

Research Article:

## **The Challenges and Opportunities of Speech Acts in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classroom: A Literature Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In order to explore possibilities as well as challenges in the use of speech acts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, the research employs an extensive literature review. One form of successful communication that works by means of asking, refusing and apologising is a speech act. However, the context-dependent nature of speech acts and linguistic and cultural differences between English and their own Bahasa sometimes made it difficult for EFL learners to master them. All these are exacerbated by poor education, which results in misconceptions and ineffective communication in the classroom. Despite the significance of pragmatic competence to language learning, it is still desirable to carry out an expansive study. It made it possible for the researchers to collect related studies, locate inadequacies in the way that teaching has been practised and explore what can be adopted to include speech acts in the curriculum of EFL. Through critical examination of existing research, this paper shall provide teachers with relevant information concerning effective teaching behaviours that improve learners' pragmatic insight and communicative competence. Placing emphasis on these factors shall make language learning activities more pertinent and interesting to the learners and improve the effectiveness of the communicative ability of the learners.

**Keywords:** Speech acts, pragmatic competence, EFL classrooms, communicative competence, language teaching strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to be able to communicate, English as a foreign language (EFL) learners must be capable of handling the complexity of language use within an environment. Speech acts, or activities performed by means of language with the aim of conveying meaning and pursuing social goals, are among the essential areas of language use (Hidayat, 2016). Speech acts are crucial for effective communication as they enable the speakers to negotiate meaning with the interlocutors and express their purpose, attitude, and emotions. However, EFL courses present enormous challenges to students who are attempting to learn speech actions because the target language (L2) is the course of speech actions, while students' mother tongues are their first language (L1) (Maghfira & Ariyanti, 2014; Sharqawi & Anthony, 2019; Widodo & Sari, 2023). Ishihara and Cohen (2014) claim that pragmatic features of speech acts reflect the ways in which people use language to achieve particular social goals. Since speech acts enable communication between learners and teachers of L2, understanding them is especially crucial in EFL classrooms.

According to Austin (1962), Izar et al. (2022) and Ramadhani and Mustikawati (2023), the speech acts are usually categorised into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. They are each applied for a specific function in the communication process. For better communication in the EFL lessons, students and instructors must have a clear idea of these interactive speech acts. Teachers should also be aware of the speech actions they use within the classroom as a way of creating a successful learning environment. On the other hand, to be able to interact with their teachers and fellow students constructively, children must be able to identify and utilise speech actions. Nuramila (2020) states that pragmatics is one of the outcomes of pragmatic studies, which are concerned with how language is used in various contexts. Speech acts are one of the components of pragmatic studies. The addressee of the speech, the actual problem being conveyed, the conditions of the utterance and other aspects are all taken into account during the selection of a speech.

In reference to Austin (1962), the first is the production of utterances with determinate meaning and reference; the second, sentences that express conventional forces, like informing, ordering, or requesting; and the third, the effect of an utterance on the hearer, showing how speech can elicit responses or initiate effects. Austin claims that illocutionary acts are unlike perlocutionary acts in depending more on conventional force to be understood, to produce effects, and to elicit responses, whereas perlocutionary effects tend to be more variable and unpredictable.

The ability to execute speech acts in the target language is closely connected with the intercultural competence principle, which presumes that language usage is driven by a deep understanding of a culture's values and norms. This task is rendered more difficult due to the fact that EFL learners may have limited access to the target culture outside of the classroom (Baroto, 2016; Pratiwi, 2018). Therefore, EFL teachers should help students grasp the cultural consequences that shape how speech acts are done and perceived and inform them about the linguistic problem of speech acts. For students to communicate and learn the language well, teachers and students in EFL classes should know speech acts. Teachers' speech acts used or utilised in class should be carefully thought out because they might affect students' comprehension and contribution in class. Otherwise, students need to be instructed on how to identify and make use of proper speech acts in such a manner that they are able to interact with their teachers and peer students meaningfully. Teachers can improve the pragmatic competence and arouse the language ability of the students by rendering the learning environment more engaging and positive by raising awareness regarding speech acts.

In order to categorise the various means of using language for reasons other than the mere conveyance of information, Austin (1962) set out five categories of illocutionary acts. These include verdictive acts, which consist of speech acts entailing deciding or judging on the basis of reasoning on facts or evidence. Verdictive activities are based on stating truth conditions and possess an evaluative attitude. When a judge delivers a decision in a court case, say, it is an act of predicting where the speaker balances the facts and reports a conclusion with important consequences for the parties.

The use of influence or power in social interactions is under the second category, which is executive acts. Voting, appointment of people, and giving advice or warning are all instances of this category. Executive decisions are relational because they tend to have the ability to change interactions; for example, when a leader appoints a person to an authority position, the dynamics of the group change, and the appointee has certain responsibilities that directly affect others.

