

Speech Acts in Everyday Communication: A Case Study of Accounting Students at Politeknik Unggul LP3M

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the types of speech acts used in the everyday communication of students from the Accounting Department at Politeknik Unggul LP3M. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, utilizing documentation and participatory observation techniques on students' oral and written communication practices. The data, consisting of 80 utterances, were classified according to Searle's five types of speech acts: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The results indicate that directive and representative speech acts are the most dominant, reflecting the function of communication as a means of sharing information and requesting assistance in academic settings. This study recommends strengthening students' pragmatic competence to enhance the effectiveness of academic and social communication.

Keywords: *Speech Acts, Pragmatics, Student Communication, Polytechnic, Accounting.*

INTRODUCTION

Studies on speech acts have been widely conducted in both educational and social contexts. According to (Yule, 1996), a speech act is the basic unit of communication in pragmatics, which not only conveys propositions but also involves real actions performed by the speaker. A study by (Budiasih, 2020) reveals that directive speech acts dominate student interactions in online learning, reflecting a need to give clear instructions and guidance. Meanwhile, (Hiasa, 2018) highlight the importance of expressive speech acts in fostering rapport and cooperation in academic settings.

On the other hand, research by (Eralita, 2025) found that vocational students tend to use more representative and commissive speech acts, as these relate directly to practical work and task collaboration. This finding is reinforced by (Arifin, 2021), who states that variation in speech acts reflects informal social structures and collective responsibilities within the learning community. Understanding the tendencies of students' speech acts can therefore assist institutions in designing more effective communication and instructional strategies.

Language plays a crucial role in human life as a tool for conveying thoughts, emotions, and information. In higher education, language serves as the primary medium in the teaching and learning process, both in oral and written forms. The success of the educational process heavily depends on the effectiveness of communication among individuals involved.

One of the key aspects of language study is the speech act, which falls under the field of pragmatics. Speech act theory examines the relationship between utterances and the actions performed through those utterances. A speech act does not merely convey information but also accomplishes something, such as requesting, ordering, complaining, promising, or declaring.

The concept of speech acts was first introduced by (Urmson, 1963) developed by (Searle, 1979). Searle classifies speech acts into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. These categories reflect the diverse functions of language in daily life, particularly in social interactions.

In vocational education environments such as polytechnics, students' communication reflects a wide range of speech acts, both in academic and non-academic contexts. Students engage in various activities that require communication skills, such as group discussions, presentations, internships, and organizational events. Thus, observing students' speech acts is relevant for understanding their communication patterns.

This study focuses on a case of accounting students at Politeknik Unggul LP3M. This department was selected due to its high intensity of academic communication, especially in group projects, problem-solving discussions, report writing, and interactions with lecturers. These conditions provide fertile ground for exploring the variety of speech acts used in everyday campus life. As (Gafari, 2025) explains, academic interactions in vocational education rely on direct and functional communication structures, with a strong tendency toward directive speech acts.

Previous studies indicate that students tend to use directive and representative speech acts in academic activities, while expressive and commissive acts appear more frequently in social or organizational situations. These findings align with the work of (Anisa Dwi Tiara, M. Arinal Rahman, 2021), who found that vocational students develop communication patterns that are task-oriented and efficient, yet still maintain an emotional dimension in teamwork. These findings form the basis for this study to further examine the communication context of polytechnic students, which is characteristically more technical and applied.

Given this background, the present study aims to describe the forms and functions of speech acts used by students of Politeknik Unggul LP3M in their daily communication. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic instruction and the improvement of students' communication skills in vocational higher education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through documentation of utterances and observation of interactions among students in the Accounting Department at Politeknik Unggul LP3M. The data source consisted of 80 utterances classified according to Searle's theory of speech acts. Data analysis involved identifying the form, function, and context of speech acts. The data were then grouped into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of 80 student utterances from Politeknik Unggul LP3M, five categories of speech acts were identified based on Searle's theory. The frequency distribution of each type is presented in the table below:

Table 1. The frequency distribution of each

Type of Speech Act	Number	Percentage
Representative	16	20%
Directive	25	31.25%
Expressive	15	18.75%
Commissive	14	17.5%
Declarative	10	12.5%
Total	80	100%

a. Representative Speech Acts

These acts express the speaker's belief in the truth of a proposition. In academic communication, students frequently use representative acts when explaining concepts, reporting data, or giving evaluations. Example: "The final cash balance shows a decline compared to last month." This utterance is informative and fact-based, supporting academic activities through the delivery of valid information.

b. Directive Speech Acts

Directive acts are the most dominant in this study, with 25 utterances (31.25%). This indicates that students actively issue instructions, requests, suggestions, or questions. Example: "Can you help explain the financial accounting cycle?" Such utterances commonly occur in group discussions, practicums, and Q&A sessions with lecturers. The dominance of directives also reflects a collaborative academic environment.

c. Expressive Speech Acts

These acts convey the speaker's psychological state, such as gratitude, apologies, or compliments. Example: "Thank you for teaching me how to post journal entries." The 15 expressive utterances (18.75%) indicate that students not only engage academically but also build positive social relationships with peers and lecturers.

d. Commissive Speech Acts

Commissive acts express the speaker's commitment to future actions. Example: "I'll finish this report tonight." The study recorded 14 commissive utterances (17.5%), mostly in the context of group work or task assignments. These reflect students' sense of responsibility and role awareness in academic tasks.

e. Declarative Speech Acts

Although the least frequent (10 utterances or 12.5%), declarative acts have the power to change the status or condition of something. Example: "Starting next week, the class will move to room 302." These acts are typically used by figures with authority, such as group leaders or class representatives, indicating the existence of informal organizational structures among students.

Overall, the dominance of directive and representative acts suggests that students at Politeknik Unggul LP3M prioritize functional communication in academic settings. The frequent use of information-seeking and informative utterances reflects productive interaction patterns. Meanwhile, expressive and commissive acts reveal that student relationships are not merely transactional but also emotional and relational. Despite its low frequency, declarative speech acts indicate a social structure within student groups.

These findings support (Anisa Dwi Tiara, M. Arinal Rahman, 2021), who noted students' reliance on representative and directive acts in academic contexts. The results also align with (Hasanah, 2025) who emphasized the role of expressive speech acts in promoting communicative harmony. Therefore, understanding types of speech acts can serve as a foundation for developing pragmatic literacy programs in vocational higher education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that directive and representative speech acts are the most commonly used by students at Politeknik Unggul LP3M. These types reflect the tendency to use language instrumentally—either to convey information or to request assistance in academic problem-solving. This suggests that campus communication is predominantly functional and goal-oriented.

Meanwhile, the considerable use of expressive and commissive speech acts shows the presence of positive interpersonal relationships among students, contributing to cooperation and

solidarity. Although the least used, declarative acts play a strategic role in reflecting authority and informal leadership within student communities.

Thus, this study underscores the importance of developing pragmatic skills in vocational higher education. Training programs that promote awareness of language use in social, academic, and professional contexts are essential for enhancing student communication effectiveness. The findings of this study are expected to inform curriculum development in courses such as Bahasa Indonesia or Professional Communication at polytechnic institutions

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