An Analysis 0f The Use 0f Speech Acts by English Language Teachers at College Level

1. Muhammad Arshad
Lecturer in English, Govt. Graduate College, D. G. Khan
PhD Scholar, University of Education, Lahore
2. Dr. Tayyaba Yasmin
Associate Professor of English, University of Education, Lahore
3. Farooq Ahmad
M.Phil. Govt. College University, Faisalabad

Abstract

The study aimed at analysing the use of speech acts by college level English language teachers in their classroom discussion. The objectives of the study were (i) to explore whether College level English language teachers in Pakistan employ speech acts in the class and (ii) to describe the kinds of speech acts employed by English language teachers at college level. The descriptive research design was used to conduct the study. Five male English language teachers with at least five years of experience in the field of English language teaching were selected as the participants of the study and an observation sheet was used to collect data in the form of utterances used by the teachers during their lectures. The research found that four types of speech acts were performed by English language teachers during their teaching practice and these included directives, representatives, commissives and expressives. The study concluded that the teachers' awareness and effective use of speech acts may save the learners from misunderstanding during the interpretation of teachers' intended messages and enhance the effectiveness of the teaching process.

Key Words: *speech act, language, teaching, directives, representatives, commissives, expressives*

Introduction

Communication helps people in the socialization process and facilitates them in constructing meaning out of the dialogue. With the help of its dynamic nature, human beings express their emotions and opinions. Miller (2001) asserts that communication is an exchange of information in the form of spoken words, signals or written text and language is used as a basic tool in this process. The ability of a person to comprehend the meanings intended by the speaker and use language in different communicative contexts is termed as pragmatic ability (Ren, 2022). According to Bachman and Palmer (2010) the capability of a language user to comprehend the contextual meaning of an utterance is an important element of various models of communicative ability. Like everyday life, communication is an essential part of classroom discussion. Teachers use utterances while asking questions and in explaining difficult concepts. According to Celce-Mercia and Olshtain (2000) instructional language has an effect on the learning outcomes of the students. Hence, use of appropriate language is crucial in ensuring successful teaching and learning process. In addition to it, classroom communication conducted by the teachers comprises of certain acts that serve different functions and are termed as speech acts. These speech acts refer to the use of utterances to perform different actions (Kreidler, 2002). Teachers use these acts to fulfill their role as leaders and facilitators of the class. Brown (2000) asserts that a teacher has to perform multiple roles in his class including the role of an authority, a guide,

counselor, and manager. In order to meet the requirements of all these roles, he needs to use speech acts to teach, direct and persuade the students to perform various tasks and assignments.

Literature Review

The instructional method of a teacher plays a key role in the skill development and grooming of the learners. A teacher, not only needs to be a good public speaker but he also needs to be skillful in various other activities. The teachers help learns in gaining information, ideas and values. The teachers use their communication skills to fulfill various requirements of the field. The role played by language in bridging the communication gap between learners and teachers is very important. The essential aspect of language which is used by the teachers to perform different function or to achieve various ends are termed as speech acts. Akinwotu (2013) asserts that speech act theory is the center of pragmatics. A speech act is a sort of communication which can be termed as an action that the speaker performs with his utterance. Dawson and Phelan (2016, P. 710) define speech acts as "actions that are performed only through using language." Usually, there are three facets of speech acts. An utterance that conveys an expression without any intension in it is termed as locutionary act while an utterance that conveys an expression and a particular intention towards the hearer is referred to as illocutionary speech act. In addition to it, a listener's response towards an illocutionary act is called a perlocutionary speech act (Austen, 1975). Grice (1975) proposed a theory of conversational implicature, which is the process by which speakers convey meaning indirectly through speech acts. The theory suggests that speakers use implicatures to convey more than what is explicitly stated, and that hearers use a set of maxims to infer these implicatures. Speech acts are necessary for a better communication as they enable language users to perform various functions like requesting, commanding, thanking or apologizing. The speech acts are helpful not only in a classroom setting rather these play a key role everywhere in daily life conversations. In the classroom activity, teachers and students are engaged in an interaction that has predetermined objectives. A calculated and effective use of speech acts can play vital role in achieving the objectives of the teaching and learning process.