Third, commissive acts—promises or intentions that obligate the speaker to do something—indicate the speaker's commitment to act in the future. They create expectations because the listener can depend on the speaker to perform what they promise. For instance, exclamations such as "I'll pay you back tomorrow" obligate the speaker and construct future speech through responsibility and belief. The fourth group, the behabitives, is most concerned with attitudes and emotional reaction expression. The behabitives are responsible for a variety of social functions such as expressing gratitude or sympathy, offering congratulations, or making excuses. As they are based on the identification of common human experiences and feelings, behabitives allow speakers and listeners to navigate through circumstances in society and build connections.

Lastly, expositive activities aim to improve communication and make arguments more understandable to interlocutors. Because it is the explicit formulation of definitions, explanations, or arguments, this type of illocutionary act is crucial for improving understanding in speech. For instance, "The reason I believe so is because" and then goes on to explain why, for example, they are taking an expositive action that is designed to make their point clear and understandable to others. Together, these five categories illustrate how speech acts are multifaceted, with language being employed as a vehicle for influencing, committing, conveying feelings, and making knowledge explicit as well as conveying information. Since they allow students to understand the various roles of language in communication and develop their pragmatic competence, understanding of these categories is crucial for pedagogical reasons, particularly in EFL contexts.

It is necessary to track the opportunities and challenges speech acts present to language learning, particularly in EFL contexts where they are vital to both effective communication and the development of pragmatic competence. This paper is going to discuss the promise and challenges of speech acts in EFL classrooms and identify the contribution of linguistic and cultural awareness to facilitating successful communication. It will also discuss a few approaches to teaching that can help learners appreciate the complexity of speech acts and ultimately improve their ability to communicate across social situations. Using the dynamics of speech actions in the EFL classroom demands adequate study questions and correctly specified goals. Efficient communication, particularly across cultures, is a matter of the intricate interrelation between language use and pragmatic competence. The objectives of this research are to determine and examine the main obstacles that EFL learners have when learning and using speech acts in diverse communicative settings, also to assess how explicit teaching approaches affect EFL learners' growth in pragmatic speech act-related abilities. We therefore specify the two brief research questions as follows:

1. Which speech acts in classroom interactions are the most difficult for EFL learners to master?
2. What effects does specific speech act training have on EFL learners' pragmatic competence?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a comprehensive literature review to explore the challenges and opportunities of using speech acts in EFL classrooms. The review process followed three key stages:

### Stage 1: Planning the Review

**(a) Question Formulation:** The study focused on the problems that students experience and the possible advantages of using speech acts in instruction to form meaningful research questions about the use of speech acts in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes. The aim of the questions was to investigate how speech acts render EFL learners more pragmatically competent and how comprehensively this area of language acquisition is dealt with by existing teaching approaches. For the research question to make significant and valuable contributions, the process of developing it involved checking the volume of literature in the current situation to see where there was a gap and to reconcile the questions with the grand research design.

**(b) Developing a Review Protocol:** To ensure consistency and dependability at every step of the review process, a systematic approach was formulated to direct the literature search, data selection, and analysis. This method includes a plan for assessing the relevance and quality of sources, a specific plan for database searching with Boolean operators and exact keywords, and clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting appropriate research. Data extraction and synthesis methods for determining similarities and differences with the recent study are also included, such as comparative analysis and comparison of topics. Through adherence to a stepwise approach, the study aimed at reducing bias, enhancing transparency and reproducibility of results, and ultimately presenting an extensive and credible evidence synthesis based on speech acts in EFL instruction.

### Stage 2: Conducting the Review

**(a) Searching for Data:** Scholarly databases were utilised to acquire relevant content, e.g., books, conference papers, domestic, national and international publications and education magazines. Since they covered broad topics and were convenient to use, electronic databases were favoured (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Among the databases accessed were renowned sites that provide open access to every type of research articles and academic papers, such as Google Scholar. Boolean operators were used to restrict search results after search terms had been selected suitably to gather research on speech acts, pragmatic competence and EFL teaching. The literature search was conducted during the past 10 years to present current research and practice, and all attempts were made to provide quantitative and qualitative studies to establish a balanced viewpoint. Additionally, by cross-checking citation rates, journal impact rankings, and research methodology, the study took into account sources' relevance, credibility and impact to ensure that only quality content was included in the review.

**(b) Selection of Relevant Data:** To decide the credibility and pertinence of sources, relevant data were selected on rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria. In order to keep the research updated and valid, the inclusion criteria centred on research studies and peer-reviewed articles from the last decade. Due to their applicability to the topic of study, studies that specifically focus on speech acts and those that were done within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) were given particular attention. Furthermore, only empirical research studies were utilised as they give quantifiable findings and tangible proof needed for the study. On the other hand, exclusion criteria were made in order to eliminate resources that would dilute the truthfulness and accuracy of the study. In order to prevent linguistic misinterpretations, non-English research was not included. In order to make sure that all the data selected were still directly related to the research questions, non-relevant studies that were not related to EFL or speech acts were also not included. Secondly, as they did not possess practical experience for this question, theoretical books and journals with no tangible data were not included. The subsequent works of literature were of very high standards and kept absolutely to the purposes of the research because of this strict data policy.

