

# ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACT CLASSIFICATIONS IN EFL CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to identify preferred speech act classifications used by English teacher in EFL classroom interaction based on Searle's taxonomy of speech act classifications and its implication towards language teaching process. This study applied qualitative research design on a twelve grade English teacher at an Indonesian high school. The data were collected through audio/video recordings and interview. Then the data were transcribed and analyzed. From the observation, it was found each classification as follows: 56% directives, 38%, representatives, 4% commissives and 2% expressives. The teacher performed speech acts multiple times in English before translating them in Indonesian. By performing speech acts in classroom, teachers are able to provide language model and comprehensible inputs for students. Keywords: speech act, classroom interaction, directives

## INTRODUCTION

In classroom interaction, the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, feelings, and opinions can be done both directly and indirectly in the form of spoken or written referred to as teacher talk and student talk. Commonly, most teachers use spoken language to present the study material. Those communications are more efficient and easier to understand. They are demanded not only to have good competence in transferring the knowledge, but also to have a good social competence and to build up effective communication in the classroom to achieve the learning objective (Lemke, 1989). In an attempt to convey a meaning, whether it is a statement, instruction, command, or request, both teachers and students do not only create utterances involving a systematic grammatical structure and words, but they also carry out action via those utterances. This is referred to as speech act (Devitt and Hanley, 2006).

When teachers speak, they perform certain acts within speech event in a situation. In order to interpret any natural language utterance within a normal human conversation, it is not enough to know what the grammatical category of every word said, nor the conventional meaning behind each associated word, nor even how such meanings combine to form an overall sentential meaning. Before being able to describe a particular meaning (specifically that intended by the speaker) to any utterance, the listener, the students, must have a clear idea of

the context in which an utterance occurs. Language functions such as apologizing, complaining, making requests, refusing things/invitations, complimenting, or thanking are carried out within the realm of pragmatic ability through speech acts. Students may also learn various forms of semantic formula, a word, phrase, or sentence which can be used to perform the act in question (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010, pp. 6–9).

Ilma (2016) noted the importance of teaching speech act in order to train EFL learners to speak on native-speaker level with highly communicative competence. Zayed (2014) stated that EFL learners need to be taught different forms of speech acts in order to be able to communicate smoothly and properly with native English speakers. Zhao and Throssell (2011) also added that the introduction and usage of speech act theory will help students in producing appropriate speech acts in intercultural interaction.

However, from Rozik (1989), learners of all languages tend to have difficulty in understanding the intended meaning communicated by a speech act, or producing a speech act using appropriate language and manner in the language being learned. Ilma further elaborated this point in Indonesian context saying that due to different cultures between Indonesian students and native speakers, it will lead to some misunderstanding and misinterpretation among the speakers, making EFL as a blur concept towards Indonesian students. This results in confusion by the students as to what the teacher is saying.

In regards to the perspective elaborated above; this study is conducted to investigate the classification of speech act used by an English teacher in EFL classroom in Indonesian context. There are two objectives in this study. First is to find out which classification of speech act is mostly preferred by the teacher. Second is to figure out the implication of speech act performance by the teacher towards the student's language learning.

Theoretically, this research is expected to give a valuable information to fill the gap of speech acts used in English teaching and learning process in Indonesian context. Practically, this particular research is expected to be meaningful in a way that teachers would have better understanding on which speech acts should be used to convey meaning in the lecturing process. As for the students, it is expected that they would also have better understanding about speech acts so they can respond to their teachers more appropriately to have the better grasp on the material presented. This research is also expected to bring information concerning the topic of speech acts to other researcher who will read this research as reference with different related focus.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Speech act**

The idea of speech act was first emerged in Austin's "How to do things with words" (1962) to report that there are utterances that there is more to the function of language than semantics. Speech act theory is concerned with the ways in which language can be used; a new perspective on language; the language/action perspective. Searle (1969) describe speech act as the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication. A speech act is an action performed by means of language. People perform speech acts when they offer an apology, a greeting, a request, a complain, an invitation, a compliment or a refusal. According to Cohen (1996), a speech act is a minimal functional unit in human communication. Just as a word (greeting) is the smallest free form found in language and a morpheme is the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning (in greeting makes it a noun), the basic unit of communication is a speech act (the speech act of greeting). Schmidt and Richards (1985) stated speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we do when we speak and the interpretation and negotiation of speech acts are dependent of the discourse or context. Here, the researcher views speech act as non-verbal action conveyed in a verbal manner. The non-verbal properties take a form of action the speaker tries to perform or action the speaker wish other people than the speaker to perform. Speech act does not need to follow the convention of structure in making an utterance, as long as it contains an action that needs to be performed.

