

## SPEECH ACT PRESENTATION IN A LOCALLY-WRITTEN ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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### ABSTRACT

A textbook is developed to provide language input for language learners. The input should contain appropriate language use to assist learners to be able to communicate effectively from the communicative competence perspective which focuses on pragmatics. For this reason, the present study attempts to investigate speech act presentation in a local English textbook from metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistics point of view. The data were taken from common phrases or language expressions of particular functions integrated with conversations in the textbook. Findings revealed that the speech acts investigated in the textbook were presented in more discrete items lacking sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information. Concerning metapragmatic information, there seems to be a significant correlation between metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistic aspects. Pedagogically, it implies that the speech acts exposed through the textbook may not serve communicative functions as it was supposed to be and therefore, the textbook did not contain adequate pragmatic knowledge which may cause fewer opportunities to reach communicative competence.

**Keywords:** speech acts; metapragmatic; sociopragmatics; pragmalinguistics

### ABSTRAK

*Buku teks bahasa dikembangkan agar dapat menjadi input bagi pemelajar bahasa. Input tersebut sebaiknya mengandung penggunaan bahasa yang tepat untuk membantu siswa supaya mampu berkomunikasi secara efektif sesuai dengan perspektif kompetensi komunikatif yang berfokus pada pragmatik. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas representasi tindak tutur dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris lokal dari sudut pandang metapragmatik, sosiopragmatik, dan pragmalinguistik. Data diambil dari frasa umum fungsi bahasa tertentu yang terintegrasi dengan percakapan dalam buku teks. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa tindak tutur yang diselidiki dalam buku teks kurang informasi sosiopragmatik dan pragmalinguistik. Mengenai informasi metapragmatik, terlihat adanya korelasi yang signifikan antara aspek metapragmatik, sosiopragmatik, dan pragmalinguistik. Secara pedagogis, ini menyiratkan bahwa tindak tutur yang diekspos melalui buku teks mungkin kurang berfungsi komunikatif seperti yang seharusnya dan oleh karena itu, buku teks ini tidak mengandung pengetahuan pragmatis yang memadai yang dapat menyebabkan lebih sedikit peluang untuk mencapai kompetensi komunikatif.*

**Kata Kunci:** tindak tutur; metapragmatik; sosiopragmatik; pragmalinguistik

### INTRODUCTION

A language textbook provides knowledge of language to assist the users or language learners to improve further. Language enhancement can be represented by the ability to use language appropriately in

terms of pragmatic competence. Therefore, the materials discussed in the textbook are highly suggested to contain adequate pragmatic aspects to enable the learners to be pragmatically competent.

Earlier investigation of pragmatics in language textbooks, however, reported that

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language textbooks contain poor pragmatic information. Learners are exposed to language use which seems to be pragmatically inadequate indicated by the lack of speech act distribution, metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistic information. (Vellenga, 2004; Nguyen, 2011; Diepenbroek & Derwing, 2013; Nu & Murray, 2020). As a result, the learners' ability to use appropriate language in context may not be improved.

In addition to the previous research indicating the lack of pragmatic information in English textbooks, Dat (2008) pointed out that local English textbooks revealed some weaknesses, three of which were 1) the language used was mostly translated from the source language to the target language. As a result, it contained linguistic inappropriateness and inaccuracy as well as unclear content; 2) the textbook seemed to neglect appropriate language use; 3) it incorporated too many local cultures which made the learning process less intriguing.

For this reason, the present study was conducted. It discusses speech act presentation in a local English textbook. In addition, it underlines the realization of speech acts from metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistic points of view. It was, therefore, formulated in the following research questions:

1. How are speech acts presented in a local English textbook?
2. To what extent are the speech acts realized in the textbook in terms of metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics is concerned with language use. It goes beyond the literal meaning, linguistic competence, and it involves context. Learning a language should aim to reach the pragmatic level to avoid misunderstanding when having an interactive communication. According to Wichien and Aksornjarung's (2011) pragmatics consists of seven features called speech act information, usage,

politeness, register, style, cultural information, and quality.

As described above, speech acts are one of the discussions in pragmatics. They can be taught through an English coursebook. In general, speech acts are defined doing things with words (Yule, 1996). They are divided into five taxonomies namely assertives, directives, commissive, expressives, and declarations. (Searle, 1976 as cited in Cutting, 2002). Each category has sub-categories as seen in the table below.