**(c) Assessing Quality of Methodology:** Given their use in understanding pragmatic competence in language acquisition, peer-reviewed articles, studies in the recent 10 years, studies in EFL settings and studies that focused particularly on speech acts were included. Priority was initially given in choosing studies with empirically measurable results and findings, as well as evidence-based findings, with validity and reliability in findings. To get a thorough overview of the topic, studies in a variety of EFL settings and levels of language proficiency were also accorded priority. Also excluded were those journals that lacked empirical evidence, for example, theoretical works or argumentation based on opinions, since they lacked the factual evidence needed to enable extensive examination and evaluation. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were followed to ensure an all-encompassing and targeted set of high-quality literature.

**(d) Data Extraction:** Key facts were methodically collected, including views regarding speech acts in EFL classrooms, findings of studies, and research design. Quantitative as well as qualitative studies were exhaustively examined under this exercise in order to achieve a general insight into the topic. The purpose of data collection was to find out the effectiveness of different pedagogical methods, the problems faced by the teachers and the students, and the strategies used to teach speech actions. In addition, the cultural dimension of speech act use was explored, focusing on the contribution made by the speakers' cultures in the way they comprehend and use speech acts in EFL contexts. In addition, the findings obtained highlighted the relevance of practical skills in language learning, innovative pedagogy, and best practice. From the systematic approach, the study attempted to merge numerous perspectives and offer meaningful outcomes that can shape further research alongside practice-based EFL teaching.

**(e) Data Synthesis:** In order to identify trends, challenges and opportunities in speech actions in language learning, theme analysis was conducted. The procedure allowed the coding of recurring themes in the collected studies into useful information regarding similar teaching practices and the effectiveness of varying teaching strategies. Critical concerns were also revealed in the analysis, such as the unavailability of speech act-based pedagogic materials, the impact of cultural differences on speech act interpretation, and the inability of students to achieve pragmatic competence. In this manner, thematic analysis gave its focus to how one can promote language teaching and learning, i.e., on how to improve innovative teaching methods, grounded on technology-enhanced pragmatic instruction, and highlighting pragmatics ability training for instructors.

Stage 3: Reporting and Dissemination of Results

The findings were synthesised and organised to provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of speech acts towards EFL classes. For the purpose of an equal and balanced assessment of the literature, this synthesis included the integration of data from sources to identify similarities and differences. For validity and analysis richness, predominant observations were clumped into categories of themes, including teaching style, student achievement, and influence on culture. Observations were kept systematic for being published in educational journals with a complex description of method, thorough discussion of findings, and effective presentation. Representative items, such as graphs and tables, wherever feasible, were utilised for readability purposes and ease in presenting complex matters.

The PRISMA workflow diagram (Figure 1) shows that 68 research publications were retrieved from Google Scholar. After applying the inclusion criteria, there were 49 research articles which were related. Making the review more relevant, we applied the exclusion criteria, and we acquired 18 matching articles as a result. The selection procedure is represented in Figure 1.

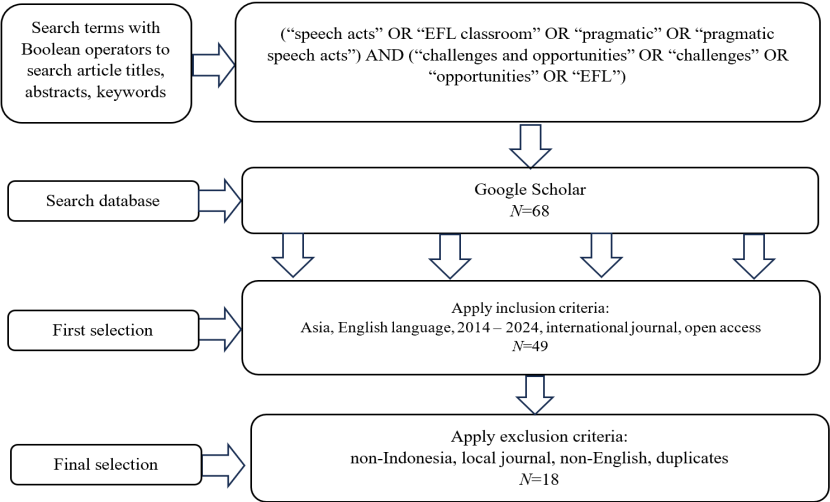


Figure 1. PRISMA workflow chart

RESULTS

Based on our analysis of speech acts practised in an EFL classroom, we categorised the articles based on the participants in the research and the methodology used in the research (see Figure 2).