Based on Austin's theory (1962), speech acts are divided into three parts of acts that is performed simultaneously: locutionary act, performing the act of saying something to inform the listener which is considered as linguistic meaning; illocutionary act, performing an act of doing something analyzed based on context that is about what is behind the text; and perlocutionary act, the act of affecting someone to influence the hearer to do what the speaker wants to do. Context is the background knowledge assumed to be shared by both speaker and hearer and which contributes to their interpretation of what is given by utterance (Leech, 1983). The utterance "It feels hot" for example will not likely be able to interpret correctly by any reader other than the speaker and listener of that utterance themselves given they both understand the context behind that sentence while other readers do not.

From Searle (1979 in Levinson et al., 1983), five general functions performed by speech act are:

- a. Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, etc.)

- b. Directives, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning)
- c. Commissives, which commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering)
- d. Expressives, which express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating)
- e. Declaratives, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment)

To follow Searle, Yule (1996) summarized those five general functions as follow:

Table 1. General functions of speech act

Speech act function	Direction of fit	S=Speaker X=situation
Declarations	Words change the world	S causes X
Representative	Make words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	Make words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	Make the world fit words	S wants X
Commissives	Make the world fit words	S intends X

### **Classroom Interaction**

There are two major points within the phrase “classroom interaction”. Classroom is the place where teacher and students gather to interact one another and for the purpose of learning. Brown (2001) defined interaction as the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other.

From Richards (2010), classroom interaction is the patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication and the types of social relationships which occur within classrooms. The study of classroom interaction may be a part of studies of classroom discourse, teacher talk and second language acquisition. Quirk (1987) defined classroom interaction as the patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication and the types of social relationship which occurs within classroom.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher defines classroom interaction as an act of communication held by two people or more in the classroom environment. This action serves a purpose of relaying thoughts and ideas or expressing feelings from one member of a classroom to another. Whether the interaction serves a purpose in teaching-learning activity is unrelated as long as it is conducted inside classroom environment.

Karter (2011) pointed out four types of classroom interaction as follow:

a. Student-Teacher Interaction

From Markee (2015), teacher-student interaction is one of the main domains of classroom interaction. It focuses on teacher and student behaviors at different grade levels and in various group sizes. Theories behind student and teacher interaction state that this type of interaction is vital for students because it compares to the relationships they have in their lives, such as the relationship with a boss or superior. Students not only must learn to interact respectfully, but must also learn how to be assertive without being rude, so that their points and opinions are heard without disruption.

b. Student-Student Interaction

One-on-one student interaction is important because it allows students to understand what it means to work with a partner. Theories of this type of interaction say that it prepares students for one-on-one relationships they will have with work associates, friends and even their spouses. Students must learn to rely on one other person and must be able to evaluate what their own strengths and weaknesses are as they try to complete a task.

c. Small-Group Interaction

Theories behind small-group interaction speculate that this is one of the best ways for students to learn from others. In groups of three to six people, students have equal time to talk and learn to perform a role that they are assigned. They learn to depend on the other members of the group to do their own parts. They also learn that a small group must have a leader and how to incorporate different learning and working styles into a group in harmony.

d. Entire Classroom Interaction

Entire classroom interaction allows all students to interact with all of the other students in the classroom. This is important in several different ways, according to different theories. Students learn how it feels to be only a small part of a very large group. They need to learn to wait their turn to talk and be prepared to do much more listening than talking. Students also gain insight about different types of people and how all will react. This is the interaction that is most closely related to the real world, where students will need to interact with people of all types.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employs qualitative research design on the emphasis of discourse analysis approach to know the kind and function of speech act used by EFL teachers in SMA Negeri 1

Bone. Elaboration of the research result were made in the form of descriptive so readers would obtain the complete information from the research result. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the theory of speech act proposed by Austin (1962).

