

Conference Paper

Indonesian Teachers' Directives in English Language Classrooms

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Abstract

English language classrooms as real language settings provide ample linguistic data, be they produced by the teachers or the students, as there are some interactions in exchanging thoughts, feelings, or ideas. Speech acts theory indicates that in using the language, people not only create an isolated series of sentences, but also carry out actions by either doing something or making others do something. By using classroom observations conducted in twelve English language classrooms, this study seeks to describe types of sentence forms and kinds of strategies used by the teachers in giving order. The findings indicate that the teachers in the Department of English, Universitas Negeri Malang, who are in a position of authority over the students, do not always impose on their students in making them do what the teachers want them to do. Even though the interactions in the classrooms are not equal as the amount of teacher talk dominates the teaching and learning process, the students (as the hearer) are aware that they should adhere to the teachers' speech acts of ordering to be successful in their study.

Keywords: English language classrooms, speech acts theory, directives, sentence forms, speech acts strategies

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1. Introduction

With the setting of nearly a break time where students were about to have their lunch, one of the researchers in this project overheard a whisper from one student sitting in the front row, "You know what? I'm hungry.", an utterance directed to her friend sitting next to her. As she was handling a course on Pragmatics, spontaneously, she asked that student to repeat the utterance and asked the reason why. She asked the student some questions related to the importance of stating that utterance in the middle of her explanation in the class related to speech act. The questions were not meant to indicate that the teacher was annoyed, but it was more to lead the class to the understanding that what the student told her friend did not necessarily inform the fact that she was hungry. There must be some reasons or intentions why she said that. The student's answers confirmed that she intended to have a lunch together with her friend sitting next to her. Basically, her utterance indicates invitation to have a lunch together instead of conveying her being hungry in the class.

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What her student was doing became an interesting issue in the Pragmatics course with the topic of Speech Acts. The students need to be aware that language is used to do a wide range of activities, such as: conveying information, requesting information, giving orders, making requests, making threats, giving warning, making bets, giving advice, making apologies, telling jokes, and giving compliments. As a setting, classroom is a place where communication between teachers and students happens and allows them to work together and to construct knowledge and meanings and develop inter-subjectivity [17]. In the classroom, there are interactions which might be in the form of teachers' talk and students' talk. Both kinds of talk are similar in the way that teachers and students use language to communicate what they have in minds. However, the emphasis on the classroom talk depends on teachers' talk as has been pointed out by [13]. They state that in the classroom, teachers will resort to their talk; that is, teacher's talk; in any activities and tasks that they design for the students. This idea has also been pointed by [21] that to do their responsibilities as teachers, their basic and principle tool is their use of language.

The use of language, including speech acts, by teachers has attracted a dearth of studies e.g., [4, 10, 16, 25]. In [10] compared and contrasted the realization patterns of the speech act of requesting between Persian speaking students and American speakers of English. Using controlled elicitation procedure, the results of his study indicate that Persian speakers are considerably more direct in making requests compared to that of the American counterparts. In [25] has also made a similar focus on speech acts in her study. Gathering the data from female EFL learners in South Sumatera University, she concluded the results of her research that the information on the use of speech acts can be used in the teaching of EFL as well as EIL to boost students' intercultural and pragmatic competences. Those two studies are quite different from what have been done by [4, 16] in terms of focus. In [4] collected the data from Preschool Teacher Education Program in Turkey to document the participants' strategies in carrying out the acts of apologizing, complaining, refusing, and thanking. Using Moroccan EFL setting, [16] investigated the use of fifteen speech acts, in the daily life conversations, such as requesting, offering, criticizing, apologizing, inviting, congratulating, adding information, complimenting, introducing, greeting, expressing gratitude, helping, making suggestions, and complaining. This study is similar to [10, 25] research in terms of identifying the focus in kinds of speech acts used; that is in the use of directives. However, this proposed study is different from those previous studies in the way that the chosen participants in this study are teachers or lecturers in the Department of English, Universitas Negeri Malang. Due to their roles, teachers can be supposed to be dominant in the classroom as they have more power and position over the students.

The function of directive is to make the hearers do something, and in classroom contexts, this means to make the students do something. Asking the students do

something is part of teachers' responsibilities to organize diverse activities and tasks in their classrooms; in addition to that, it is also the teachers' duty to manage the class via language use wherein the use of speech acts is inevitable.

Speech act is under a theory of language formulated by [1, 28] that focuses on the relation between language and action (performances) in which people do not use the language to create an isolated series of sentences, but they use the language either to do something or make others do something [2]. Similar ideas on the relationship between language and acts are formulated by [8, 22]. In his book, Cummings provides description and elaboration on Austin's views on language and ([22]: 95) puts more emphasis by describing some examples which shows that articulating and using speech acts as verbal actions means changing the existing state of affairs in the world. Their ideas show the importance of how words can change the world. In this view, this study seeks to describe the teachers' use of directives in class in terms of its sentence forms and strategies.

