

# CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN

**FORUM KOMUNIKASI ILMIAH  
DAN EKSPRESI KREATIF  
ILMU PENDIDIKAN**

**Mengembangkan Pola Pikir Berwirausaha**

**Membangun SMK Yang Unggul  
Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Daya Saing Lulusan  
Untuk Menghadapi Persaingan Kerja  
Di Era Masyarakat Ekonomi Asean (MEA)**

**Makna Simbol Dalam Komunitas Public United Not Kingdom (PUNK)  
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**Merajut Nasionalisme Ditengah Ancaman Disintegrasi Bangsa**

**The Strength Of Natural Reader In The Teaching Of English  
For Young Learners**

**Teachers' Speech Act And Politeness In EFL  
Classroom Interaction**

**The Power Of Classroom Interaction In EFL Classes**

**Code-Mixing And Code-Switching In Various Indonesian Texts**

**Analisis Kesalahan Mahasiswa STKIP PGRI Blitar  
Dalam Menyelesaikan Soal Persamaan Deferensial Orde 1  
Yang Berkaitan Dengan Persamaan Deferensial  
Bernoulli Dan Homogen**

**The Effectiveness Of Counselling Learning Approach  
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Untuk Mengarahkan Pemahaman Proses Berpikir Mahasiswa  
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**Pemahaman Mahasiswa Berdasarkan Taksonomi Bloom**

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# TEACHERS' SPEECH ACT AND POLITENESS IN EFL CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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**Abstrak :** Tindak tutur guru dalam interaksi kelas memiliki peran penting atas sukses tidaknya proses belajar dan mengajar. Dalam kelas secara umum menurut Sinclair dan Coulthard terdapat pola IRF (Initiation Respon Feedback) dimana guru melakukan inisiasi, siswa menjawab, dan guru memberikan umpan balik. Dari pola ini secara jelas dapat diketahui bahwa guru mendominasi tindak tutur kelas. Selain dominasi tersebut, tindak tutur direktif oleh guru cenderung dominan yang jika tidak dilakukan dengan santun akan membuat kesalahpahaman dalam berkomunikasi. Oleh karena itu makalah ini menyajikan gagasan tentang jenis-jenis tindak tutur guru dan strategi kesantunan yang sesuai dalam interaksi kelas berdasarkan kategori tindak tutur yang diusulkan oleh John Searle (1969) yang terdiri dari asertif, deklaratif, ekspresif, direktif dan komisif. Sedangkan kesantunan tindak tutur guru akan dikaji dengan pandangan Leech yang serupa dengan teori prinsip kerjasama seperti *Tact maxim*, *Generosity Maxim*, *Approbation Maxim* dan *Modesty Maxim*.

**Kata Kunci :** Interaksi kelas, tindak tutur guru, kesantunan

**Abstract :** Teacher's speech acts in classroom interaction play a very important role in determining the success and failure of student learning. This involves not only transferring knowledge to students but also maintaining good rapport between the teacher and students. From Sinclair & Coulthard (1975, 1992) IRF model of classroom discourse, it is clear that the teacher usually initiates communication about a topic, for example, by asking a question, the learner then responds to the teacher's initiation, and the teacher finally gives the learner feedback. From this pattern, it can be seen that teachers have dominant part in performing communicative functions. With its dominant role in classroom interaction, this paper aims to share the types and appropriateness of speech acts performed by an English teacher and students in classroom interaction. The speech acts performed are identified under Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts namely assertive, declarative, expressive, directive, and commissive speech acts while their appropriateness is based on Leech's view of politeness involving a set of politeness maxims analogous to Grice's maxims such as: Tact Maxim: Minimize cost to other. Maximize benefit to other, Generosity Maxim: Minimize benefit to self. Maximize cost to self, Approbation Maxim: Minimize dispraise of other. Maximize praise of other, Modesty Maxim: Minimize praise of self. Maximize dispraise of self.

**Key Words :** Classroom interaction, Teachers' speech acts, politeness

## INTRODUCTION

Classrooms are places where typically one teacher and a number of learners interact together for a pedagogical purpose. For language teaching and learning, interaction which occurs between teachers

and learners is regarded as being central. Interaction contributes to acquisition through the provision of negative evidence and through opportunities for modified output. In meaning negotiation, it can serve to draw learners attention to form-meaning relationship

and provide them with additional time to focus on encoding meaning, while through interaction that involves feedback, the attention of the learners are paid to the form of errors and are pushed to create modification.