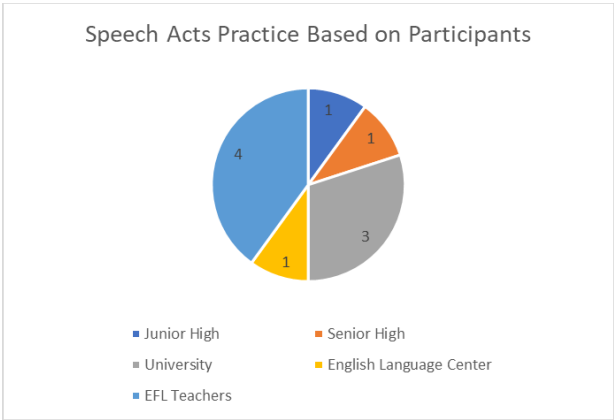


Figure 2. Speech acts practice based on participants

Participants and methods are the two general groups under which the speech act practice data is classified. The largest number of participants were EFL teachers, who made four studies (36.4%), followed by university-level participants, who made three studies (27.3%). Junior high, senior high, and English language centres all contributed one study each (9.1% each). Following this trend, language centres and secondary schools are comparatively less focused on speech acts research when compared to learners and teachers in tertiary education. With their larger exposure to teaching of language and development of pragmatic competence, the above distribution predicts that most investigations into speech acts in EFL situations have the tendency to provide higher importance to learners and instructors at the tertiary level. The said imbalance also implies a probable dearth of knowledge on speech acts in language centres and secondary schools. It may be possible to find out more about the acquisition of speech acts at various levels of education by studying speech act behaviour among younger learners and in non-formal language learning environments.

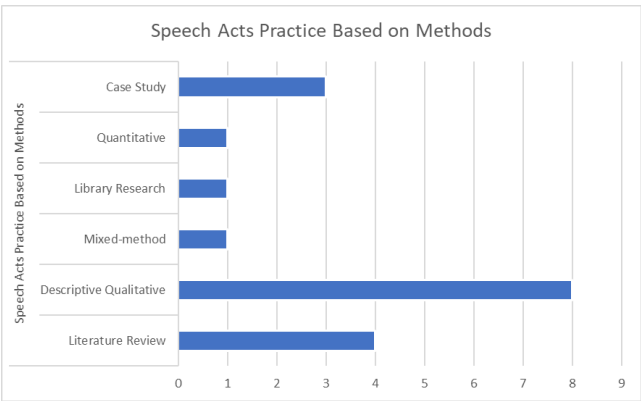


Figure 3. Speech acts practice based on methods



Figure 3 shows the speech acts practice based on methods. The highest preferred techniques were descriptive qualitative studies, which were applied in 8 studies (50%) and indicated a strong preference for detailed interpretative analysis. Literature reviews were applied in four studies (25%), and three studies (18.8%) used case studies. One study used mixed-method, library research, and quantitative methods (6.3% each), indicating lower reliance on these techniques. While the dominance of qualitative methodology underscores the importance of gaining rich, context-sensitive descriptions of speech action, it also serves to highlight the limited application of statistical analysis and empirical validation. Broader application of quantitative and mixed-methods designs can provide a more well-rounded knowledge by trading off depth and generalisability.

The research identifies a number of lacunae and tendencies outside the range of statistics. The use of university participants and EFL teachers reflects bias in prioritising expert and complex perspectives on speech actions. While helpful, this risks excluding the process by which speech actions are acquired and enacted in lower language acquisition stages. In addition, even though qualitative approaches are valuable, they were not able to measure more pervasive trends or quantifiable results in speech act competence. Through varying the subjects and method of study, such shortcomings can be abandoned, and the discipline can gain an advantage with more diverse and improved data.

These trends may also be shaped by situational influences. Participant availability and accessibility, as well as research design decisions, will be determined by educational goals, cultural settings, and institutional means. For example, universities may be endowed with strong resources and research, which may be the rationale behind the excess of university students and teachers. By considering such issues, subsequent research may then strike a balance between technique and representation.

These findings have significant pedagogical implications for EFL instruction. There is a need for increased research due to the absence of consideration of young learners, but most teacher-centred studies provide rich data for classroom instruction. By incorporating pragmatic teaching at all levels of education, this disparity can be addressed and curriculum design enhanced. In addition, the lack of many mixed and quantitative studies indicates that more diversified research approaches have to be utilised in order to reflect general tendencies as well as specific evaluations of speech act practice. In an effort to provide a better description of speech actions in EFL settings, future studies need to attempt to close these gaps.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Challenges of Speech Acts in the EFL Classroom**