2. Method

This study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data were used to identify types of sentence forms and strategies used by the teachers to produce directives in English language classrooms. The data in this study were collected from the teachers at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters Universitas Negeri Malang. The data were in the forms of utterances from the teachers in twelve English courses: Cultural Studies, Semiotics, Journalism, Trends and Issues in Linguistics, English Social and Literary Theory, Gender and Literature, Thesis Proposal Seminar, Translation II, Topics in Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Editing, and Advanced Drama. The students were asked to note down directive and the results of their notes were analyzed to find out the types of sentence forms and strategies used by the teachers.

3. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study in finding out types of sentence forms and kinds of strategies in the teachers' directives. In addition, some discussion and explanation on the data are provided.

3.1. Types of Sentence Forms in Teachers' Directives

In order to find out sentence forms of the teachers' directive, the students were asked to note down their teachers' utterances in giving order in those twelve classes. After analyzing the teachers' utterances, this study recorded 660 utterances of directives. From those 660 utterances, the researchers categorized the sentences into affirmative,

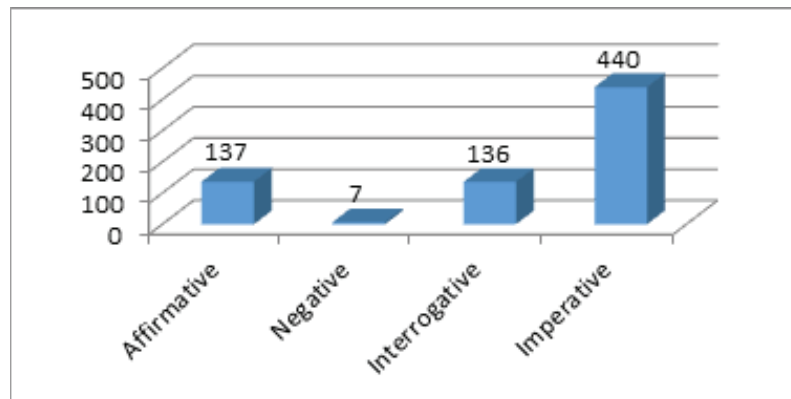


Figure 1: The Sentence Forms of Teachers' Directives.

negative, interrogative and imperative structures. Although there were 660 utterances documented from the teachers' utterances, there were several utterances containing more than one sentence forms. The number of the sentence forms found from the teachers' directives is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the most frequently used teachers' directives are in the form of imperative sentences and the least frequent use is negative sentences. In addition, both affirmative and interrogative sentences have quite similar frequency. These findings indicate that most of the time, teachers formulate their sentences into imperatives when it comes to make the students do something. This is in line with the idea [1, 26, 28] that directives are attempts made by the speaker to get and direct the hearer to do something, so that the hearer makes things happen according to the speakers' wishes. Its use in the speakers' utterances might vary in form, function, and frequency [15]. Figure 2 indicates that in terms of sentence forms, the teachers' directives were dominated by the use of imperatives.

Merriam Webster provides full definition of an imperative in the way that it is "(1) of, relating to, or constituting the grammatical mood that expresses the will to influence the behavior of another; (2) expressive of a command, entreaty or exhortation; and (3) having power to restrain, control and direct." In addition, the description of its use can be found at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>. Imperative is used when we want to tell someone to do something (most commonly for advice, suggestions, requests, commands, orders or instructions). It can also be used to tell people to do or not to do things. Further elaborative functions of imperative can be accessed at <http://www.englishgrammarssecrets.com/imperative/menu.php>, which states that an imperative can be used (1) to give a direct order; (2) to give instructions; (3) to make an invitation; (4) on signs and notices; (4) to give friendly informal advices; and (5) more "polite" order.

In addition to those definitions, through Han's cross-linguistic investigation into the structure and interpretation of imperatives and related constructions conducted in 1998, he defines imperatives as "directive illocutionary force as an instruction to the

hearer to update a plan set, a set of propositions that specifies the hearers' intentions". Most of the time the illocutionary force in directives including commanding, prohibiting, suggesting, permitting or requesting [19, 24] which has a bald on record quality in threatening others' face [6]. Some examples on the teachers' uses of directives which are in the most dominant forms of imperatives are as follows:

U₁₂: Show your journal, now.

U₃₂₀: Please write on the whiteboard so your friends can understand your explanation.

U₆₁₇: Please explain what you have discussed.