**Table 1. Searle's Speech Acts Taxonomy**

| Category            | Sub-categories  |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Assertives</b>   | stating, boasting,<br>complaining, claiming,<br>reporting, asserting,<br>describing, announcing,<br>insisting, guessing,<br>forecasting, predicting,<br>introducing, calling,<br>complimenting, concluding,<br>reasoning, hypothesizing,<br>telling, insisting, or<br>swearing. |
| <b>Directives</b>   | requesting, warning,<br>inviting, questioning,<br>ordering, commanding,<br>advising, reassuring,<br>summoning, entreating,<br>asking, directing, bidding,<br>forbidding, instructing,<br>begging, recommending,<br>suggesting, daring, defying,<br>and challenging.             |
| <b>Expressives</b>  | Greeting, thanking,<br>apologizing, regretting,<br>commiserating,<br>congratulating, condoling,<br>deploring, welcoming,<br>surprising, blaming, praising.  |
| <b>Commissives</b>  | Promising, vowing, offering,<br>threatening, refusing,<br>pledging, intending, vowing<br>to do or to refrain from doing<br>something.   |
| <b>Declarations</b> | Declaring, christening, firing<br>from employment, resigning,<br>dismissing, naming,  |

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excommunicating,  
 appointing, sentencing,  
 blessing, firing, baptizing,  
 and bidding.

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Source: Vaezi et.al. (2014, p. 169)

Other than speech acts, three aspects involved in pragmatics and language learning are metapragmatics, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics. Metapragmatic is pragmatic information concerned with the social relationship between speakers and hearers, the setting or where an interaction takes place, and the topic or what the speaker and the hearers talk about (Nguyen, 2011). Two other aspects in pragmatics concerning metapragmatic and language learning are sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics which were first introduced by Jenny Thomas (1983). Thomas (1983) raised the issue of pragmatic failure which included sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failure.

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), sociopragmatics deals with social factors and pragmatics regarding in what circumstances we use particular speech acts while pragmalinguistics includes common or appropriate language forms used in certain situations. Cohen(2005) and Jiang (2006) underline that sociopragmatics is when suitable phrases or expressions are used while pragmalinguistics is which phrases or expressions are used in particular settings. Marmaridou (2011, p.77) says that "Pragmalinguistics is concerned with particular resources that a given language provides for conveying pragmatic meaning while sociopragmatics deals with pragmatic meaning to an assessment of participants' social distance, the language community's social rules and appropriateness norms, discourse practices, and accepted behaviours."

A concern of these three aspects of pragmatics in language learning is voiced in the present study through an investigation on a local English language textbook. It is based on previous research reporting that English textbooks contain insufficient pragmatic knowledge which has resulted in under-represented speech acts (Nguyen, 2011;

Harwood, 2014; Ren & Han, 2016). In addition, the present study is based on one of five basic assumptions about the nature of verbal communication that should be considered in second language learning. It is said that 'communication is subject to social appropriateness. The form of utterances takes into account such factors as the age, sex, and relationship between speaker and hearer, as well as the setting and circumstances in which the act of communication takes place.' (Harlow, 1990, p. 328). Pragmatics, therefore, should work together in harmony with social and linguistic knowledge to successfully realize speech acts in everyday communication.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate how speech acts are presented in terms of metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics, language functions covered in a local English textbook were scrutinized by deploying qualitative method and content analysis. The language functions and their language expressions or phrases, which became the data source, were taken from a local English textbook, written by an Indonesian and published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The textbook was devised for the eleventh graders of Indonesian Senior Secondary School (SMA). It consists of five language functions namely 'suggesting and offering', 'expressing opinions', 'agreeing with an opinion', 'disagreeing with an opinion', and 'making an invitation'. These language functions were then analysed based on speech acts, metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics theories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Speech Acts Presentation

There are several types of speech acts or language functions discussed in the textbook.

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**Table 2. Speech Acts Range and Distribution**

| No. | Speech Acts/Language Functions |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1.  | Suggesting and Offering        |
| 2.  | Expressing opinions            |
| 3.  | Agreeing with an opinion       |
| 4.  | Disagreeing with an opinion    |
| 5.  | Making an invitation           |

Firstly, findings indicate that there were only a few of speech acts taught in the text book. Referring to Searles's speech act taxonomy, all of the speech acts represent directives and commissives. This is not problematic as long as the presentation of the speech acts are pragmatically adequate.