### **Research Subjects**

The subject in this research is a male twelve-grade English teacher of SMA Negeri 1 Bone selected out of eight English teachers. He has experience of teaching English in high school setting for 28 years. The teacher was selected due to being the most experienced English teacher at the school. He is also the only teacher who was available during the time of pre-observation.

### **Technique of data collection**

#### **1. Classroom Observation**

This research used audio and video recordings to capture the language performed during the teaching process, which in turn to be transcribed. A transcription of video/audio recording were written after the observation stage of data collection. Video/audio transcription of the classroom observation were used during interview stage of data collection to clarify the types and function of speech acts teachers use during the observation. Furthermore, transcriptions of interviews the researcher conducted with teachers were also written and used for data analysis.

#### **2. Interview**

Interview was designed to collect data from the subject concerning speech acts used during English teaching process. It entailed audio recording between the researcher and the teacher to gain confirmation as to purpose of speech acts are used in English teaching and learning process.

### **Procedure of Data Collection**

In the procedure of collecting data, observation was conducted of the teaching and learning process to find out speech acts used by the teacher. During the observation, the data were collected by video/audio recording. Two meetings of teaching and learning process were recorded, one is 1 hour and 18 minutes in length and the other is 1 hour and 40 minutes in length. Then, the teacher was interviewed to clarify usage of speech act performed during English teaching process.

The recordings were transcribed after. The speech acts were then analyzed within the framework of five major classifications of speech acts developed by Searle: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. To determine the sentences to be categorized into Searle's taxonomy, a framework based on word clues proposed by Qadir and

Riloff (2011), was developed. Next, the percentages of each speech acts classification were counted and interpreted into the findings and discussions.

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

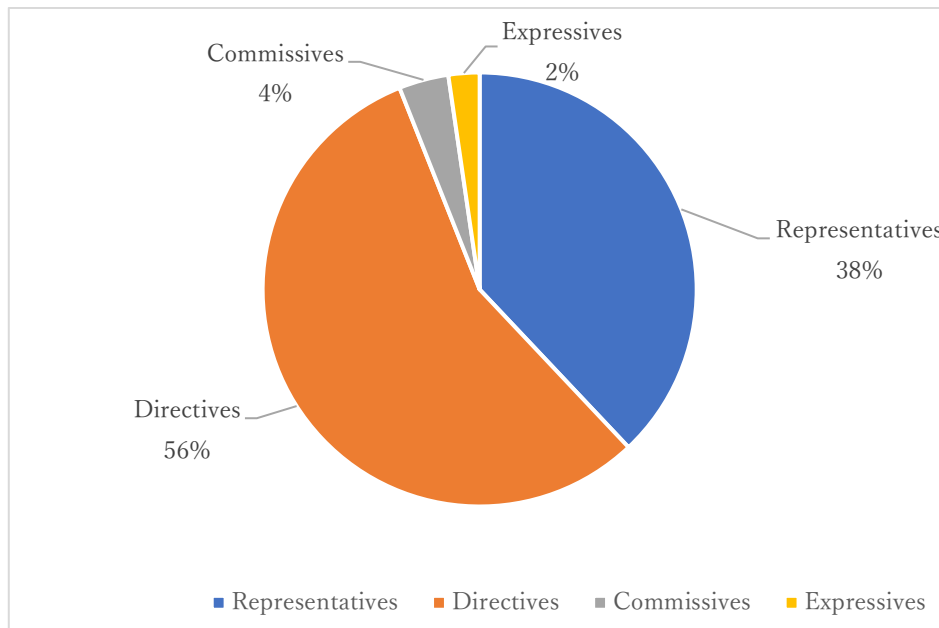
The data obtained during the research were analyzed qualitatively through triangulation method. In this process, the researcher compared the research gained from each kind of procedure of collecting data through interview and observation. The comparison is needed to obtain a valid data as the findings of the research. In analyzing data from classroom observation, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis by Miles and Huberman (2014, pp. 11–14) which consists of three stages:

1. Data condensation; Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. At this stage, the data from recording of class observation and interview were transcribed into written transcript. Then the researcher identified parts of the data to determine types and functions of speech act. The types and function of speech act are determined by using the theory of speech act by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) respectively.
2. Data display; after the data condensation is done, the researcher described the data displayed based on speech act theory by Austin and Searle. The data display would be shown based on the research focus.
3. Description of draw/verification; the researcher draws conclusion based on displayed data. The researcher would conclude the kinds and function of speech act used by English teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Bone.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section describes the data that was collected, namely the findings, from observation and interview. The findings represent the result of data observation of speech acts in classroom interaction between teacher and students. This section is organized in terms of sequence of the research question.