Those three utterances (U indicates utterance, number indicates the data identification for one utterance to another) were documented from three different classes among twelve classes in which the students took notes on the uses of teachers' directives. Those data were chosen to represent different ways of imperative forms used by the teachers. The first example was extracted from the course on Cultural Studies in which the teacher assigned the students to write on their reflective journals in every meeting related to the teaching and learning materials. In the first example (U₁₂), the structure signals the teacher's expression of desire that the students show the journal. The action desired from this utterance might be both verbal and non-verbal, as verbal action indicates that the students provide explanation to the teacher on what they have on their journal. The action might be non-verbal as the students only show their journal without any indication of explaining what they have written in the journal.

Both U₃₂₀ and U₆₁₇ make use of the word "please" to order the students in writing down something on the whiteboard and in explaining what they have discussed. In ([12], 174) categorizes the use of "please" as force idioms which mean "expressions for which there is no plausible inferential path leading from literal, direct meaning to the accepted basic pragmatic signal." When the word "please" occurs before an imperative structure, it signals the utterance used as a request to the students which mitigates the ordering force into a suggestion. The sentence form in U₃₂₀ is followed by a declarative sentence stating the effects or the consequences of doing the command to write on the whiteboard. In terms of future action, U₃₂₀ demands non-verbal actions as the students need to write down something on the board, while U₆₁₇ requests the students to have verbal performance by explaining what they have discussed. The first utterance (U₃₂₀) was from English Social and Literary History and the second utterance (U₆₁₇) was from Sociolinguistics class in which the latter requires the students to have group discussion.

Those three utterances suggest that the use of teachers' directives fall into two: orders and requests. In [23] divides imperatives into three subtypes: orders, requests, and permissions. Those three share "the force of *Requiring* as they all conventionally add a property to the addressee's To-Do list." However, they are different in terms

of pragmatic basis for the speakers' relationship to authority. The teachers' use of directive indicates order when the basis is social authority since the speaker imposes on the hearer to do things as he/she wants. Meanwhile, the use of directive indicates request when there is no indication of referring to different social authority because the basis is on the speakers' benefit. The use of imperative in the form of request minimizes the gap between the teacher and the students, and also to create positive and conducive atmosphere during the process of teaching and learning.

As noted earlier, Figure 2 also shows the least use of directives in the forms of affirmative, interrogative, and negative sentence forms. Some examples of those utterances are as follows:

U206 : I want you to find a data or media that contain about our topic today. It can be language and age, language and social class or language and religion.

U324 : Could you please show me the previous slide?

U406 : You don't need to put number like this. You need to add more info.

The three examples are not in the form of imperatives as U206 is in an affirmative form, U324 in an interrogative form and U406 in a negative form. The first affirmative sentence indicates indirect directive from the teacher to the students to find more data related to topics in Trends and Issues in Linguistics subject. The teacher expresses her desires on speaker-based-conditions. Similarly, the second utterance is one form of directive which turns into a polite request from the teacher to the students to show the slides. The third sentence indicates negation to the directive as the teacher stated the need not to put number (or do the listing) on their presentation since adding more information can be beneficial. The teacher modifies his directives by making the sentence into negative sentence form. The teachers' use of indirectness, as will be discussed in the next part, shows the teacher's way to minimize power, distance and imposition in the classroom in order to create conducive atmosphere in the classroom. This is supported by [9] stating that the use of indirectness will modify the teacher-student role-relationship with its authoritarian and confrontational overtones. The attempt is intended to create social harmony in a classical one versus many situations in language classrooms.

3.2. Kinds of Strategy Use in Teachers' Directives

In [27] distinguishes two strategies to produce speech acts in terms of its level of speech directness: direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are defined as speech where the intended speech act uses the intended speech act form, while indirect speech act is defined as speech which implies "more or other than what is explicitly said. After tabulating the results of the students' notes on the teachers' use of directives, the number of strategies used is shown in Figure ??.

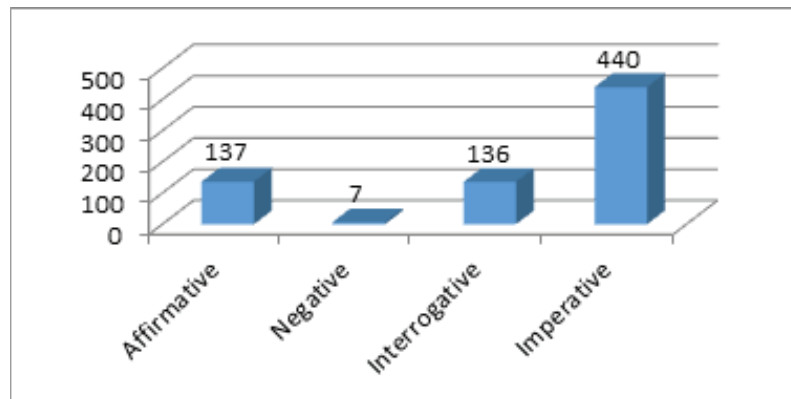


Figure 2: Kinds of Strategy Use of Teachers' Directives.