These speech acts are taught in separate units. The author incorporate them by giving examples of common phrases or expressions, examples of they are used, and the language pattern of each speech act. Suggesting, offering, expressing opinions are some instances of how they are discussed in the textbook.

**Figure 1. Suggesting**

When making suggestions, we often use the following expressions.

Let's ...  
 Why don't we ...?  
 We could ...  
 What about ...?  
 How about ...?  
 I suggest that ...  
 You might want to change ...  
 I think ...  
 I don't think ...

**Examples of Suggestions**

- Let's go to the library.
- Let's go to movies.
- Why don't you do your homework before going out?
- We could eat at home today.
- What about eating at the new place?
- How about going to Sam's place first?
- I suggest that we call it a day.
- You need to change your sleeping habits.
- I think you should go and meet her.
- I think we should do it this way.

| Subject | Verb        | That | Object                                 |
|---------|-------------|------|--|
| I       | suggest     | that | he clean his room.                     |
| We      | recommend   | that | she read "The Hunger Games".           |
| I       | propose     | that | a report should be sent in.            |
| I       | put forward | that | we work together on this.              |
| We      | advise      | that | he work hard.                          |
| I       | advocate    | that | we support them in every way possible. |

**Figure 2. Offering**

**Expressions/Gambits**

When making offers, we often use the following expressions.

May I ...?  
 Can I ...?  
 Shall I ...?  
 Would you ...?  
 How about I ...?

**Examples of Offers**

- May I give you a hand?
- Can I help you?
- Shall I bring you some tea?
- Would you like another piece of cake?
- How about I help you with this?
- Can I clean the car for you?
- Shall I help you with your homework?
- I will do the washing, if you like.

Let's take a look at the sentence structure to offer something.

| Modal Verb | Subject | Object                       |
|------------|---------|------------------------------|
| Would      | you     | care for another cup of tea? |
| Shall      | we      | take you there?              |
| Could      | I       | offer you something?         |
| Will       | you     | have tea with that?          |

**Figure 3. Expressing Opinions**

**Expressing Opinions**

What I mean is ...  
 In my opinion ...  
 In my humble opinion ...  
 I would like to point out that ...  
 To my mind ...  
 By this I mean ...  
 I am compelled to say ...  
 I reckon ...  
 As I see it ...

In my opinion ...  
 I think ...  
 Personally, I think ...  
 In my experience ...  
 I strongly believe that ...  
 As far as I am concerned ...  
 From my point of view ...  
 As I understand ...

**Agreeing with an Opinion**

These are some of the expressions used to express agreement with an opinion.

Of course.  
 This is absolutely right.  
 I agree with this opinion.  
 I couldn't agree more.  
 I agree with what you are saying but have you ever.....

I agree, I never thought of that.  
 Neither do I.  
 That's a good point.  
 I think so too.

These are the expressions used to express disagreement with an opinion.

Expressions of Disagreement:

- I am sorry, I don't agree with you.
- I disagree with you.
- I am not sure I agree with you.
- I think you are wrong.
- I don't agree with you.
- That's not the same thing at all.
- I am afraid I have to disagree with you.
- It is not justified to say so.
- I do not believe that.
- I am not convinced that ....
- By this I mean.....
- I can't say I agree with this, and here's why....

Examples of how to agree and disagree with an opinion

| Statement                                  | Agree  | Disagree  |
|--|--|---|
| Smoking should be banned in public places. | I totally agree that smoking should be banned in public places.            | I am sorry but I tend to disagree with you on this. |
| Bullying is so prevalent in most schools.  | I couldn't agree more with you.  | I think it would be wrong to generalize.            |
| Women should not work.                     | I think so too. Women should stay at home and take care of their children. | I am afraid I have to disagree with you on this.    |

Let's look at the sentence structure to express opinions.

| Subject | Verb        | Object   |
|---------|-------------|--|
| I       | agree       | with what you are saying.                                      |
| We      | believe     | this is not the right way to handle things.                    |
| I       | reckon      | this could be right considering the reasons you have provided. |
| I       | agree       | that I didn't look at it from this perspective.                |
| I       | doubt       | that this is possible.   |
| We      | assume      | you are biased on this issue.                                  |
| I       | don't agree | with you.  |
| I       | think       | you are mistaken.  |
| I       | think       | so too.  |

As seen in the examples of the speech acts 'suggesting', 'offering', and 'giving opinions', students are only given the common phrases for each speech act, the examples how they are used in complete sentences, and then the linguistic patterns of each speech act. There is some important information missing here. First of all, there are not any conversations or dialogues integrating the common phrases of the speech acts. Students need to be exposed to how the expressions of speech acts are actually used in a real conversation.