## Classification of speech acts used by teacher EFL classroom interaction



**Figure 1** Percentage of Speech Act Performance by English Teacher

Declaratives (0%)

During observation, it was found that there are only four speech act classifications used by teacher in classroom interaction. The teacher did not use speech acts of declarative classification. It is due to nature of declarative speech act where the utterance changes the state of the world (Yule, 1996). The speaker needs to have an institutional role to change the state of affairs. The situation that is changed for the by the speaker is not easy to be avoided or broken, and stays longer.

Representatives (38%)

Qadir and Riloff (2011) came up with several word clues to determine utterances as representative speech acts. The list of words includes the act of hypothesizing, insisting, boasting, complaining, concluding, deducing, diagnosing, claiming, assuming, and suspecting. From the data obtained, 164 out of 432 utterances by the subject during teaching process were classified as representative speech acts. The representative speech acts committed by the subject included acts such as assertions, claims, and reports.

Extract 1 (Assertion)

T: *Iya, inquiry. Yang kedua?*

(Yes, inquiry. The second one?)

SS: Sales.

T: *Saya kira bukan sale tadi di sini. Ini itu persuade, membujuk.*

(I don't think it was sales. This is persuade, to convince.)



FS: *Jadi apa, Sir?*

(What is it then, Sir?)

T: Membujuk untuk membeli.

(Convincing to purchase.)

FS: Sales letter.

T: *Oke, sales letter. Yang ketiga?*

(Okay, sales letter. The third one.)

This is an extract of interaction between the subject and his student during an exercise. When re-checking for answers, they stumbled upon the second question about a type of letter, in which the students answered by saying that it was a sales letter. However, the teacher thought the students answered differently when checking the answer. His utterance “*Saya kira bukan sale tadi di sini. Ini itu persuade, membujuk,*” was a speech act functioning as an assertion of representative category. Representatives commit the speaker to the truth, that the students had answered differently. An assertion is a confident and positive statement regarding a belief or a fact. By that utterance, the teacher convinced that the students had answered differently instead of the answer they have just given.

Extract 2 (Claim)

T: *Oke, masih dalam kelompok. Coba buat surat keluhan. Berdasarkan surat ini. **Jadi surat ini dianggap kurang bagus.** Kalian membuat surat yang bagian-bagiannya kalian anggap benar. Kan sudah ada tadi yang mana yang heading, yang mana yang sender, yang mana yang date. Ini kan tidak, tidak lengkap ini surat.*

(Okay, still in groups. Try to write a complain letter. Based on this letter. **So this letter is deemed not well written.** You make a letter with components you think is correct. I already told you which is the header, which is the sender, and which is date, didn't I? This letter... is not complete.)

This is an extract of a classroom interaction between the teacher and his students at practice stage. In this extract, the teacher was giving an instruction to the students to write a complain letter based on a pre-existing letter. However, the teacher claimed that the letter is not well written because it was missing some of the components. While the entire extract is a directive, the utterance “*Jadi surat ini dianggap kurang bagus*” is a speech act that functioned as a representative. The speaker committed to the truth that said letter was not well written.

Extract 3 (Report)

T: Okay. This time, as I've told you just now that we still will talk about the letter.

ML: The letter.

T: **But, the kind of letter is different from previous one. *Berbeda dengan yang sudah kita pelajari yang lalu. Kalau yang lalu application letter, maka sekarang kita akan mempelari a letter, a letter which is send to, eh, which is send by a company to other companies. A company to another company. Iya. Is sent from a company to another company.*** What, what do you call it? *Anda menyebutnya apa?*

(But, the kind of letter is different from previous one. Unlike what we previously learned. Previously, we learned about application letter, now we learn about a different kind of letter, a letter which is send to eh, eh, which is send by a company to other companies. A company to another company. Iya. Is sent from a company to another company. What, what do you call it? What do you call it?)

FS: *Surat resmi.*

(Formal letter.)