Face-to-face classroom interaction is mediated by classroom talk, talk produced by teacher and students. This is a social interaction in which teaching and learning is mediated, (Alexander, 2004:5; Wells, 1999: 319). Through talk, understanding is achieved for example, because concepts are explained, tasks demonstrated, questions posed, and ideas discussed. Thus, speech in the classroom is central to most of teaching and learning activities.

In education, language is crucial for the success of teaching and learning. To accomplish a particular goal of learning, teaching may be successfully conducted through the use of certain language. In general teachers use language to instruct. Also, they use it to intervene in an incorrect knowledge acquisition on the students' part. In this case they typically use language to lead their students in the right direction by pointing to the possible contradictions and inconsistencies in their reasoning or actions. Thus, teachers use language to perform certain acts and to achieve particular effects on their students. In this sense teachers' linguistic acts conform to the traditional understanding of speech acts as defined by Austin (1962). In line with the notion of speech acts in classroom interaction, the following section presents a discussion concerning with speech act theories, classroom discourse, and the teacher's speech acts in classroom interaction. These are to provide a clear picture of the types of speech acts performed by teachers and the ways of performing polite speech acts.

## SPEECH ACT THEORIES

Speech act philosophy sees language as a set of activities in concrete situation and speech act philosophers define it according to psychological and social functions. They include, for example, the expression of psychological state (thanking, apologizing), and social acts such as influencing other people behavior (warning, ordering) or making contract (promising, naming).

Austin's speech act involves three aspects encompassing the *locution* (the act of saying something), the *illocution* (the act done in saying something), and the *perlocution* (the act done by saying something). For example: the expression "Don't smoke!" contain the words "don't" and "smoke", which subsume the locutionary act. This also means a performance of an illocutionary act such as urging, advising, or ordering someone not to smoke. If, as a consequence of this utterance, the hearer doesn't smoke, the perlocution act is that the speaker convinced the hearer not to smoke. Blunt (2013) gives examples that when one says:

"I will come and see you tomorrow",  
one is promising;

"I think you will pass your exams",  
one is declaring one's belief about something;

"Go to the end of the street", one is commanding, or instructing;

"That was a good job that you did",  
one is congratulating.

The concept of the speech act reflects the cooperation of linguistic structure and social structure in communication. It is concerned with the ways in which language can be used. Austin classifies illocutionary acts into five types, i.e., *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives*, and *expositives*. Although it is often argued that Austin's classification is not complete and those coined categories are not mutually exclusive, Austin's classification

is best seen as an attempt to give a general picture of illocutionary acts: what types of illocutionary act one can generally perform in uttering a sentence. One can exercise judgment (Verdictive), exert influence or exercise power (Exercitive), assume obligation or declare intention (Commissive), adopt attitude, or express feeling (Behabitive), and clarify reasons, argument, or communication (Expositive).

Austin's classification (1962), attempted to categorize the communicative intentions behind utterances. His analysis has since been extensively modified and revised, particularly by Van Ek, Wilkins and Munby. Munby's version as cited by Blunt (2013) are seven groups of functions, also termed macro-functions:

1. A scale of certainty, which includes speech acts expressing degrees of personal certainty (I am certain, I think, I doubt, I am not certain), and impersonal certainty (he is sure to pass, he should pass, he may pass, he is certain not to pass).
2. A scale of commitment including speech acts expressing intention (I want/ prefer/ promise ...), and obligation (it is my duty/ responsibility).
3. Speech acts of expressing judgement and evaluation, including evaluation (I estimate it is worth ...), verdiction (I condemn/ sentence/forgive you), approval (I commend/ appreciate your concern) and disapproval (I deplore your ingratitude).
4. Speech acts that express suasion, including inducement (I suggest/advise ...), compulsion (I command/prohibit ...), prediction (I warn/ invite/threaten ...), and tolerance (I consent/ agree to/authorise ...).
5. Speech acts that express argument, stating or asserting information, seeking information and denying information (I reject/oppose your point ...), expressing agreement, disagreement (I wouldn't go along with

that point) or concession.

6. Speech acts that express rational enquiry and exposition, and includes stating presuppositions, hypotheses, substantiating, generalising, concluding, interpreting, explaining, demonstrating, classifying, defining and exemplifying.
7. Speech acts that express formulaic communication such as greeting, farewells, thanking, apologising, congratulating, commiserating, and saying things which show that you are paying attention.

Meanwhile, Hymes (1968) classifies speech acts according to their focus in the communicative event. He identified several factors in communication and showed that speech acts usually focus on one of these, resulting in six groups of speech functions called "macro functions".