Speech acts are crucial constructs of successful communication, but they pose a significant challenge to students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching contexts, mainly attributed to linguistic and cultural disparities, and a shortage of proper pedagogical approaches (Sulastri & Saptiany, 2023; Widodo & Sari, 2023). Students commonly struggle with trying to manage complex speech acts, i.e., disagreement or refusal, which lead to misunderstandings and social discomfort (Sharqawi & Anthony, 2019). The structural and pragmatic dissimilarities between Indonesian and English also render the struggles students experience in comprehending and producing the appropriate speech acts even more difficult, especially indirectness, politeness strategies, and idiomaticity (Hidayat, 2016). In addition, pragmatic norm transfer from their L1 to English may result in unintended rudeness or confusion and hence make spontaneous communication more difficult (Azhari



et al., 2018). Although some students have high grammatical accuracy, they are often not able to communicate effectively in real contexts due to a lack of pragmatic competence (Christianto, 2020). The problem is also exacerbated by low exposure to natural use of language and instructional emphasis on grammatical structures instead of pragmatic use (Basra & Thoyyibah, 2017). Moreover, the literature indicates that the lack of explicitly stated teaching frameworks for the teaching of speech acts, coupled with the absence of sufficient explicit training, hinders learners from developing pragmatic competence (Su, 2017).

Speech act effectiveness is highly pedagogically entwined; however, most conventional methods employed in Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings—e.g., explicit teaching and command instruction—emphasise rote memorisation over content interaction, thereby restricting the opportunities for students to enhance their communicative competence (Amir, 2023; Swastiana et al., 2020). Even with the promotion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for enhancing pragmatic competence, its application is still hindered by the presence of large class sizes, limited resources, and an exam-oriented education system that prioritises grammatical accuracy over pragmatic fluency (Santosa & Kurniadi, 2020). Experiments also demonstrate the potential benefits of corpus-based approaches, in which students are exposed to authentic examples of speech acts in authentic discourse, but this approach is underutilised in Indonesian EFL instruction (Su, 2017). Further, confusion with speech acts is also due to a lack of knowledge of English pragmatic conventions like speech act realisation patterns, idiomatic expressions, and culture-bound communication norms (Rakoczy & Tomasello, 2009). Lacking proper training, learners may not be able to handle social interactions with native speakers and fall into making misunderstandings that could cause unease or unintentional offence (Azhari et al., 2018).

In order to face such challenges, the EFL instructors need to incorporate overt pragmatic teaching into their syllabus, using discourse analysis, role-play tasks, and real-life communicative tasks to enhance learners' speech act capacity (Azhari et al., 2018). Future studies should likewise address how to make data-driven learning (DDL), task-based language instruction (TBLT), and technological innovations—such as AI-powered chatbots and virtual simulations—available to provide learners with platforms for practising actual conversational situations. It is a comprehensive approach that integrates tasks to develop pragmatic awareness, corpus-informed results, and interactive instructional methods for enhancing learners' ability to use speech acts. With the help of these methods, the instructors can make the students more competent in communicating, thereby enabling more natural and contextually appropriate interactions in English.

### **Opportunities of Speech Acts in the EFL Classroom**

The incorporation of speech acts into language instruction can greatly enhance the communicative competence of EFL learners by enabling them to convey meaning appropriately in a given context. In contrast to grammatical rules, which primarily deal with sentence structure and correctness, speech acts emphasise the functional use of language in real contexts. Stronger knowledge of speech actions, according to Widodo and Sari (2023), helps students to derive not only the psychological and goals of the speakers but also the external elements of utterances. By helping students to modify their reactions to formal and informal situations, this pragmatic awareness helps them to communicate more successfully. For instance, people who possess the sensitivity to discern the subtle hues between a command (e.g., "Close the door") and a gracious request (e.g., "Would you be so kind as to close the door?") exhibit greater capacity to function across various social and professional contexts. Acquiring knowledge in such distinctions mitigates the

risk of miscommunication, a component that is especially significant in intercultural communication, where pragmatic norms could be divergent.

Santosa and Kurniadi (2020) argue that language models and comprehensible input must be brought into EFL instruction so that learners can model and imitate natural speech acts made by fluent speakers. Krashen's Input Hypothesis supports this kind of instruction as it calls for more complex linguistic input to help in the acquisition of a natural tongue. Teachers can help students internalise proper uses of speech acts by giving them realia like recorded conversations, dialogue and role-playing exercises. Furthermore, interactive involvement between professors and students offers an active learning environment that lets students practice using speech actions in context. In class debates of contentious subjects, for instance, teachers might show students how to respectfully disagree with one another using terms like "I see your point, but I disagree," rather than stating outright "You are wrong." This conscious practice of communicative interactions strengthens learners' ability to manage actual communicative contexts, thus reducing the frequency of pragmatic errors.