This is an extract of a representative speech act that functions as a report. In the extract, the report was presented in the utterance “But, the kind of letter is different from previous one. *“Berbeda dengan yang sudah kita pelajari yang lalu. Kalau yang lalu application letter, maka sekarang kita akan mempelari a letter, a letter which is send to, eh, which is send by a company to other companies. A company to another company. Iya. Is sent from a company to another company,”* This utterance tells the students the difference between the material they have previously learned compared to the current material meaning while the current material has similarities to the previous material but with a different variety.

Directives (56%)

Out of 432 total utterance, 242 were classified as directive speech act. Directive speech acts committed by the teacher included acts such as suggestion regarding solution of an ongoing activity, request in a form of a question that demanded an answer from a student, and command. Directive speech acts are the most used in classroom interaction between the teacher and the students, followed by representative speech acts. The teacher claimed that using questions to lead students to perform a task engages students to come up their own perception before being informed with the lesson plans. The teacher would also use greetings such as, “Hello”, or referring to the student’s position to demand student’s attention.

Extract 4 (Suggestion)

T: *Ditulis, yah. Ditulis suratnya dengan mengikuti bentuk yang sudah dijelaskan tadi. **Kalau perlu ditambah.** Ini kan tidak ada tanggalnya. Mungkin mau ditambah tanggal, kalau*

*mau ditambah tanggal, cek tanggalnya di mana. Ya, activity eight, bagian A number one. Diminta rewrite this appropriate informal letter. Informal business letter. Jadi ini dianggap informal business, surat bisnis yang tidak resmi. Ya, yang tidak formal. Yang tidak benar.*

(Write it down, okay. Write the letter following the elaborated form. **Add if necessary.** This doesn't have a date on it. Maybe you would like to include a date, if you do, check where the date is. Yes, activity eight, part A number one. You are asked to rewrite this appropriate informal letter. Informal business letter. So this is assumed to be an informal business, an informal business letter. Yes, informal. The incorrect one.)

This is an extract of a directive speech act that functions as a suggestion. In the extract, the teacher was giving instruction to his students about a task of writing a business letter. Through the passage, “*Kalau perlu ditambah,*” which was a directive speech act, he suggested the students that they may include certain elements to their letters. One of said elements was a date of letter. This utterance resulted in the students working on the task given, starting with the inclusion of a date on the letter.

#### Extract 5 (Request)

T: ...Please observe again your letter. Okay. Okay. The question is, what is the social function of the letter? **Dis, can you mention the function? Farid, can you tell us the social function of application letter?**

MS: To apply for a job.

T: Ah, go.

MS: To apply for a job.

T: Iya, to apply for a job. Any else? Apply for a job, yes of course.

In this extract, the MIPA English teacher was asking about social functions of job application letter to his students. In the utterance, “Dis, can you mention the function?” he asked a student to name the functions. However, the student did not answer, failed to fulfill the illocutionary force behind that utterance. Therefore, the teacher tried to ask another student instead on the next utterance, “Farid, can you tell us the social function of application letter?” which then the student answered, fulfilling the illocutionary force behind that utterance.

#### Extract 6 (Commands)

T: *Tambah lagi satu.* Okay. Ya. You have received? Tetas? **Okay, please sit in groups of three or four. Silahkan yang di depan menghadap ke sebelah kanan to make groups of three and four.**

SS: [sits in groups]

In this extract, the teacher was telling his students to form groups consisting of three or four students so they could perform an upcoming lesson task. This was conveyed in the utterance, “Okay, please sit in groups of three or four,” that contains a directive speech act in a form of a command. It demanded the students to perform an action, forming a group of three to four students, that must be followed. The next utterance, “*Silahkan yang di depan menghadap ke sebelah kanan* to make groups of three and four,” also contains directive speech act, further elaborating on previous command; selecting member of the group to the right side.

Commissives (6%)

From 432 of total utterance, 16 are identified as commissive speech acts. Commissive speech acts committed by the teacher included acts such as the upcoming topic of the lesson, and promises about the delivery of the material. Through commissive speech acts, the teacher committed himself (and the students) to perform the aforementioned action.