Figure ?? indicates that direct speech acts are dominantly used by the teachers in those twelve English language classrooms. The strategy is in line with the sentence forms discussed previously that the most dominant of which is imperative. The same findings are also found in the study by [3] demonstrating that a direct speech act would be one where a request is written in an imperative form. An example of this direct speech act is found in U12 where the teacher commands the students show the journal immediately. In addition, the use of adverbial time "now" indicates the urgency of showing the journal. However, in terms of the strategy used and the action needed to meet this imperative, the expression is not intended literally to show the physical object of the journal. The teacher implicitly orders the students to prove whether they have written a summary of what they have learned in previous meetings. This is pretty much interesting to find out that in terms of sentence forms, the expression is in direct form, yet in terms of the action needed, it has certain level of indirectness. As what has been outlined by [7] through his six properties of indirect speech acts, direct speech acts are intended to have just one meaning. The utterance of "Show your journal, now." has more than one meaning as it is asking the students to show their work. Figure 2 also indicates that there are around 35% utterances which were formulated indirectly. Some examples on indirect utterances are as follows:

U477: Your presentation is the same as that of last week presentation.

U484: Throw your pocket dictionary, use monolingual dictionary.

U569: What you should do now is start to read references.

U605: You need to talk about the result of your reading.

Those are four utterances produced by teachers in Thesis Proposal Seminar, Translation and Sociolinguistic classes. In terms of strategies used, the teachers employ indirect speech acts to their students as the utterances have more than one meaning [7]. The first example (U477), for instance, though the sentence is in a declarative form, it does not mean that the teacher asserts on the similarity of the student's presentation with the previous one. The teacher demonstrates his annoyance on the

students' inability to accommodate the teacher's inputs and feedback. A similar thing can be found in U569 in which the teacher gives advice and suggestions to the students related to their work. It does not mean that the immediate response is for students to start looking and finding references for their work.

The other two examples also indicate the same issue in terms of having multiple meaning beyond the semantic meaning of the utterances. At the moment of speaking in U484, the teacher does not indicate that the students do physical action to throw away their pocket dictionary, but the teacher simply suggests that the students start consulting a monolingual dictionary. In addition, U605 indicates that the students are asked to discuss the results of their reading on the topic with their friends as another layer of meaning for the utterance. The declarative use in U477, U569, and U605 is intended to soften the message to be less direct and less threatening.

The teachers' use of indirect speech acts shows the wide use of indirectness as a conversational strategy. It has been noted by [20] that the use of indirect speech acts mainly is in relation with politeness since its use might eliminate the unpleasant message contained in both requests and orders. The preference in using indirect speech acts stems from the fact that the speakers do not want to infringe on the hearer's face. However, politeness is not the only motivation for indirectness, people use indirect strategies when they want to make their speech more interesting, when they want to reach goals different from their partners' or when they want to increase the force of the message communicated [30]. Instead of stating that "Your work (presentation) is not good" as can be interpreted from U477 and U569, the teacher does not want to threaten the students' face and impose his power as a teacher. Instead, he makes use of indirect speech acts in the form of a declarative sentence.

Lessening and softening the face-threatening situation through the use of indirectness might be seen as the teachers' politeness strategies in giving feedback and criticizing. Providing indirect feedback for students is considered to be more effective than direct feedback as it lets students to learn to correct their mistakes [5, 11, 29]. Although it has benefits, the use of indirectness might not be useful if the students have difficulties interpreting the indirect feedback as it needs more mental processes to understand [18].

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

In a nutshell, this study shows that the teachers at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang make use of variations in their directives. In terms of sentence forms, they employ imperative as the most dominant form (61%), affirmative and interrogative (each is 19%) and the least used is negative form. In terms of strategies used, the teachers make use of direct speech acts to give order and command to the students during the teaching and learning processes. However,

through the use of indirect speech acts, the teachers do not always impose on their students in asking them to do what the teachers want them to do. The use of indirect speech acts is intended to mitigate the tone in giving order even though, as teachers, they are in a position of authority over the students.

The results of this study have been extracted from the students' notes when they were attending those twelve classes in which they needed to write down any directives used by the teachers. As this has been taken from the students' notes, we realize that there are weaknesses, for we interpreted the utterances based on our subjective judgment. Therefore, further research on the use of teacher's directives by considering linguistic transcript which shows pauses, intonation contours, and laughter need doing. In addition, conducting a cross-reference with the teacher teaching the subjects mentioned in this article needs to also be conducted.

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