1. Personal function. Focusing on the speaker as a person, it is any speech act which expresses the speaker's attitudes towards things. These speech acts include opinioning, judging, believing and intending.
2. Directive function. Speech acts which focus on the hearer would be those which are directive, such as commanding, suggesting, warning and permitting.
3. Phatic function are speech acts in which the speaker and hearer need to create contact in order to communicate, and this would require speech acts which call a hearer's attention (greetings, etc.), solicit their continuing attention ("Do you follow?"), keep the conversation going through "small talk", and signpost the conversation (listing points, defining terms, giving examples).
4. Metalinguistic function. These are speech acts which focus on the rules of a particular linguistic code (such as the defining function in the scientific code).

5. Referential function. These are speech acts which focus on the topic of the utterance, and/or on its setting in place and time.
6. Imaginative function. These are speech acts which focus on the form of the message, its volume, tone or presentation whereby the style of the composition conveys a rhetorical message in addition to its propositional content.

Searle (1969) defines speech acts as the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication. Following Austin, Searle (1969) classified speech acts into five categories: representatives (assertion, claim, report, conclusion), directives (suggestion, request, order, command), expressives (apology, complaint, thank), commissives (promise, threat, refusal), declaratives (decree, declaration). They are described as follows :

1. Representatives are speech acts to express feelings, beliefs, assertions, illustrations, and the like such as “Today, tomatoes can be grown in the desert.”
2. Directives are speech acts in which speakers impose some actions on the hearer. They are acts where the speaker intends to make the hearer act in a particular way, associated with acts such as asking, challenging, commanding, daring, forbidding, insisting, instructing, permitting, requesting, ordering (o'Keefee et al. 2007:166). Inherently, these are face-threatening acts toward the hearer since they usually impose on the hearer.
3. Expressives are among the most important speech acts which express psychological states of the speaker or the hearer. Apologizing, complaining, complimenting, and congratulating, are examples of expressive.
4. Commissives are speech acts that enable speakers to commit themselves to future actions. By definition, these are speech acts whereby the speaker takes on or refuses some responsibility or task and are,

therefore, face-threatening to the speaker, or imposing on the speaker, o'Keefee et al. (2007:166). Examples of commissives are guaranteeing, offering, inviting, promising, vowing, undertaking refusing. The chunk Are you sure? can be part of the routine of offering as re-offers, particularly food.

5. Declaratives (also called performatives) are speech acts that “change the world” as a result of having been performed. Some good examples of such declarative speech acts are when the jury foreman announces, “We find the defendant not guilty!” and when the justice of the peace says, “I now pronounce you man and wife.”

Searle's classification, based on the others' classification above, seems to represent all that have been discussed above.

### TEACHER'S SPEECH ACTS WITHIN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

The reason for concentrating on the study of speech act is that all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts and speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication (Searle, 1969:16). The term speech act relates to language function. Hymes (1962, following Jakobson, 1960) proposes seven 'broad types' of function which language in use serves: expressive/emotive, directive/ conative/ persuasive, poetic, contact (physical or psychological), meta-linguistic (focusing on meaning), referential, contextual/situational.

The speech functions which Hymes calls metalinguistic, contact and poetic are particularly relevant to a teacher's communicative concern in the classroom. On the contrary, Stern's (1991:220) states that language in social context is closer to real life, meaning that in classroom, any types of speech acts may occur. Fitria's (2010) analysis of elementary

classroom speech acts classification shows that the teacher and the students produced all of the speech act types. She found that the teacher dominates declaratives, expressive, and directives with directives being the most frequently expressed, while the students dominate representatives and commissives with representatives being more frequent.

Teachers constantly check up to see if they are on the same wavelength as their pupils, if at least most of their pupils are following what they are saying, in addition to actively monitoring, editing and correcting the actual language which pupils use. Teachers therefore constantly exert different kinds of control over the on-going state of talk in the classroom, Stubbs (1983:50). Examples of the kinds of metacommunication which characterizes teacher-talk are attracting or showing attention, controlling the amount of speech, checking or confirming understanding, summarizing, defining, editing, correcting, specifying topic. The following is more detailed examples of the kind of metacommunication which characterized teacher-talk taken from note made during observation of English lessons in an Edinburgh secondary school. They are the actual words spoken by teachers.

*Attracting or showing attention.* A teacher constantly makes remarks primarily to attract or hold the attention of the pupils, and therefore merely to prepare them for the message still to come.