Furthermore, Su (2017) calls for the exploration of local grammars of speech acts, or the specific ways in which these acts are realised across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By analysing these patterns, instructors can devise teaching approaches that respond to the most common problems of their students. For instance, Indonesian EFL learners will have difficulty with indirect speech acts since Indonesian tends to be more explicit in speech than English's often implicit communication. Such understanding of linguistic differences allows the teacher to develop instructional materials that target areas of frequent confusion. The study of speech acts also allows students to see how messages may be misconstrued due to cultural and contextual differences. Swastiana et al. (2020) contend that in the absence of explicit teaching on how speech acts are supposed to be used, students may find it hard to grasp pragmatic meanings attached to specific utterances. For example, an English speaker responding with "That's interesting" to a statement may inadvertently convey a polite withdrawal from discussion rather than genuine interest. Educating students on such subtleties via contextualised exemplification and discussion enables the development of a more sophisticated sense of operating dynamics at play in speech acts in actual communicative activity.

Additionally, practice with international languages is needed to facilitate pragmatic competence since this exposes individuals to different communicative conventions and practices. El-Dakhs et al. (2023) point out that social variables—more so social dominance—play a major role in the performance and accommodation of speech acts. In hierarchical cultures, individuals use a different set of speech acts in addressing superiors than in addressing their equals. EFL students must be sensitive to such variations if they are to be able to effectively communicate in a variety of situations. In English, for example, an employee can minimise a request to their boss by using hedging devices such as "Would it be possible to" rather than a straight demand. By means of analysis of these variations, the students may position their speech act use in power dynamics, formality, and cultural standards. Including these components in EFL guarantees that students not only develop their language but also their pragmatic skills to be able to interact in multicultural settings.

The students of EFL need to learn how to choose suitable linguistic forms and fit them into various social and cultural contexts because effective communication relies on both pragmatic awareness and linguistic competence. The accuracy in grammar is vital, but insufficient for effective interaction; the learners need to acquire an understanding of the functional workings of language within contrasting contexts. For instance, the sentence "Can you help me?" may seem straightforward but can convey various meanings depending on intonation, context, and cultural conventions. What constitutes a simple request in one

culture may be perceived as too direct in another. Hence, the acquisition of pragmatic competence—being able to effectively use language in social interaction—becomes equally crucial as the learning of lexis and grammar. Lacking this competence, learners may encounter difficulties that contribute to unintentional miscommunication and hence cause confusion or even offence while communicating cross-culturally. Basra and Thoyyibah (2017) advocate the application of directive speech acts within classrooms, grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), since their routine use induces students' involvement in interactive communication. Directive speech acts of requests, commands, and suggestions are vital in academic and everyday communication.

In classrooms, directives are usually employed by teachers to direct student behaviour (e.g., “Open your books on page 10”), and by students to request clarification (e.g., “Repeat that, please”). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) promotes learners to be active participants in conversation and in real-life communication encounters, and so the use of directive speech acts becomes a natural component of this pedagogical system. Through rehearsing these speech acts, the students feel increasingly confident in initiating and responding to interactions appropriately, reducing their diffidence in using English outside the classroom.

It also assists students in identifying and clarifying possible English misunderstandings, thereby enabling them to have a more precise interpretation of different utterances (Hidayat, 2016). One of the greatest difficulties for EFL students is understanding indirect or implied meaning, as English people prefer using hints rather than making direct statements. For example, if someone responds to an invitation with, “I’ll have to check my schedule,” it may not be a literal expression but a polite decline. Were it not for such pragmatic conventions, EFL learners would take such utterances at face value, leading to miscommunication. By incorporating the teaching of speech acts, teachers can expose students to such nuances, allowing them to read between the lines and respond appropriately.

Moreover, knowledge of the speech act norms, idiomatic phrases, and the culture is of great value to help learners perform speech acts successfully and in a correct way, thereby raising their cross-cultural communication awareness. Various linguistic and cultural systems realise politeness, agreement, disagreement and other speech acts in different ways. For instance, an English speaker can say, “That’s an interesting idea,” as a polite expression of disagreement; but in Indonesian, there may not be such a direct equivalent, and there may even be a danger of misunderstandings. Idiomatic language also does not usually have word-for-word translations into other languages. An utterance like “It’s a piece of cake” (something is easy) would confuse an EFL learner unaccustomed to idiomatic use. Explicit instruction in speech acts, then, helps the learners decipher such differences, and their communication becomes more effective across different contexts. Azhari et al. (2018) describe that pragmatic competence is crucial to successful communication in both ESL and EFL since it enables learners to manage complex social interactions with accuracy and confidence. In real conversation, speakers are required to constantly adjust their language based on social relationships, the context of the situation and cultural rules. A student communicating with a professor, for instance, must use more formal language than when communicating with a friend. Similarly, a worker involved in negotiation with a manager may need to make more tactful use of linguistic words to maintain politeness. For example, the use of utterances like “I was wondering if we could talk about my workload” would be more polite than simply “I have to discuss my workload.” Without pragmatic competence, students may unintentionally come across as rude, overly formal, or inappropriately informal. Through the development of practical consciousness, instruction of speech acts provides students with the ability to implement these changes, thereby enhancing their capacity for effective communication in both the academic and workplace contexts.