Searl (1976) identified five types of speech acts. The illocutionary act used by the speaker to express his opinion about a situation is termed as a representative speech act. The speaker asserts his opinion or state whether something is true or false. The commissive speech act is another type where the speaker uses an utterance to commit himself to a future action. Commissives are used to promise, guarantee, offer, deny and to threat. Moreover, directives are another type of speech acts which are used to get things done by the listeners. These may include commands, requests and suggestions. The fourth type, the expressives are used by the speakers to express their feelings or emotions. Declaratives according to Searl (1976) are the fifth type of speech acts where a speaker changes the state of events through his words. While performing declarative speech acts, the speaker must have an institutional purpose and status. Collectively, Searle's classification of speech acts provides a useful framework for understanding the different types of communicative acts that individuals use to achieve their goals and express their intentions through language. However, it is important to note that the boundaries between these different types of speech acts are not always clear-cut, and the interpretation of speech acts can vary depending on the context and cultural norms

For teachers, classroom speech behaviour is a crucial concern since it might reveal the kind of teaching practices they use frequently while speaking with their pupils. Thus, it demonstrates the level of verbal engagement in the classroom (Merdana et.al, 2013). In keeping

with this notion, Consolo (2006) asserts that the employment of diverse language functions in the classroom during the interaction between teachers and students has a significant impact on students' language development. Nonetheless, teachers and students should be aware of a number of elements in an EFL classroom context such as idiomatic terms and cultural conventions. If listeners do not fully get the meaning of the remark, these aspects may cause them difficulty. That is because they assume that the norms and grammar of their own tongue apply to the other language as well. Their lack of understanding of cultural norms and colloquial phrases in a foreign language may also cause problems. For instance, the study by Karimnia and Afghari (2011) that emphasised the various complementing styles between Americans and Persians demonstrated how culture influences language use in several ways. In addition to cultural considerations, the language of the teacher is another crucial element that affects how well English is taught and learned. While teaching English to foreign language learners in a classroom environment, a non-native speaker of the language has difficulty getting the pupils to grasp what is being said. According to Nuraini (2015), Indonesian students misunderstand the teacher's use of speech acts in the classroom because they see them as being improper. Perhaps a simple statement made by the teacher may elicit different meanings in the minds of the students. In order to make the communication fruitful, the teacher must have a good awareness of IFIDs (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices).

Overall, inadequate study has been done on teachers' use of speech acts, particularly in the setting of EFL. The majority of earlier studies concentrate on the speech acts focused political speeches, films, commercials, books, and short tales. So, this research was carried out in an effort to overcome the research gap. This study looked at the speech acts utilised in EFL classroom conversations, including the kinds of speech acts college level English teachers employed in their classrooms and how they served certain purposes.

Objectives of the Study
The study was aimed at achieving the below mentioned objectives.
1- To explore whether College level English language teachers in Pakistan employ speech acts in the class.
2- To describe the kinds of speech acts employed by English language teachers at college level.

Research Questions
The study was aimed at finding answers to the following questions.
1- Do English language teachers in Pakistan make use of speech acts in the classroom discussion?
2- What are different kinds of illocutionary speech acts and forces employed by college level English language teachers?

Research methods
A pragmatic approach has been used in conducting the study. It is focused on the classification of speech acts performed by English language teachers during the classroom activity. The principles of pragmatics and conversation have been integrated to analyze the kinds and frequencies of illocutionary speech acts by keeping Searl's (1976) classification of speech

acts in view. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study the researcher used a mixed method approach to conduct the study.

Design of the study

The descriptive research design was suitable to conduct the study as it was focused at investigating the practices of English language teachers with regards to the use of speech acts in the classroom discussion.

Participants of the study

Five male English language teachers with at least five years of experience in the field of English language teaching were selected as the participants of the study. The age of the participants was between 30 to 45 years. Prior permission was sought from the participants for the observation of classroom activity.

Data Collection

Participants' observation was used to collect qualitative data in the form of utterances used by the teachers during their lectures. The collected data was natural and authentic as it was based on communication inside classroom. This sort of data is natural and empirical as it is based on factual information. Observation is the most appropriate way to directly report activities performed by the participants.

