

A Pragmatic Analysis of English Teachers' Speech Acts in Language Teaching: A Case Study at Smart Mataram Private Course

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Received: April 2025; Revised: May 2025; Published: June 2025

Abstract

Effective classroom communication is a key component in successful language teaching, particularly in EFL contexts where teachers must navigate both linguistic and pedagogical goals. This study investigates the use of speech acts in classroom interactions, with a specific focus on an English teacher at Smart Mataram Private Course. The primary aim was to identify the types, frequency, and pedagogical functions of speech acts employed during instructional activities. Adopting a descriptive qualitative research design, the data were gathered through direct classroom observation, supplemented by audio and video recordings to ensure accuracy and depth of analysis. The collected data were analyzed using Searle's taxonomy of speech acts, which categorizes language use into five types: directives, representatives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. The findings revealed that directive speech acts dominated classroom interactions, comprising 43% of all utterances, followed by representatives (30%), expressives (17%), commissives (7%), and declaratives (3%). This distribution highlights the teacher's reliance on directives for classroom control and instructional delivery, while representatives and expressives played important roles in conveying content and fostering student engagement. The study concludes that speech acts, particularly directives, are central to classroom discourse and serve distinct pedagogical purposes. It also suggests that enhancing teachers' pragmatic awareness and communicative strategies can improve interactional effectiveness and learning outcomes. These findings have practical implications for teacher training programs, especially in private language institutions, by underlining the importance of speech act competence in supporting interactive and communicative language teaching.

Keywords: Pragmatic analysis; Speech acts; Searle's taxonomy; Language teaching; Classroom interaction

How to Cite: Sari, P.D.N., Rahman, A., Jupri, J., Mahsar, L., & Arbaiza, B (2025). A Pragmatic Analysis of English Teachers' Speech Acts in Language Teaching: A Case Study at Smart Mataram Private Course, *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 5(2), 483-492. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i2.2813>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i2.2813>

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics, a critical field of linguistics, provides a robust framework for analyzing how language operates within specific social and contextual settings. According to Noviyenti and Anwar (2023), pragmatics explores the interaction between linguistic structures and their users, focusing on how meaning emerges and evolves through context. In educational contexts, integrating pragmatic principles significantly enhances teaching and learning by offering learners essential tools to interpret communication effectively (Baicchi & Erviti, 2018; Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024). This study focuses on the application of speech acts—an essential element of pragmatic theory—by English teachers to promote productive and meaningful classroom interactions.

Speech acts are fundamental to structuring and mediating communication between teachers and students. These linguistic tools are purposefully used by educators to deliver instructions, clarify content, and regulate classroom dynamics. As Karim et al. (2024) suggest, effective speech act deployment is crucial for successful classroom interactions, as it helps engage students and create a conducive learning environment. The appropriate use of speech acts by teachers not only facilitates clear communication but also enhances students' understanding and participation in classroom activities.

Searle's classification of speech acts into declarations, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives provides a systematic approach to examining their roles in teaching. Shehab (2024) emphasizes that each category serves distinct communicative purposes, contributing uniquely to the learning environment. For instance, directives help manage classroom activities, expressives build rapport, and representatives facilitate knowledge transmission. A detailed analysis of these categories offers valuable insights into how speech acts align with and support pedagogical objectives.

However, while there is a growing body of literature exploring speech acts in formal educational settings such as public schools and universities, relatively few studies have examined their use in non-formal or private educational environments. This lack of focus on private institutions creates a gap in understanding how instructional communication practices may differ in more personalized, flexible, and often less regulated teaching contexts (Ardhianti et al., 2023). Moreover, few studies explicitly connect pragmatic theory with classroom-based empirical observation in private language courses.

Pragmatic competence involves using language effectively within a given context, extending beyond mere grammatical accuracy to include social and cultural dimensions of communication (Wodak, 2007; Nikiforidou, 2018). Educators with strong pragmatic competence can strategically use speech acts to manage diverse classroom scenarios, from delivering feedback to encouraging engagement. This competence also prepares students for authentic communication in real-world contexts, highlighting its critical role in language education.