- Now, don't start now, just listen.
  - Yeah, well, come on now, you guys!
  - Eh, wait a minute, let's get the facts.
  - (The teacher claps his hands several times.)  
Right, right, right, right, right!
  - ... you pair of budgies at the back!
- or he may say something to show his own continued attention to the pupils when they are speaking.
- Yeah. Mmhm. Uuh.

*Controlling the amount of speech.* Teachers frequently exert control simply over whether pupils speak or not. This may take the form of an order to a pupil to say something, or a request (usually an order) not to speak.

- Do you want to say something at this point?
- Brenda? ... (Long pause.) Morag?
- Anything else you can say about it?
- I could do with a bit of silence.
- I don't like this chattering away.
- Look, I'd prefer it if you belted up.
- Who's that shouting and screaming?
- Eh, some of you are not joining in the studious silence we're trying to develop.

*Checking or confirming understanding.* Teachers may check whether they have understood or confirm that they have understood.

- A very serious what? I didn't catch you.
- I see.

And they may try and check whether their pupils are following.

- Do you understand, Stevie?

*Summarizing.* Teachers often summarize something that has been said or read, or summarize the situation reached in a discussion or lesson; or they may ask a pupil to give a summary of something that has been said or read.

- The rest all seem to disagree with you.
- Well, what I'm trying to say is ...

*Defining.* A teacher may offer a definition or reformulation of something that has been said or read.

- Incarnate - that means "in the flesh".
- Well, these are words suggesting disapproval.
- Sonsie is just "well stacked".
- *Whore*-(the word occurred in a poem)-now you don't want to get too technical about that word-it's just a girl.

or the teacher may ask a pupil to give a definition, or to clarify something.

- Well, Brenda, does that mean anything to you?

- What's glaikit
  - David, what's the meaning of hurdles'!
  - Can anybody put that in a different way?  
(*Sonsie*, *glaikit* and *hurdles* are Scots words, meaning respectively "attractive" or "buxom", "stupid" and "buttocks" or "hips".)
  - Editing.* He may comment on something a pupil has said or written, implying a criticism or value judgement of some kind.
  - I take it you're exaggerating.
  - That's a good point.
  - That's getting nearer it.
  - No, no, we don't want any silly remarks.
  - Correcting.* Or he may actually correct or alter something a pupil has said or written, either explicitly or by repeating the 'correct' version.
  - Teacher : David, what's the meaning of  
*paramount*
  - Pupil : Important.
  - Teacher : Yes, more than that, all-important.
  - (The teacher is correcting a pupil's essay with him.) The expression *less well endowed* might be the expression you're wanting- men don't usually pursue women because they're *well-built*.
  - Controlling a topic.* Finally, the teacher may focus on a topic of discussion or place some limits on the relevance of what may be said.
  - I'm not sure what subject to take.
  - You see, we're really getting on to the subject now.
  - Now, we were talking about structures and all that.
  - Now, before I ask you to write something about it, we'll talk about it.
  - Well, that's another big subject.
- (Stubbs, 1983:50-53)

Such metacommunication is highly characteristic of teacher-talk, because it comprises a high percentage of what teachers do spend their time saying to their pupils and the working of the communication channels, clarifying and reformulating the language used.

The classroom communication is sometimes problematic especially in initiating discussion. It is more problematic than continuing it once it is under way. The difficulty is sometimes caused by having to initiate social contacts and 'break the ice' with students. Moreover, the teacher has additional problem of explaining to pupils, who do not speak very good English, exactly what is required of them. Almost all his effort is therefore devoted to coaxing along the communication process itself: proposing a topic of discussion, checking if his pupils are following, defining terms, inviting the pupils to speak, editing and correcting their language. In other words, the various different kinds of communicative stress which the teacher is under seem to have led to a very high degree of explicit monitoring of the discourse. In short, even in this kind of situation, the metacommunicative functions used by the teacher fall into the categories of metacommunication defined above.

However, more often than not, teachers do more directive acts in the classroom and therefore among the five speech act types, directive speech acts are often dominant. This phenomenon has been shown by Merdana et al.(2013) and Wajdi (2010), whose result is basically the classroom teachers dominate the talking time and use more directives while students dominantly use representative. They mainly respond to the teacher's questions and rarely initiate the talking turns for example asking questions to the teacher.

Directive speech acts are characterized to be hearer oriented in which the speaker gets the hearer to do something. This type of speech acts, is then kind of face threatening acts. Therefore, it is important to consider the ways to communicate appropriately and in relation to this purpose politeness theories are presented as the following.