Research instruments.

The researcher collected the data as a participant observer. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982) the researcher is one of the important instruments of the qualitative research. This technique assists the researcher in developing a complete understanding of the phenomena of interest. Kawulich (2005) asserts that observation enables the researcher to understand and explain the phenomena in a better way as the observer is aware of the context. The researcher himself listens and observes the occurrences in the research site.

The researcher also made use of an observation sheet to collect data about teachers' use of speech acts in the classroom. Schmuck and Kawulich (2005) asserted that use of such methods helps researchers to analyze the expression of feelings and understand how the subjects achieve the objectives of their communication. The format of the observation sheet used in the research has been given below:

Observation sheet

Participant		Qualification	Experience (in years)				Class/ Course
Observed data		Context	Kind of speech acts				
			Rep	Dir	Exp	Com	Dec

Data Analysis

The data obtained through observation was analyzed to describe the types, frequencies and percentages of speech acts performed by the participants during their lectures in the classrooms. Quantitative approach was applied for the analysis of frequencies of different types

of illocutionary acts and a thematic analysis was conducted to describe different types of speech acts and their realization by the participants.

Findings

The results of the research indicate the tendencies of college level English language teachers about the use of speech acts. Searl (1979) described representatives, expressives, declaratives, commissives and directives as five types of illocutionary speech acts. The table below presents the detail about the utilization of these types by English language teachers at college level:

Table.1 Frequencies of speech acts

Participant	Representatives		Directives		Expressives		Commissives		Total
	Occurrence	%	Occurrence	%	Occurrence	%	Occurrence	%	
1	8	32	10	40	5	20	2	8	25
2	4	21.1	9	47.3	3	15.8	3	15.8	19
3	9	37.5	8	33.3	5	20.8	2	8.3	24
4	5	23.8	9	42.8	3	14.2	4	19	21
5	5	25	8	40	5	25	2	10	20
Total	31	28.4	44	40.3	21	19.3	13	12	109

It is evident from the data that the participants employed four kinds of speech acts in their teaching practice. These include representatives, expressives, directives and commissives, whereas the instances of the declaratives were not found in the data. It has been revealed from the data that the first participant performed 25 illocutionary speech acts out of which 32% were representatives, and the frequency of directives was 40%. The frequency of expressives remained 20% and only 8% commissives were used by the first teacher. The second teacher performed 21.1% representative speech acts while directives (47.3%) were the most frequent type of speech acts employed by him. The frequency of expressives and commissives was 15.8% each.

The third participant also performed four types of Searl's illocutionary acts. Representatives were performed frequently by him. Out of total 24 speech acts performed by him, 37.5% were representatives and the frequency of directives was 33.3%. The use of expressives was 20.8%. The frequency of commissives performed by him was 8.3% and no declaratives were performed by him during the class. The data shows that the fourth participant used 23.8% and performed 9 directive speech acts which makes 42.8% of the total illocutionary speech utterances by him. The frequencies of expressives and commissives were 14.2% and 19% respectively. The fifth participant performed directive speech acts frequently as 40% of the speech acts performed by him during his lecture belong to this category. The frequency of representatives and expressives is 25% each, whereas 10% of the observed utterances were commissives.

Thematic description

The data obtained through observation of classroom discussion conducted by the participants was analyzed thematically. Representatives, expressives, declaratives, commissives and directives are the five types of illocutionary speech acts which were analyzed in the study. Each participant performed various speech acts in accordance with the requirement of the situation. The illocutionary forces employed in different speech acts identified during the observed Classes have been discussed below.