While numerous studies have examined the use of speech acts in classroom interactions, there is limited research focusing on private educational settings, particularly at institutions like Smart Mataram Private Course. This study fills this gap by investigating how English teachers at this institution utilize speech acts to achieve instructional goals. The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of pragmatic communication within a private course setting, which offers a personalized approach to language instruction. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on formal educational institutions, this study provides fresh insights into how speech acts contribute to effective communication in a different educational context.

Comparative findings from both private and public educational settings suggest that classroom dynamics, teacher autonomy, and communicative strategies often differ in significant ways (Islami et al., 2024). While directive acts tend to dominate in most classroom contexts, the frequency and intention behind expressive and commissive acts may vary depending on class size, institutional flexibility, and teacher-student familiarity—factors that are typically more pronounced in private settings. By synthesizing these findings, the current study aims to deepen the understanding of contextual pragmatics in localized EFL classrooms.

To address this gap, the study is guided by the following research questions: 1) What types of speech acts are used by English teachers at Smart Mataram Private Course?, 2) How frequently are these speech acts used, and how effective are they in facilitating classroom interactions?, 3) How does the use of speech acts by English teachers support pedagogical strategies and enhance student engagement and learning outcomes?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design, which is well-suited for exploring the use of speech acts in classroom interactions. According to Chasokela (2024), qualitative research aims to explain social phenomena by providing a deeper understanding of the factors that influence them. It emphasizes subjective evaluations of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, as noted by Aryal (2024), offering insights into the complexities of social interactions in natural settings.

Qualitative research is characterized as a methodology aimed at uncovering the meanings that individuals or groups assign to social or human phenomena. According to Negou et al. (2023), this approach involves dynamic and iterative processes, including the development of research questions, data collection within participants' natural environments, and inductive data analysis. These processes enable researchers to identify patterns and derive themes that reflect the complex and nuanced meanings within the data. Furthermore, qualitative research is inherently flexible, allowing for adjustments throughout the study to ensure that the findings are contextually grounded and meaningfully interpreted.

Aligned with these principles, this study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to examine and interpret the speech acts used by an English teacher during classroom interactions. The design is particularly suitable for describing and analyzing the types and to contribute the effectiveness of communication of speech acts systematically and comprehensively. This is achieved through the application of pragmatic theories, such as those defining the classifications and functions of speech acts, as proposed by recognized experts in the field.

The descriptive nature of this research ensures a systematic presentation of factual data, focusing on the teacher's utterances within the classroom. By capturing and analyzing these interactions, the study aims to provide a detailed account of how speech acts are employed to facilitate teaching and learning. This approach not only enhances understanding of the pragmatic aspects of classroom communication but also contributes to improving teaching practices within similar educational settings. The chosen research design provides a robust framework for addressing the study's research questions. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the teacher's speech acts, offering theoretical and practical insights into the effective use of language in educational contexts.

Participants

The subject of this research was a teacher actively involved in language instruction at the Smart Mataram Private Course. The selection of this subject was guided by the principles of qualitative research, which prioritize the depth and richness of information over the quantity of participants. Rather than aiming for a broad generalization across a large population, the study sought to conduct a focused and detailed examination of classroom interactions, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the teacher's communicative practices. The teacher was selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria established by the researcher, namely that the subject must be directly engaged in English language teaching within the institution. This approach ensured that the data collected would be relevant and directly reflective of authentic instructional scenarios. By focusing on a single teacher who met these criteria, the study aimed to uncover the nuanced use of speech acts in classroom discourse, shedding light on the pedagogical strategies employed to facilitate communication and learning. The setting of the Smart Mataram Private Course provided a realistic and practical context for examining how speech acts function in everyday teaching practice, making the findings both contextually grounded and pedagogically valuable.

Data Collection Method

This study used observation as the primary method for data collection, enabling the researcher to directly witness and interpret naturally occurring events within the research setting. As Wade-Berg (2022) highlights, observation provides an opportunity to capture authentic interactions and behaviors, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. To enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data, the observation process was supplemented with audio-video recording using a handy-cam. This ensures that the spoken interactions and contextual cues are documented in their entirety for subsequent analysis.

