

## HOW AN EFL TEXTBOOK TEACH LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC SKILL

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### ABSTRACT

As a language learning resource, an English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) textbook plays a pivotal role in students' pragmatic development. There has been a plethora of studies conducted to evaluate the quality of textbooks across the countries regarding the proportional content of pragmatic uses. However, there is still no evidence of the study in Indonesia. Thus, to fill this void, the study aims to explore types of speech acts included in an EFL coursebook for senior high school students and to what extent those speech acts meet students' learning needs. This study employs a qualitative content analysis method, with one nationally mandated English textbook for senior high school students chosen and analysed. The analysis included categorizing dialogues in the textbook using Searle's (1976) Speech Act Theory, which comprises directive, commissive, representative/assertive, declarative, and expressive speech acts. The research findings indicate that the pragmatic content in the coursebook is still inadequate. This inadequacy may affect students' pragmatic development since proportional use of all types of speech acts would help learners use an appropriate speech act in an appropriate social setting. There is a call for more studies on the evaluation of EFL textbooks which use textbooks from all grades at senior high school level.

**Keywords:** *EFL textbook, pragmatics, speech act analysis*

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## INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic competence for English as foreign language (EFL) learners plays a very significant role in conducting successful communication with English native speakers (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Leech, 1983). Understanding and using language appropriately in social contexts while taking the interlocutors' cultural norms and beliefs into consideration is a necessary component of pragmatic competence (Veronika et al., 2015). In addition, it covers conversational turn-taking, politeness strategies, and speech acts (Valentina, n.d.). To avoid misunderstandings and forge good connections with English



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speakers, EFL learners should develop their pragmatic competence. The failure in expressing an idea may be due to inadequacy in pragmatic competence. One of the pragmatic skills is to communicate our ideas via an appropriate speech act (Hidayat, 2016; Widodo & Sari, 2023). Speech acts may be in the form of making requests, giving invitations, stating disagreement, and so on (Astuti, 2018; Sulviana, 2016). All these speech acts should be used within a particular socio-cultural setting (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Nguyen, 2011).

The EFL textbook is one of the resources for learning pragmatic competence (Esmaeel & Behnam, 2019; Mihajla, 2024; Vellenga, 2004; Ton et al., 2020). Textbooks are often designed to teach language skills in the context of everyday communication, but without in-depth analysis, it may not be clear how the textbook guides students in understanding the purpose and function of utterances (such as requesting, explaining, or expressing agreement). Thus, a pragmatically friendly EFL course book should provide activities that promote learners' awareness of intercultural pragmatic competence and contextual learning materials. A variety of expressions to accomplish social purposes of certain speech acts should also be included in the learning materials.

Potential problems in this textbook can arise if the speech acts taught are not in accordance with the context of everyday language use or there is a lack of variation in examples of speech acts. For example, if it only focuses on assertive to convey information without examples of directives that encourage interaction or expressive to express feelings, students may have difficulty understanding the pragmatic aspects of language in real situations. In addition, without an emphasis on speech act variation, students may be less skilled in choosing the right type of utterance according to the social context or specific communication purpose.

With pragmatic analysis, educators may evaluate whether the textbook provides appropriate examples for various speech acts such as assertive, directive, expressive, and others as well as ensuring that teaching materials support comprehensive communication skills and are appropriate for effective language use in real life.

Considering the significant contribution of pragmatic competence to EFL learners' language proficiency, this study aims to examine types of speech acts that are dominantly used by the author and to what extent these speech acts meet students' learning needs. Furthermore, the study will look into how well these speech acts are incorporated into the course book to improve students' knowledge and use of pragmatic language. By examining how frequently and appropriately speech acts occur in the materials, the study intends to offer insightful information that will help authors of EFL course books that emphasize pragmatic competence develop more effective materials. The main goal is to enhance students' capacity for successful communication in real-worlds settings, both within and outside of the classroom.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The speech act theory by Searle (1976) was adopted as a framework for the analysis which comprises directive, commissive, representative/assertive, declarative, and expressive. Directive deals with speech act that asks the hearer to perform something. In other words, Yule (1996) defined this as an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something, such as requesting, demanding, asking, questioning, urging, etc. Commissive is a type of speech act used to commit speakers to do future actions, such as ordering, praying, pleading, inviting, permitting, etc. Furthermore, representative is a type of illocutionary action which commits the speaker believes in something true or not, such as stating, telling, predicting, asserting, etc. On the other hand, declaratives are kinds of the speech act that change the world via utterances, for instance announcing, declaring, defining, appointing, etc. The last type of speech act is expressive. This speech act deals with the expression of feelings, such as surprise, like, fear, apology, thank, regret, etc.