Representatives. The illocutionary act used by the speaker to express his opinion about a situation is termed as a representative speech act. The speaker asserts his opinion or state whether something is true or false. These have various function like explaining, stating, agreeing, disagreeing, correcting and confirming. The data obtained during the observation indicated that the first participant employed utterances like "The social norms have undergone a change" and "We cannot achieve native like fluency" for stating his opinion about different issues. The use of expressions as, "That's right" was done for agreeing to the responses provided by the students. The Second participant employed representatives like "The examination pattern is not going to change" for stating his view point in response to a question asked by the students. Utterances like "Meaning is generated on the basis of context" and "Conventional meaning is associated with idioms" were used for the purpose of explaining the concept of idiomatic expressions. Moreover, the observation sheet indicated that representatives were the most frequent speech acts in the discussion of third participant. He used utterances like "Planning is the most important step in writing" and "Passive voice is suitable for official communication" for the purpose of explaining his viewpoint to the students. Fourth participant's use of representatives included utterances like **"**You have almost completed your syllabus", "There can be several examples of imperatives and "We discussed it in the last session" for stating his assertions in the classroom. The evidence of representatives like "Words can express different meanings" and "It is human nature to get involved in debates" was found in the observation of the fifth class for stating and explaining the concepts.

Directives. Directives are another type of speech acts which are used to get things done by the listeners. These may include commands and suggestions. Asking questions, requesting, commanding and suggesting are some of the functions of directives. The data collected through classroom observation revealed that these are the most frequently used speech acts in the observed classes. The first participant employed directives for suggesting ideas by using the utterance "You should observe the phenomena" and asking questions like "Do norms and values change overtime?" He used utterances like "It is compulsory for all the students" to command and warn students to get the assigned task done. The second participant's use of directives comprised of commands as it is evident from the observed instances like "Speak loudly.", "Repeat the pronunciation after me." While the third participant employed utterances like "You should share your opinion" and "Describe various types of writing" to command and suggest the students to take active part in the classroom discussion. The directives uttered by the fourth teacher included warning like "Don't miss the tests". Direct commands like "Maintain silence, please" and suggestions as "You can ask questions if there is any confusion" were also an important part of directives employed by him. The fifth participant's used of directives, according to the observed data, comprised of direct commands as it is evident from instances like "Give me a text book" and "Let me check your responses". It can be inferred from the frequent

use of directives that the class activity is dominated by the teachers whereas the students remain passive.

Expressives. The expressives are the utterances used by the speakers to express their feelings or emotions. Such speech acts perform the functions as greeting, thanking, congratulating, praising or apologizing in different situations. The data obtained through the observation sheet revealed that expressives have been used by all the participants for greetings while entering or leaving the class. The first participant used utterances like "good" and "thanks" for praising the correct responses of the students during discussion. The second participant greeted the class by using expressions from Urdu language and did not employ much utterances to praise or despise any activity. However, the third participant made good use of expressions like "Yes, you are right" and "excellent" for praising students' responses to questions asked by him. The fourth participant made use of utterances like "Dear students" and "Ok" to show closeness with the learners. Moreover, the fifth participant employed utterances like "You have done well" and "That is a good question" to express his approval towards students' responses in the classroom activity.

Commissives. The commissive speech act is another type where the speaker uses an utterance to commit himself to a future action. Commissives are used to promise, guarantee, offer, deny and to threat. The observed data indicated a scarce but well-structured use of commissives in the classes conducted by college level English language teachers. The first participant used the utterance "I'll elaborate it later" to vow that the concept under discussion will be elaborated later. The Second participant used utterance "I'll call students' names to respond" to threat or urge students to take part in the classroom discussion. Moreover, he used the expression "Ill conduct a session of discussion on weekly basis" to do a promise with the students. The third participant uttered "I will bring the handouts for you" to promise the provision of notes to the students. The fourth participant used the expression "Whoever skips the class will be fined" to threat students to be careful about their attendance. Threatening is the illocutionary force behind the utterance "You have been absent for many days" employed by the fifth participant that he used to warn a student to be regular in the class.

Declaratives according to Searl (1976) are the fifth type of speech acts where a speaker changes the state of events through his words. While performing declarative speech acts, the speaker must have an institutional purpose and status. However, no evidence of the use of declaratives have been found during the observation of selected classes.