Other than the absence of the conversations, there is a paucity of pragmatic information such as there are not any explanations of to whom and when the

language expressions can appropriately be used.

An ideal conversation which aims to expose the students with how speech acts are supposed to be used can be seen below.

**Read the conversation below. Two business partners, Marianne and Steven are arranging a meeting.**

Marianne: Morning, Steven. I hope you rested well over the weekend.

Steven: Yes, I did, thanks. Went skiing with the family.

Marianne: Oh, nice. Well, as you know, our company is experiencing some financial difficulties right now, and I'd like to arrange a meeting in my office to discuss the situation with you and Nick.

Steven: Right, that's a good idea.

Marianne: Are you available on Tuesday at 3pm?

Steven: I'm afraid I can't make it on Tuesday, I have a doctor's appointment.

Marianne: Oh right, I remember.

Steven: But I'm free on Wednesday.

Marianne: OK, Wednesday can work. How about 2pm?

Steven: 2pm sounds fine.

Marianne: Great. See you then.

Here, it is clearly stated who the interlocutors are and the topic discussed in the conversation. Although the setting is implicitly stated, it can be concluded that the speaker and hearer in this conversation are in their office.

The interlocutors are business partners and they discuss a situation related to work and business situations. Therefore, the language expressions tend to be more formal and are commonly used in a workplace. Students are taught to be able to:

- 1) suggest a day or time ('Are you available on Tuesday at 3 pm?' and 'How about 2 pm?')

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In this conversation, metapragmatic information is not found. There is not any information regarding the social relationship between Joko and Yeni, the topic regarding the function of making invitation, and where or what mode of the conversation takes place and employs. Therefore, the locutionary acts might sociopragmatically and pragmalinguistically be inappropriate. It is possible that 'Would you like to come over for dinner tonight' and the use of 'Would you like me to bring something' are a way too formal considering the relationship between Joko and Yeni which might be closer and thus, the expression of making invitation in this conversation is inappropriate.

**Figure 6. Sample of Conversation (2)**

Invitation to the grand opening of ABC software company

Ariyanto : Mr. Budi, I would like to invite you to the opening of my software company.

Mr. Budi: When and where?

Ariyanto : This Saturday at 10 a.m.

Mr. Budi: I am afraid I won't be able to come. I have a prior engagement.

Although this conversation states the setting or situation, the social relationship between Mr Budi and Ariyanto is unclear. Whether or not they are a superior and a subordinate is not clearly stated. In addition, if the conversation begins with a formal expression indicated by 'I would like to invite you to the opening of my software company.', then it is followed by the phrase 'when and where?' which, in this context, sounds informal, there seems to be pragmatic failure in terms of pragmalinguistics because if the speaker and hearer in this conversation has a formal relationship, it may not be possible to include informal phrase 'when and where?' Therefore, metapragmatics play a significant role here because it affects how the speaker and the hearer are supposed to make an invitation.

**Figure 7. Sample of Conversation (3)**

Invitation to anniversary dinner

Yanti : Mr. Suharto, my husband and I are celebrating our 3<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. We would like you to join us.

Mr. Suharto: Oh, thank you! I would be delighted to. When is it?

Yanti : On Sunday at 8 p.m in the Balai Kartini.

Mr. Suharto: OK, I will be there.

Yanti : Thank you. See you then!

Mr. Suharto: My pleasure. See you then!

Similar to the other conversations, the topic and the setting here are stated; however, there is no clear information regarding social relationship between Yanti and Mr Suharto. Consequently, the expressions 'we would like you to join us', 'I would be delighted to', and 'My pleasure' could be inappropriate language form to accept an invitation in this context.