The data collection process followed a systematic and rigorous procedure to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. First, the recorded materials will be carefully reviewed to comprehend the teacher's utterances and interactions. Second, the audio recordings will be transcribed into written text, enabling a detailed examination of the speech acts. Third, the transcribed data will be verified by re-listening to the recordings to ensure the accuracy and fidelity of the transcription.

Subsequently, relevant segments of the recordings that align with the research objectives will be extracted during the data selection phase. These selected excerpts will then be organized and recorded into structured data sheets during the documentation phase to facilitate systematic analysis. Finally, the documented data will be classified based on predefined criteria, such as the types of speech acts and their contribution to the effectiveness of communication in the teaching process, ensuring that the analysis is structured and aligned with the study's objectives. This methodical approach to data collection and processing ensures precision and reliability while maintaining a strong focus on the research objectives. By capturing authentic classroom interactions and meticulously organizing the data, the study aims to provide a robust foundation for analyzing the speech acts employed by English teachers during classroom interactions.

To mitigate observer bias and ensure objectivity, the researcher maintained a non-intrusive presence during classroom observations to reduce the Hawthorne effect and minimize influence on participants' natural behavior. Additionally, the use of audio-video recordings allowed for repeated review and peer debriefing with academic supervisors to validate interpretations and reduce subjectivity in data analysis. This triangulation of methods and validation through external review enhanced the overall trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study consisted of three interrelated phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Each phase plays a crucial role in ensuring that the collected data is systematically analyzed to generate meaningful insights. The first phase, data reduction, involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing the data to retain only the information pertinent to the research questions. This ensures the integrity and focus of the study while eliminating irrelevant or extraneous data. The process begins with a thorough review of the collected data to identify key themes and patterns emerging from classroom interactions. The researcher then selects and codes the relevant data based on predefined speech act classifications, such as declarations, representatives, expressive, directives, and commissive. This systematic approach ensures that the data is well-structured and manageable for subsequent analysis.

The second phase, data display, is essential for presenting findings in a structured and comprehensible manner. To address the research questions, data display will primarily involve the use of tables and descriptive summaries that categorize the types and frequency of speech acts used by the English teacher during classroom interactions. The

first research question examines the different types of speech acts employed, which will be categorized using established classifications and accompanied by frequency counts. The second research question explores the impact of these speech acts on communication effectiveness, for which percentages will be calculated using a standardized formula. This analytical approach facilitates a systematic comparison of speech acts, highlighting their relative importance in the teaching and learning process. By presenting data through tables and percentages, this study ensures clarity, accuracy, and ease of interpretation.

The final phase, conclusion drawing and verification, involves interpreting the analyzed data to assess its alignment with the study's objectives. This stage requires a reflective and iterative approach, where the researcher repeatedly reviews the data to draw meaningful conclusions. Verification is conducted by revisiting the original data multiple times to ensure consistency and reliability. Additionally, peer review and consultations with supervisors provide external validation, minimizing potential biases in interpretation. This rigorous process ensures that the conclusions are credible, well-supported by the data, and contribute valuable insights into the role of speech acts in effective classroom communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of classroom interactions at Smart Mataram Private Course offers valuable insights into the speech acts employed by English teachers during instructional sessions. The concept of speech acts, originally developed by Searle as cited in Yanti (2021), is fundamental in understanding the dynamics of classroom communication, as it directly influences knowledge transmission, student engagement, and instructional effectiveness. In a pedagogical context, speech acts serve as essential linguistic tools that shape the interaction between teachers and students, structuring the flow of discourse and facilitating comprehension. The ability to effectively employ different types of speech acts allows educators to create an interactive learning environment, promote student participation, and enhance overall language acquisition. Therefore, a systematic examination of how speech acts are utilized in the classroom is crucial for refining teaching methodologies and improving communicative competence among learners.

Frequency and Classification of Speech Acts

The study's analysis of teacher-student interactions at Smart Mataram Private Course revealed notable patterns in the use of speech acts within English language instruction. Utilizing Searle's speech act classification framework, as referenced in Yanti (2021), the utterances observed in the classroom were categorized into five primary types: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. Table 1 illustrates the distribution and frequency of each speech act category identified in the data.