Discussion

Firstly, the research aimed at analyzing the English language teachers' use of speech acts during the classroom discussion. The second objective of the study was to describe different kinds of speech acts performed during the process of classroom teaching and the frequency of the use of these acts. For achieving the said objectives, a mixed method approach was adopted by the researcher. A qualitative approach was used in data collection by using observation as a data collection tool. The data was elaborated by using a quantitative analysis of different types of speech acts. The data indicated a total of 109 occurrences of illocutionary speech acts during the observation of the teaching process of the participants. The bar graph below indicates the overall frequencies of various speech acts employed in the classroom discussion:

Figure.1 Frequency of speech acts

Frequency of speech acts
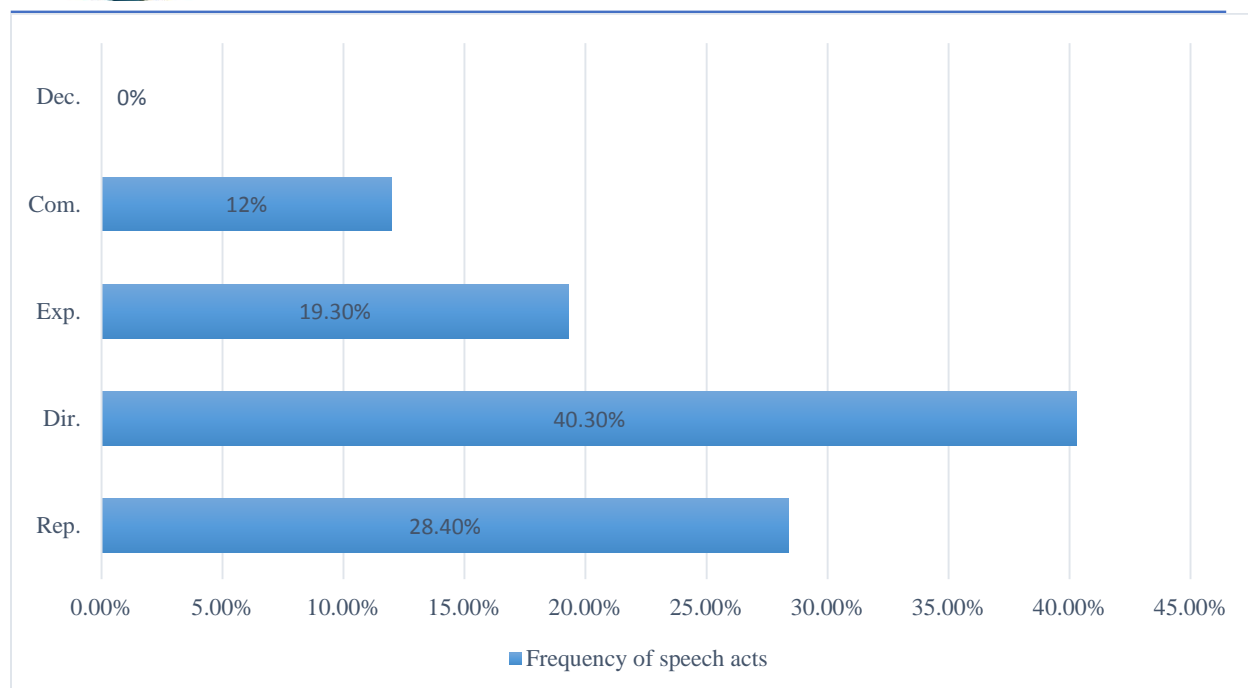
The graph elaborates that out of the total 109 occurrences, the number of representatives is 31 which makes 28.4 percent and almost 44(40.3%) occurrences of directives have been found in the data which is the highest frequency as compared to the other types of speech acts performed by the participants. The occurrence of expressives and commissives was 19.3% and 12% respectively while no evidence of the use of declaratives has been found in the observed data. High frequency of the performance of the directives by the college level English language teachers indicate teacher centeredness of the English language classes at college level. In such classes, the students play the role of passive listeners.

The findings of the research are the predictors of the tendencies of college level English language teachers about the use of speech acts. Representatives, expressives, declaratives, commissives and directives are the five types of illocutionary speech acts which were found in the data. The illocutionary forces employed in different speech acts identified during the observed classes have been analyzed qualitatively. From a thematic point of view it was revealed that the participants used representatives for informing, explaining, agreeing and conforming. The directives were employed for the purposes of asking, suggesting, warning, commanding, requesting and persuading. Moreover, the use of expressives was done for the sake of praising, greeting and wishing. The commissives were used for offering, promising and granting.