As speech acts are central to language acquisition, more research is required to examine their pedagogical exploitation in larger contexts and wider demographic groups, thereby yielding more comprehensive data regarding the pragmatic ability of both teachers and students (Christianto, 2020). Although several studies have examined the theoretical facets of speech acts, insufficient research has been conducted into their efficacy in various English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments. Different learning settings, cultural contexts, and levels of language proficiency can influence how learners acquire and use speech acts. For instance, students in an urban, technology-enhanced classroom can be exposed more to spontaneous English speech acts via electronic media than students in rural schools with less contact with native-like input. Conducting extensive research in various educational settings would enable one to identify the best approaches for teaching speech acts and highlight the challenges faced by students in attaining pragmatic competence.

Successful application of speech acts in classrooms enables easier interaction, making teaching more effective and students more engaged. If both the teacher and student have a common knowledge of the functions of speech acts, there are fewer opportunities for misinterpretation, and the classroom becomes more interactive and productive. For example, a teacher's ability to use indirect requests ("Would you mind opening the window?") rather than direct commands ("Open the window.") can create a more positive classroom atmosphere, thus enhancing student participation. Likewise, students who are trained in the proper use of speech acts are able to express agreement, disagreement, and politeness in a more natural way, which adds liveliness to classroom discussion. Educating students on speech act subtleties equips them for real-life interpersonal interaction, where being able to use effective communication skills is crucial. Without such education, individuals will not be able to grasp implied meaning, react appropriately in various social contexts, or manage workplace cultures that encompass indirectness and politeness strategies.

Speech act analysis gives students a deeper understanding of the use of various communicative acts, thereby enhancing their language capacity. Speech acts entail more than syntax; students must also take into account the speaker's intention, participant interaction, and general cultural context of the discourse. For example, English request-making typically encompasses hedging strategies, including using phrases such as "Could you possibly" or "I was wondering if you could" to be polite. In other cultures, though, directness would not be perceived as impolite. Learning these distinctions enables students to be more effective communicators and also to prevent possible pragmatic breakdown, such as coming on too demanding or too indefinite. Furthermore, speech act competence increases the students' confidence to participate in sophisticated social interactions, ranging from job interviews to daily communication with native speakers. Future research should move in a more statistical and data-oriented direction in the investigation of speech acts in EFL instruction, offering a more nuanced description of their role in communicative competence development. Corpus linguistics, questionnaires, and experimental studies can provide more objective data on the learning and use of speech acts in EFL contexts. For example, pre- and post-tests for tracking students' performance prior to and following explicit speech act instruction can show measurable improvement in pragmatic ability. Similarly, corpus-based studies of real classroom interactions could determine the most common speech act errors and inform more effective teaching methods.

Through the incorporation of explicit speech act teaching into EFL curricula, teachers can equip learners with the means to speak successfully, negotiate social and cultural differences, and reach a greater level of pragmatic competence in actual communicative situations. The integration of various pedagogical practices can be achieved in a number of ways, including role plays, discourse analysis, and exposure to authentic language via media and speaking practice. Furthermore, the instruction of speech acts combined with intercultural sensitivity

training can enhance the comprehension of the sociocultural facets of communication among students. As the world is increasingly interconnected, the ability to use speech acts in context will be a vital skill for EFL learners to be able to communicate effectively and meaningfully across linguistic and cultural borders.

## **Implication of Speech Acts**

One of the primary challenges highlighted is the context dependency of speech acts, which poses difficulties for EFL learners in grasping and employing them appropriately across various situations. The presence of cultural and linguistic disparities between students' native languages and English further compounds this issue, potentially leading to misunderstandings and incorrect utilisation of speech acts. A prevalent observation is that students often lack adequate training in employing speech acts correctly, resulting in communication breakdowns that impede the learning process. Specifically, areas such as "disagreement" and "rejection" are noted as problematic, given their potential to cause embarrassment and discomfort if not handled adeptly.

The varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds of EFL learners are pinpointed as a prominent factor contributing to substantial misinterpretations, as the conventions governing speech acts can differ significantly across cultures. The insufficiency of teaching methods that fail to address these differences effectively can leave students ill-equipped to navigate the complexities associated with employing speech acts in diverse contexts. Despite these challenges, there exists a significant opportunity to bolster communicative competence by integrating appropriate speech acts into EFL education.

By equipping students with an understanding of speech acts and providing opportunities for practice, educators can enhance learners' ability to navigate real-life communication scenarios, ultimately elevating their overall language proficiency. This heightened understanding enables students to engage in more nuanced and effective interactions, enabling them to respond aptly to various social cues and contextual nuances. Teaching speech acts also serves to enhance students' pragmatic awareness, fostering their comprehension of the subtleties of language use within social contexts and enabling them to engage in culturally sensitive communication – a crucial skill in multicultural environments where misunderstandings are commonplace.