## **POLITENESS THEORIES**

It is important to understand what 'politeness' is. Politeness is the use of the right word or phrase in the proper context, which is determined by the rules that are prevalent in society. Grundy (2000) says that "politeness principles have been considered to have wide descriptive power in respect of language use, to be major determinants of linguistic behavior, and to have universal status." Watts (2003) states that politeness is determined by the relationship between behavior and the suitability convention, not by specific linguistic forms. Politeness is influenced by social factors such as P (power), D (distance), and R (relationship), and also affected by speech events, Holmes (1992). In terms of the directness, people who are close friends or intimates use more imperatives. Another factor which is relevant to the form of directive is the routineness or reasonableness of the task. Requesting a routine task tends to be easy to use a direct form.

Politeness occupies a central place in linguistic pragmatics. It has been suggested (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983) that politeness is another level to conversational interaction besides the rules of the cooperative principle. Lakoff (1977) sees Grice's rules as essentially rules of clarity, and proposes that there are two prior rules of pragmatic competence. These are: Make yourself clear and be polite. Taking Grice's maxims as an approximation of how to conform to the rule making yourself clear and proposing three rules of politeness (Lakoff, 1977:88) (Formality: don't impose/remain aloof; Hesitancy: give the addressee his options; Equality or camaraderie: act as though you and the addressee were equal/make him feel good), Lakoff (1977:89) elaborates the second rule as permitting addressee to decide his own options. Leech's view of politeness involves

a set of politeness maxims analogous to Grice's maxims such as:

Tact Maxim : Minimize cost to other.  
Maximize benefit to other.

Generosity Maxim : Minimize benefit to self. Maximize cost to self.

Approbation Maxim : Minimize dispraise of other. Maximize praise of other.

Modesty Maxim : Minimize praise of self. Maximize dispraise of self.

(Leech, 1983:132)

Politeness can be complicated due to its variability in participants and cultural expectations placed on society. Lorsch & Schulze (1988) look at issues of politeness in the discourse of foreign language classrooms in Germany. Basing their analysis on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, which implies that realizations of speech acts which are indirect and off record are more polite than those which are direct and bald on record they found the latter to be heavily dominant in the EFL classrooms they investigate and they consequently conclude that there is a general lack of politeness.

Another related study was conducted by Dalton-Puffer (2010) in Austrian CLIL classrooms. The result shows that the directive realizations found in the data span the entire spectrum of the directness scale from most direct to most indirect. The vast majority of teacher requests use indirectness strategies while direct strategies were used only in critical situations when dominant speakers wished to assert their authority and therefore were rare occurrences overall, which, according to the framework of analysis she employed, are unexpected because of the teachers' hierarchical position and social role.

In classroom interaction, what is called being polite may be different from the politeness convention practiced in society in general. Agustina & Cahyono (2016) found some

expressions produced by EFL teachers that are considered to go into face-threatening utterances such as *What's your name?*, *Wait wait wait!*, *No, it's wrong*, and so on. While those that are face-saving are for examples: *Good*, *Of course*, *Would you please type over here?*, *Anybody can answer my question?* and so on. This means that direct directives are less polite than indirect ones. However, Holmes (1992:291) asserts that teachers can use very direct expressions of their meaning because of their high status relative to their students. On the other hand, the right and obligations in a role relationship such as teacher-pupil are so clear cut that teachers can also use minimally explicit forms, for example, *Blackboard!* ('Clean the blackboard'). A gentle *sit down* may be far more polite than a thundered *I want you all sitting down now*.

Based on the two different interpretations above, Blum-Kulka's (1987) statements may apply in which he says that "tipping the balance in favor of either pragmatic clarity or non-coerciveness will decrease politeness; thus, direct strategies can be perceived as impolite because they indicate a lack of concern with face, and nonconventional indirect strategies (hints) can be perceived as impolite because they indicate a lack of concern for pragmatic clarity." Watts, (2003) suggests that in respect to language, politeness corresponds to the use of indirect speech acts, addressing others using respectful tone, or utilizing polite utterances such as *please*, *sorry*, or *thank you*.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the discussion above shows that classroom teachers with their responsibilities should perform speech acts appropriately. They may use various types of speech acts for social and instructional purposes. In order to communication runs

successfully, teachers need to obey the cooperative principles that is just talk as required. In classroom context, moreover in foreign language context, being direct and literal seem to be appropriate as far as the closeness, routiness, informality, and relative status as well as intonation and so on are taken into consideration. Thus, being polite in the classrooms does not always mean to speak indirectly but depending on the context, being direct can also mean polite. This can also be indicated by politeness markers such as the use of *please*, *sorry*, *thank you*, *good*, *of course* and so on which are sincere and beneficial to the hearers.

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