Speech acts, according to Dawson and Phelan (2016, P. 710) are "actions that are performed only through using language." Speech acts emphasize the intension of the speaker in uttering an expression. Awareness about the classification and use of speech acts in EFL classes may assist learners to use language effectively and efficiently. Hence, the uses and effects of speech acts should be further assessed in order to promote better teaching and learning practices in the language classrooms.

Conclusion

In accordance with the objectives of the research, which were to analyze the use of speech acts by English language teachers and to describe different types of speech acts

performed in the classroom, the research found that four types of speech acts were performed by English language teachers during their teaching practice and these included directives (40.3%), representatives (28.4%), commissives (12%) and expressives (19.3%). Among the frequencies of speech acts described in the data, it was revealed that directives were the most frequently performed speech acts during the English language classes observed in the study. Representatives were the second most frequently used speech acts. Contrary to it, declaratives were the most scarcely used acts in the classroom teaching practice of the participants as no evidence of the use of declaratives was found in the data.

From the perspective of functions of speech acts, the representatives were performed for informing, explaining, agreeing and conforming. The directives were performed for the purposes of asking, suggesting, warning, commanding, requesting and persuading. Moreover, the use of expressives was done for the sake of praising, greeting, wishing, stating pleasure and sorrow. The commissives were used for offering, promising and granting.

In conclusion, it is asserted that the language teachers and students must have a good awareness of the use of speech acts. It will enable them to understand how language can be used to perform certain actions in a better way. The teachers' awareness of speech acts may save the learners from misunderstanding during the interpretation of teachers' intended messages. For this purpose, the teachers should incorporate different activities during their lectures to boost up communicative competence and pragmatic awareness of students. The per-locutionary acts of students in response to teachers' use of illocutionary acts during the classroom activity should be closely analyzed for the sake of effective classroom communication.

References

Akinwotu, S.A.(2013). *A speech act analysis of the acceptance of nomination speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief OMK Obiola*. English Linguistic research, 2(1),43-51.

Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words*. Oxford university press.

Bachman, L. F., and Palmer, A. S. (2010). *Language assessment in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bogdan R., Biklen S. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (Vol. 4). New York: Longman.

Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching: A guide for language teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Consolo, D.A. (July/December 2006). Classroom Oral Interaction in Foreign Language Lessons and Implications for Teacher Development. Linguagem & Ensino, 9(2), 33-55.

Dawson,H.C. & Phelan, M.(2016). *Language files: Material for introduction to language and linguistics.(12th Ed.).* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Grice, H. P. (1975). *Logic and conversation*. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), Syntax and semantics: Speech acts (Vol. 3, pp. 41-58). Academic Press.

Karimnia, A, Afghari, A. (2011). Compliments in English and Persian Interaction: A Cross-Cultural Perspective. Jezikoslovije. 12(1). 27-50.

Kawulich, B. B. (2005, May). Participant observation as a data collection method. In *Forum qualitative sozialforschung/forum: Qualitative social research* (Vol. 6, No. 2).

Kreidler, C. (2002). *Introducing english semantics*. Routledge

Merdana, et.al. (2013). An Analysis of Speech Acts Produced by Elementary School Teachers and Students to Facilitate Teaching and Learning at SDN 10 Pringgasela East Lombok. E-Journal Program Pascasarjana Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. 1

Miller, J. H. (2001). *Speech acts in literature*. Stanford University Press.

Nuraini, P.N. (2015). A Pragmatic Analysis of Classroom Speech Acts in The English Teaching and Learning Process at SMA N 1 Purworejo (A Case Study). Unpublished Thesis, Yogyakarta: Yogyakarta State University

Ren, W. (2022). Second language pragmatics. *Elements in Applied Linguistics*.

Searle, J. R. (1979). Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts. Cambridge University Press.

Searl, J. R. (1976). The classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in society*, *5*(1), 1-24.

Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge University Press.