The integration of speech acts into language instruction not only enriches the learning experience but also ensures active student engagement. Involving learners in activities that necessitate the use of speech acts enhances their participation and retention of knowledge. By employing strategies such as role-playing, simulations, and other interactive tasks, educators can provide students with practical experience in implementing speech acts, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application.

Furthermore, a focus on speech acts in educational settings cultivates students' cultural sensitivity and empathy by encouraging them to navigate the intricacies of diverse cultural communication styles. This heightened cultural competency is increasingly vital in today's interconnected world, where effective communication across cultural boundaries is imperative. Proficiency in speech acts empowers learners to establish stronger connections with individuals from varying cultural backgrounds, facilitating smoother and more meaningful interactions. Developing competency in using speech acts not only enhances students' linguistic abilities but also fosters a deeper understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity.

The discussion underscores the multifaceted impact of integrating speech acts into EFL instruction. Despite the challenges posed by context dependency and cultural differences



associated with speech acts, educators have a valuable opportunity to enhance students' communicative competence, pragmatic awareness, and cultural sensitivity by emphasising the practice and understanding of speech acts within the language learning curriculum. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, educators can pave the way for more effective and enriched language learning experiences that prepare students to engage meaningfully in a globalised world.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of speech acts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms provides a nuanced understanding of the myriad challenges and opportunities inherent to teaching and learning in this domain. It is evident from the literature that EFL learners face considerable difficulties in comprehending and employing speech acts effectively due to various factors, including linguistic and cultural disparities, improper pedagogical approaches, and a lack of contextual awareness. These challenges are compounded by the structural and pragmatic differences between English and the learners' native languages, which can lead to miscommunication, social discomfort and unintended disruptions in interaction dynamics.

The limited exposure to authentic language use, emphasis on grammar over pragmatics, and the absence of explicit teaching frameworks significantly hinder learners' development of pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the predominant instructional practices in Indonesian EFL contexts, such as rote memorisation and an exam-oriented approach, do not adequately address the complexities of speech acts. Consequently, students may find themselves struggling to navigate real-world communicative situations, which require not only grammatical accuracy but also a deep understanding of the contextual factors that influence language use.

In light of these challenges, a shift in teaching methodologies is imperative. Educators must integrate overt pragmatic instruction into the curriculum, leveraging techniques such as discourse analysis, role-play, and task-based language tasks to foster functional language skills. By doing so, learners can acquire the tools necessary to negotiate meaning and engage in natural, contextually appropriate communication. It is equally crucial for teaching strategies to incorporate exposure to authentic discourse through corpus-based approaches and technological innovations, allowing students to engage actively with real-world language use.

Moreover, the cultivation of cultural awareness and sensitivity is paramount in the EFL classroom. As speech acts are context-dependent, understanding the cultural nuances of communication becomes essential in mitigating misunderstandings and enhancing interaction quality. Therefore, educators must emphasise training students to recognise and adapt their speech act use based on the social dynamics and situational contexts they encounter.

The integration of speech acts into EFL instruction not only improves linguistic abilities but also amplifies students' confidence and competency in navigating complex social interactions across diverse cultural landscapes. By understanding the pragmatic functions of language, students will be more adept at employing polite requests, making agreeable assertions, or handling potentially confrontational dialogues with more grace and confidence. Furthermore, such pragmatic sensitivity permits learners to adapt their communication styles to align better with social norms, enhancing their relational and intercultural effectiveness.

Thus, the focus on speech acts within the EFL curriculum ultimately lays the groundwork for developing a more profound communicative competence among learners, enabling them to apply their language skills with greater confidence and accuracy. It opens doors to more meaningful interactions in academic, social, and professional contexts while preparing students for the realities of a globalised society where cross-cultural communication is pivotal.

In moving forward, ongoing research is warranted to investigate how various pedagogical strategies impact learners' pragmatic abilities across different EFL contexts. Engaging in empirical studies to track progress in speech act competence and examining how specific teaching interventions can bridge the gap between pragmatic theory and practice will provide valuable insights for educators. Additionally, attention to the diverse learning needs and backgrounds of students will ensure instruction is responsive and relevant, fostering an inclusive environment that recognises and values the cultural diversity that learners bring into the classroom.

In summary, the effective integration of speech acts into the EFL curriculum is not merely an instructional enhancement; it is a vital component of preparing learners for the complexities of real-world communication. By addressing the identified challenges and capitalising on the opportunities to foster pragmatic competence, educators can significantly impact learners' linguistic, social, and cultural proficiency, equipping them with the necessary skills to communicate adeptly in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural global landscape. Ultimately, it is through this approach that EFL educators can truly empower their students to navigate the intricacies of language and culture with confidence, fostering a generation of learners equipped to engage meaningfully within an expansive and diverse world.

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