Extract 7 (Promise)

T: This is the last. On Saturday, probably... no. Why? Because I will be... eh... Maulid. [inaudible] Semester bagaimana kita. Satu hal yang terpaksa kita lakukan adalah perubahan jadwal yang seperti ini. Tadinya Saya Maulid pada hari Sabtu, tapi ada kegiatan di Wisma Tajunta sehingga saya tidak bisa sampai di sini pada pukul sebelas. Terpaksa dibawa ke sini dan yang program hari ini terpaksa di-cancel. Apa itu? Yaitu letter of complain. Itu materi peminatan. **Materi tersebut akan Saya kirim kepada kalian, ya, untuk dipelajari untuk menghadapi the assessment.** The assessment of semester ten, ya. Jadi penilaian di akhir semester. Saya kirim. Jangan lupa dipelajari, ya?  
SS: Yes, Sir.

In this extract, the teacher was explaining that because of a conflict on the schedule, they would have to cancel their next lesson. The teacher then explained that he would have to hand off the material for the canceled lesson. This was shown in the utterance, “*Materi tersebut akan Saya kirim kepada kalian, ya, untuk dipelajari untuk menghadapi the assessment,*” a commissive speech act. Through that utterance, the teacher committed himself to perform the action in the utterance, sending the students their lesson material, sometimes in the future.

Expressives (2%)

The remaining 10 utterance from total 432 utterance are identified as expressive speech acts. Expressive speech acts committed by the teacher included acts such as thanking as part of a greeting. This particular speech act contained no information to contribute to the interaction

between teacher and students. It is also one of the speech acts that were the least used by the teacher.

#### Extract 8 (Gratitude)

T: Mudah-mudahan dengan apa yang kalian peroleh pada hari ini itu bisa membantu kalian manakala surat-surat tersebut dibutuhkan pada kehidupan sehari-hari kita.

SS: Yes, Sir.

T: **I think that's all, thank you very much.**

In this extract, the teacher was giving a reflection of the given lesson. At the end of his lecture, he said, "I think that's all, thank you very much," as a part of farewell greeting. This utterance contained expressive speech acts of thanking towards the students for attending the lesson.

From the interview it is found that the teacher preferred to perform direct speech acts with explicit performatives. Direct speech act is a term to describe a form of speech act where the structure of the utterance is directly connected to the function of the utterance (Yule, 1996). The teachers would perform speech acts in English and then wait for students' reaction. If desired reaction is achieved, then teachers would proceed with the lesson. According to Rozik (1989), confusion in understanding the intended meaning is caused by student's difficulty in understanding the intended meaning communicated by a speech act, or producing a speech act using appropriate language and manner in the language being learned. Should the students do not understand the intended meaning behind the illocutionary force within the utterance, after repeating several times in English, the teachers would then switch to Indonesian. During observation stage, they did not switch to native language Buginese when this occurred.

During performance of speech acts, the teacher would also use Indonesian discourse markers, such as "iya" and "oke", regardless whether they were speaking in English or Indonesian. The teacher would also be using "please" as a discourse marker. He claimed that the purpose of that is to teach students good behavior and politeness in speaking.

#### **Implication of Speech act performance by English teacher in EFL classroom interaction**

By the use of speech acts in classrooms, the teacher is able to create and provide language models and a comprehensible input for the students. He claimed his inputs enable students to understand the material and respond to conversations properly. According to Sulviana (2015), students are able to understand the materials presented by lecturer's utterance of speech acts as it raises student's participation in classroom interaction.

The subject also claimed that as a result of performing speech acts in front of the students, students are capable of replicating language functions such as greetings, thanking, and

apologizing, and directions such as commands and making requests in daily conversations. According to standard theories (Jacobs, 1989 & Ishihara and Cohen, 2010), through usage of speech acts, such language functions are carried out within the realm of pragmatic ability through speech acts, in which students may also learn and perform. From speech acts performed by the teachers, they claimed that their students are most fluent in using expression of greetings in daily conversation.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion, four classifications of speech acts were found from the data. Each classification has different proportions with directive speech acts being the dominant one, taking 56% of total utterances, followed by representatives with 38%, and commissives and expressives with 4% and 2% respectively. Through the use of speech acts in classroom interaction, the teacher is able to provide language models and comprehensible input for the students. The teacher also claimed that by repeating those speech acts themselves, students are able to replicate them and use it in daily conversations.

The researcher suggests English teachers, especially in Indonesian context to expose students to more of speech act performance. The researcher also suggests EFL students to practice in their communicative competence through speech act performances to understand the context of conversation in order to have smoother interaction between teacher and students. A further research regarding the speech act performances by both teachers and students is suggested.

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