2 pragmatics, including interpersonal speech acts, is often underrepresented in textbooks, classroom input, and teacher education, making pragmatic learning largely incidental (Fatma et al., 2020; Katili, 2021). In professional business communication, interpersonal moves are essential because BELF meetings require strategies such as proactive explaining to maintain clarity, shared understanding, and organizational goals (Salim et al., 2019). Role-play in business negotiations and social interaction can also approximate real-world communicative demands (Farahat, 2020). Relational work, or the management of social relationships while pursuing communicative goals (Locher & Watts, 2005), is central to pragmatic competence because speakers must use context-sensitive speech-act formulae, appropriate styles, and mitigation routines to reduce misunderstanding (Fatma et al., 2020; Marsevani et al., 2024). Thus, the limited use of expressive acts indicates that the classroom had not yet fully modeled the interpersonal dimension of authentic business interaction (Katili, 2021; Salim et al., 2019).

This pattern has direct implications for pragmatic competence. Students who can express opinions but rarely use appreciation, polite disagreement, empathy, or interpersonal support may still struggle in professional interaction. Business communication requires not only transactional clarity but also relational sensitivity. In meetings, negotiations, presentations, and client-oriented communication, speakers must know how to appreciate others’ ideas, soften disagreement, show professional respect, and maintain a positive interactional climate. It also confirms the relevance of Locher and Watts’ (2005) relational perspective for Business Conversation pedagogy.

The interactional pattern further strengthens the interpretation of directive dominance. Lecturer–student interaction accounted for 55%, while student–student interaction accounted for 45%. Although the difference was not extreme, the higher proportion of lecturer–student interaction confirms that the lecturer remained the main organizer of classroom discourse. Student–student interaction was present, but it often appeared as short responses rather than extended negotiation, collaborative meaning-making, or autonomous business-oriented discussion. This means that students participated in communication, but their participation was not yet fully independent, dialogic, or professionally elaborated. From the perspective of communicative language teaching, the classroom had moved toward interaction but had not yet achieved the interactional independence required for professional pragmatic development.

The gap addressed by this study lies in the limited empirical attention given to speech-act distribution in EFL Business Conversation classrooms for management students. Previous studies have examined

speech acts, pragmatic competence, and classroom interaction in general EFL contexts, but fewer have analyzed how speech-act patterns reveal the quality of business-oriented classroom discourse. This study fills that gap by showing that a Business Conversation classroom may include communicative activities while still being dominated by lecturer-controlled directives. It also reveals an uneven pragmatic repertoire: students were relatively more active in producing assertive acts but less active in producing commissive and expressive acts, although both are essential for professional business communication.

The novelty of this study lies in linking directive dominance with ESP-oriented Business Conversation pedagogy. Rather than viewing speech acts only as linguistic categories, this study interprets them as indicators of classroom power, student agency, pragmatic opportunity, and professional readiness. This contribution is important for applied pragmatics, classroom discourse, and ESP pedagogy because Business Conversation learning should be evaluated not only by students' ability to speak English, but also by the pragmatic actions they are allowed and encouraged to perform. Pedagogically, lecturers should reduce excessive directive control and increase student-initiated interaction through tasks that require varied speech acts in meaningful business contexts, such as offering, negotiating, promising, persuading, appreciating, disagreeing politely, and making decisions. Curriculum designers should also include pragmatic learning outcomes so that assessment covers speech-act appropriateness, interactional initiative, politeness, strategic communication, and professional relevance, in addition to fluency, grammar, and vocabulary.

In conclusion, directive dominance functions as both a pedagogical resource and a limitation in EFL Business Conversation learning. While directives help organize classroom activities, their dominance may restrict students' opportunities to develop broader pragmatic competence, especially commissive and expressive speech acts. Future studies should examine speech acts in wider ESP contexts, such as business negotiation, meeting discourse, workplace role-play, customer-service interaction, entrepreneurial pitching, and cross-cultural business communication. Longitudinal research is also needed to explore how explicit speech-act instruction, peer-led interaction, and business-based communicative tasks support students' pragmatic development.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that classroom interaction in the EFL Business Conversation course was marked by a clear dominance of directive speech acts, indicating that the learning process remained strongly lecturer-controlled despite the use of communication-based activities. Based on the analysis of 210 utterances produced by 35 Management students, directive acts

appeared as the most frequent category, followed by assertive, expressive, commissive, and declarative acts. This pattern shows that the lecturer played a central role in organizing interaction through instructions, questions, and classroom management, while students were more frequently positioned as respondents than as initiators of professional communication. Although the presence of assertive acts suggests that students had begun to express opinions and explain business-related ideas, the limited use of commissive and expressive acts reveals that they still had insufficient opportunities to practice strategic and relational language functions, such as offering, negotiating, promising, appreciating, and politely responding to others.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on directive dominance in an EFL Business Conversation classroom and its contribution to connecting speech act analysis with ESP-oriented business communication pedagogy. The findings imply that Business Conversation teaching should move beyond general speaking practice by designing more student-centered, task-based, and professionally situated activities that encourage learners to initiate interaction, negotiate meaning, make commitments, and manage interpersonal relations in English. Future research is recommended to investigate speech act use in broader ESP contexts, such as business negotiation simulations, workplace role-plays, customer-service interactions, entrepreneurial pitching, meeting discourse, and cross-cultural business communication, preferably through longitudinal or comparative designs to examine how students' pragmatic competence develops over time.

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