Table 1. Frequency of Speech Acts Used by the English Teachers

Speech Act Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Representatives	45	30%
Directives	65	43%
Expressives	25	17%
Commissives	10	7%
Declaratives	5	3%
Total	150	100%

As shown in Table 1, directives constituted the most frequently employed speech act (43%), highlighting their significant role in instructional discourse. The high occurrence of directive speech acts indicates that teachers predominantly used commands, questions, and requests to manage classroom activities, provide instructions, and elicit

student responses. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Yanti, 2021), which emphasize the pivotal role of directives in fostering student engagement and ensuring structured lesson delivery. The frequent use of directives suggests that teachers actively guide students' learning processes, employing explicit language to maintain order and encourage participation.

In addition to directives, representative speech acts accounted for 30% of the total utterances, reflecting their importance in conveying factual information and reinforcing students' linguistic knowledge. Teachers often employed representatives to present explanations, definitions, and corrections, which aligns with the communicative function of representative speech acts in language instruction (Micleuşanu & Tomailă, 2022).

Expressive speech acts, which constituted 17% of the observed utterances, were commonly used to provide feedback, praise student performance, and foster a supportive classroom environment. The use of expressives in instructional discourse plays a crucial role in motivating students and creating a positive learning atmosphere, as suggested by Tindak et al. (2022).

The commissive and declarative speech acts, comprising 7% and 3%, respectively, were less frequently employed. Commissives were primarily used to express commitments or promises, such as offering additional explanations or assignments to reinforce learning. Meanwhile, declaratives, though infrequent, were significant in marking transitions between classroom activities and establishing new instructional phases.

To enrich the qualitative dimension of the study, several examples of classroom dialogue illustrate how various types of speech acts were used by the teacher during instruction. For instance, a directive was observed in the prompt, "Can you read the sentence aloud, please?", which aimed to activate student participation. A representative example is, "Present continuous is formed using 'to be' plus a verb ending in -ing," used to convey factual grammatical information. The expressive act, "Nice try, but let's fix the verb tense together," reflected encouragement and corrective feedback. A commissive was demonstrated in the teacher's assurance, "I'll review this topic again tomorrow if you're still unsure," indicating commitment to student understanding. Lastly, a declarative act was shown through the instruction, "Now, you're working in pairs to complete the exercise," which marked a shift in classroom activity. These examples provide concrete evidence of how speech acts were employed to support both pedagogical goals and classroom interaction.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that English teachers at Smart Mataram Private Course predominantly rely on directive and representative speech acts to facilitate classroom interactions. The varying frequencies of each speech act type underscore their distinct roles in structuring discourse, managing student engagement, and supporting language acquisition. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of pragmatic communication in educational settings, reinforcing the need for teachers to adopt a balanced use of speech acts to optimize classroom discourse and improve instructional effectiveness.

The Role of Speech Acts in Classroom Communication

Understanding the functional roles of each speech act type within classroom discourse is essential to comprehend how teachers utilize language as an instructional tool. By categorizing speech acts according to Searle's taxonomy, this study offers a deeper analysis of how various speech act types support different pedagogical functions. The discussion elaborates on the contribution of each speech act category to classroom communication, highlighting their pedagogical significance and supporting the findings with examples and relevant theoretical perspectives. Among these, directives emerged as the most frequently observed speech acts, comprising 43% of the total utterances. Teachers

often employed imperative structures such as “Repeat after me,” “Answer the question,” and “Open your book to page 10” to direct students' actions and ensure active participation. As Aini et al. (2023) suggest, directives are essential tools for managing classroom dynamics and guiding learners toward intended learning outcomes. Similarly, Idris et al. (2023) emphasize that directive speech acts help structure classroom discourse and maintain lesson flow.

Following directives, representatives were used in 30% of the teacher utterances. These speech acts played a central role in transmitting knowledge, particularly through factual statements like “The past tense of ‘go’ is ‘went’” or “English has many irregular verbs.” Such utterances aimed to reinforce students' grammatical and lexical understanding. This finding aligns with research by Zhong (2024), who argues that representative speech acts form a key part of the linguistic foundation in second-language acquisition. Darong's (2024) perspective on locutionary acts further supports the idea that representative utterances contribute significantly to instructional meaning-making. In addition, expressive speech acts constituted 17% of the total, often used to convey positive feedback and emotional support. Common examples included phrases like “Good job!” and “That's a great answer!” These expressions served to motivate learners and encourage their active involvement. As noted by Ruswandi and Arief (2024), expressive speech acts can enhance students' motivation and self-confidence. Shukurova's (2024) Affective Filter Hypothesis also supports the notion that positive reinforcement helps lower student anxiety, promoting more effective language acquisition.