All of the speech acts presentation and their realization in the textbook analyzed with regard to metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics indicate the lack of pragmatic information or knowledge. The textbook claims that the basic competence the students should reach is '*.....dengan memperhatikan fungsi sosial, struktur teks, dan unsur kebahasaan yang benar dan sesuai dengan konteks*' (*.....by taking into account social function, text structure, and proper linguistic elements, and suit the context*) (Basir, 2017). This basic competence implies pragmatic competence; however, it turned out that the speech acts were insufficiently realized in terms of pragmatic competence.

English textbook writers may find the following suggestions useful for future development of English textbooks for Indonesian secondary school (SMA) students regarding speech acts presentation.

First, speech acts should not be presented in discrete items. They need to be integrated in conversations which contain metapragmatic information—setting or situation in which the conversation takes place, topic the speaker and hearer discusses in the conversation, and the social relationship between the interlocutors. This information plays an important role in the application of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics.

Second, instead of making a list of expressions or phrases as presented in the textbook analysed, those expressions may be

integrated in a conversation as the following example.

### Figure 8. Sample of Conversation (4)

In this lesson, Lieve and David are in the cafeteria of the Narwee SP office and start a conversation.

| Transcript |   |
|------------|---|
| Lieve:     | Excuse me, is anyone sitting here?  |
| David:     | Er, no, I don't think so. Go ahead.   |
| Lieve:     | Thanks.   |
| David:     | Sorry, are you new? I don't think I've seen you around before.  |
| Lieve:     | Yes, I'm one of the new interns. I just started yesterday.  |
| David:     | Oh, well, let me introduce myself. I'm David. I'm in charge of Customer Operations here at Narwee Solar Panels. |
| Lieve:     | Hi, David. Pleased to meet you. I'm Lieve.  |
| David:     | Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Could you say your name again?  |
| Lieve:     | Sure. It's Lieve.   |
| David:     | Nice to meet you Lieve. And welcome to the office. Are you finding your way around okay?                        |
| Lieve:     | Yeah, I think so. It took me a while to find the cafeteria, though!   |

Here, the author can generate a list of speech acts or expressions which indicate 'Introduction or introducing yourself'. Then, students can be given additional speech acts and metapragmatic information as seen below.

### Figure 9. Metapragmatic Information

#### Introducing yourself

*(I don't think we've met.) My name's... / I'm...*

*I'm from / with (Apax Ltd).*

*I work for (Apax Ltd).*

*I'm the (quality controller).*

*I'm in (finance / the finance department).*

*I work in (the construction industry).*

*I'm in charge of (corporate accounts).*

*I'm responsible for (maintaining inventory).*

In informal situations, e.g. in a restaurant with new colleagues, it's common to say, *Hi, I'm... or Hello, my name's...* to introduce yourself. In a more formal situation, e.g., at a conference, you could start your introduction with *I don't think we've met*. Saying your name and your surname will also make your introduction sound more formal. It's important to maintain eye contact during an introduction, and it's common to give some basic information about yourself, e.g., where you work or what you do.

Finally, language textbook authors should bear in mind that to teach communicative functions through the textbooks, there are pragmatic norms they need to take into considerations.

- Thomas' (1999) rules of sociopragmatics:
  - Power relationship
  - Social distance
  - Rank/size of imposition

- Brown and Levinson's (1987) norm of politeness divided into four types of politeness strategies: off-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and on-record baldly.
- Blundell et al.'s (1982) formal, neutral, and informal language which can be seen in the following table.

**Table 3. Typical Aspects of Neutral, Formal, and Informal Situations**

Table 2.2: Typical Aspects of Neutral, Formal, and Informal Situations

| SETTING                | Pub  | bus stop; shop   | boardroom; ceremonial reception |
|------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| TOPIC                  | the latest football match; a TV comedy program | weather; travel  | an important business deal      |
| SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP    | a friend; child; close colleague               | a stranger in the street; taxi-driver; customs officer | a senior colleague              |
| PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDE | relaxed; light-hearted                         | no feelings way  | strong either very serious      |
| PROBABLE LANGUAGE      | INFORMAL LANGUAGE                              | NEUTRAL LANGUAGE                                       | FORMAL LANGUAGE                 |

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

To sum up, speech acts in the local English textbook investigated are still under-represented regarding metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistic information whereas these three pragmatic aspects are crucial in language teaching. Students will highly unlikely gain pragmatic competence which at the end may not be able to use the language in an actual communication appropriately.

A further investigation on how speech acts should be presented incorporating three significant pragmatic aspects—metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics—should be conducted in the near future.

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