There has been a plethora of studies conducted to explore pragmatic aspects in EFL course books (Nguyen, 2011; Soleimani et al., 2012; Soozandehfar & Sahragard, 2011; Vellenga, 2004). All the studies have been undertaken to explore different pragmatic aspects in EFL textbooks. Vellenga (2004) conducted a mixed method study on eight English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook to explore and identify types of speech acts introduced by the author. The results showcased the course books still have unclear metapragmatic content. This component is essential to help students acquire pragmatic competence. In the same vein, Nguyen (2011) conducted a textbook analysis on a series of EFL course books for Vietnamese upper secondary students. She examined how the author presented speech acts in those course books and how adequate contextual and metapragmatic content help students learn the speech acts more effectively. The study revealed that the issues in accuracy and adequacy of pragmatic content still exist in those textbooks. She recommended that a more realistic learning model with adequate explanation of contextual use of the pragmatic expression would be an alternative solution to deal with the issues.

Another study by Soozandehfar (2011) examined language functions and speech act of conversation texts in Top Notch fundamental course books. There were 14 conversations randomly selected from the books. The texts were analyzed using model of Halliday's (1978) language function and Searle's (1976) speech acts. The outcomes showed that the conversations were still not effectively and functionally designed. In contrast, Soleimani and Dabbaghi (2012) found that dialogue recordings and video clip cuts in the New Interchange were sufficiently designed with various scenarios in different speech settings for learners who wants to learn basic expressions of requesting/accepting, requesting/ refusing, and affirmation.

As the above reviews indicate, most of the findings revealed that pragmatic content in EFL course books was still not effectively and adequately designed. Also, all the samples of course books were taken from commercial publishers, none of them was taken from Government approved EFL course books. Since course books are never free from certain ideologies and hidden agenda, this study aims to investigate types of speech acts manifested in a government mandated EFL course book for senior high school students. The link and match between course book pragmatic content and students' learning needs are also looked at.

### **METHODS**

This research used qualitative content analysis to understand speech or texts within their specific contexts as a whole. Instead of just counting words or extracting basic content, it looks for deeper meanings, themes, and patterns that might be obvious or hidden. This approach helps to interpret social reality in a thoughtful and scientific way (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2017).

One nationally mandated English textbook with title "Buku Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA/MA/SMK Kelas X" published by Indonesian Ministry of Education was selected as the material for analysis. This book was chosen because it is a government endorsed course book for senior high school students across Indonesia. The book comprises of 15 units with 6 subtopics, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking.

The unit of analysis was taken from samples of dialogues and conversations in the course book. There are 5 samples of 15 dialogues that were analyzed. Then, each expression of the samples was read carefully and identified. The identification results were then presented in a table of frequency. The stand out findings were then analyzed using Speech Acts Theory by Searle (1976). Narratives reflecting predominant use of certain speech acts were also discussed.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following table depicts the results of the analysis of distribution of speech acts used in the textbook. It contains the information regarding the frequency and percentage of use of each speech act (Table 1).

**Table 1. Types of Speech Acts Found throughout the Textbook**

SPEECH ACTS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Representative	71	40
Directive	44	25
Commissive	13	7
Declarative	2	3
Expressive	44	25
Total	174	100

It is clearly seen from the table that representative is the most dominantly used speech act (40%) in that textbook whereas commissive is the less dominantly used one (13%). Directive and expressive are two types of speech acts that are equally dominant in use (44% each) while declarative is the least frequently used speech act in the entire textbook (3%). The data showcase unequal distribution of speech acts used in the textbook. The difference in the number of uses between the most frequently used speech act and the least frequently used one is too high although there are two types of speech acts, namely directive and expressive, share the same frequency of use. This unequal distribution of speech act may downgrade the quality of textbook itself. It is crucial for authors and educators to consider the frequency of various speech acts within a textbook in order to achieve balanced and effective communication with readers. Recognizing the unequal distribution of speech acts allows for enhancements to improve the textbook's overall quality and impact. This allows the educational content to be more interesting and useful for readers, resulting in a more successful learning experience.