The remaining speech acts—commissives and declaratives—played more specific but still important roles. Commissives, which accounted for 7% of all utterances, were used by teachers to make promises or express commitments, such as “I will explain this topic again if you don't understand” and “I will give you extra exercises.” These statements helped build trust and demonstrated the teacher's dedication to student learning. Bardorfer (2024) highlights the value of commissives in strengthening teacher-student rapport, while Locher (2024) emphasizes their role in establishing mutual expectations through politeness strategies. Declaratives, although the least frequent (3%), were essential in managing classroom transitions. Examples such as “You are now in groups” and “Class is dismissed” illustrate how teachers used language to alter the social structure of the classroom. Merabti (2022) describes declaratives as powerful speech acts capable of enacting social change, and Haritsyah et al. (2024) emphasize their function in shaping classroom discourse through systemic functional linguistics. Together, these findings highlight the diverse functions of speech acts and their collective importance in fostering effective communication and pedagogy in the classroom setting.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study suggest practical implications for teacher training and classroom practice. First, training programs should integrate pragmatic competence as a core component, enabling teachers to consciously vary their speech act usage according to communicative goals and classroom needs. For instance, by increasing their awareness of when to use expressive versus directive acts, teachers can balance classroom control with emotional support. Second, classroom discourse analysis like this can be used as a model for reflective teaching. Teachers could record and evaluate their own speech acts during lessons to improve clarity, engagement, and responsiveness to students. Finally, as this study was conducted in a private course setting, the findings may inform context-sensitive instructional design, especially in environments where class sizes are small and teacher-student rapport is critical.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role of speech acts in shaping the communicative dynamics of English language instruction at Smart Mataram Private Course. Directives emerged as the most frequently utilized speech acts, underscoring their importance in facilitating classroom management and student engagement. Representatives played a significant role in knowledge transmission, while expressives contributed to fostering a supportive and motivational learning environment. Although commissives and declaratives were less frequent, their presence was crucial in building teacher-student rapport and maintaining classroom structure.

These findings reinforce the relevance of Searle's speech act theory in educational discourse and align with previous research on classroom interaction. The study also underscores the necessity of a balanced use of speech acts to enhance instructional effectiveness. Teachers should integrate various speech act types strategically to create a more interactive, engaging, and supportive classroom environment. Furthermore, the study's implications suggest that teacher training programs should emphasize pragmatic competence to help educators optimize their use of speech acts for better learning outcomes.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this study was limited to a single private course institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Future research could explore the impact of different speech act strategies on students' language acquisition and engagement levels. Additionally, comparative studies across different educational settings may provide deeper insights into the universal and context-specific aspects of speech acts in language teaching. By further investigating these dimensions, educators and researchers can contribute to the development of more effective language teaching methodologies, ultimately improving student learning experiences in diverse classroom settings.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, future research should explore how students respond to different types of speech acts and how these interactions influence their language acquisition and classroom participation. Additionally, researchers could investigate the impact of cultural and contextual factors on teachers' use of speech acts in private language courses. One of the key challenges in conducting this research was the limited generalizability of the findings, as the study focused solely on Smart Mataram Private Course. Future studies should consider a larger sample size across different private and formal educational settings to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Moreover, incorporating students' perspectives through interviews or surveys would offer deeper insights into the effectiveness of speech acts in language teaching. Finally, technological advancements, such as AI-based language analysis tools, could be utilized to enhance the accuracy of speech act classification and provide more objective findings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to Smart Mataram Private Course for granting permission to conduct this study and for their valuable cooperation during the data collection process. Appreciation is also extended to the English teacher and students who participated in this research, providing essential insights into classroom interactions. Special thanks go to academic advisors and colleagues for their constructive feedback and support in refining this study. Finally, the researcher acknowledges the support of family and friends, whose encouragement has been instrumental in completing this research.

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