Ideally speaking, all types of speech acts should be distributed evenly. If it is not possible to do that, maybe the author puts an emphasis on certain language feature, at least the differences in percentage of use between the speech acts are not too high. This will ensure that the readers are engaged and can easily comprehend the material being presented. By paying attention to how speech acts are distributed, the author can customize the material to the audience's requirements and expectations, resulting in a more effective communication process. Overall, an equal distribution of speech acts is essential in creating a successful and powerful teaching material.

This is essential since the coursebook is not only a learning resource for learners, but it also serves as an agent of transferring the knowledge itself (Eunice, 1994; Saeid et al., 2013). Hence, in order to guarantee that the message is received effectively, writers must carefully evaluate the influence of speech acts in their writing. A well-balanced arrangement of speech acts can keep the reader's attention and comprehension throughout the entire text. At the end of the day, writers can improve students' overall learning experience and make knowledge transfer easier by thoughtfully arranging speech actions into the coursebook.

The least exposure to all types of speech acts, the lower capacity of pragmatic development the learners will gain. For instance, including a variety of direct speech acts in language learning textbooks, like commands, promises, and requests, can help students comprehend how these are used in everyday conversations. Learners are also able to understand the nuances of communication and cultural differences when indirect speech acts such as invitations, suggestions, and apologies are provided. This comprehensive approach ensures that students have a wide variety of language abilities to successfully navigate a variety of social situations. However, students could find it difficult to comprehend the nuances and complexity of communication in many settings if the textbook exclusively emphasizes direct speech acts and ignores indirect speech acts. Without exposure to a range of speech acts, students could find it difficult to interact with others in more complicated social settings. Different type of speech acts reflects different use in its socio-cultural settings (Kamal, 1991; Wierzbicka, 1985; Hossein & Azizeh, 2020). Thus, a number of appropriate speech acts should be taught to students in order to enable them to interact successfully in a specific social relationship. Searle (1976) emphasizes that all types of speech acts should be taught to learners to make them more communicatively competent in establishing their ideologies and social relationships within various social contexts (Figure 1).

From that excerpt, the dialogue can be broken down into smaller unit of analysis as follows.

- Hello, I am Edo (Declarative)
- May I know your name please? (Directive)
- Sure, I am Slamet I am from Jepara. (Representative)
- What about you? (Directive)
- I am from Raja Ampat. (Representative)
- I work in a tourism resort (Representative)
- I work for a furniture company. (Representative)
- Have you heard about ukir Jepara? (Directive)
- Yes, and I want to know more about that (Declarative)
- It's a specific carving pattern created in Jepara. (Describing Representative)

It can be seen from the dialogue how Edo gives a bit more information about himself by the dominant use of representative. Within this context, the dominant use of representative is still appropriate. However, if this happens in a dialogue between two people, and one of them uses representative too frequently, it signals how dominant that speaker is in the dialogue. This is confirmed by a research from Zhou & Niu (2017) that said frequent use of representative by one speaker signals their dominance, especially in crosssex conversations. From the dialogue, the participants least frequently use declarative. They use it just for a coherent dialogue. "Hello, I am Edo" this expression is used to initiate a conversation whereas "Yes, and I want to know more about ukiran Jepara" is used as a response to the directive speech act by Slamet. This is to make the dialogue coherent.

Here is another example of the dialogue.

Sample 2, Dialogue 2: Task 1, page 23

Samuel: Alif, congratulations. (Expressive)

You deserved it, Man. (Expressive)

Alif: Thank you very much. (Directive)

This is because you always help me. (Representative)

Sinta: I am very happy for you, Alif. (Expressive)



Now, that you are the director of the company, I believe the company will develop even faster. (Representative)

Alif: (replies with a happy tone) Thank you. (Expressive)

I cannot forget your collaboration with me, and I will still need your help. (Directive)



**Figure 1. Task 2 Dialogue from Buku Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA Kelas X page 17**

This dialogue illustrates various types of speech acts based on Searle's theory that reflect the function of social communication in the work context. First, Samuel uses expressive speech acts when he says "Alif, congratulations" and "You deserved it, Man," to express his appreciation for Alif's success, indicating that he feels that Alif deserves it. Alif responds with an expressive speech act as well, by saying "Thank you very much," which shows his gratitude. Next, Alif uses a representative speech act in the sentence "This is because you always help me," by stating his belief that his success is the result of the support of his colleagues. Sinta then adds an expressive by stating, "I am very happy for you, Alif," to express her happiness for Alif's achievement. Sinta continues with another representative speech act when she says, "Now, that you are the director of the company, I believe the company will develop even faster," expressing her view that Alif will bring progress to the company. Alif again uses an expressive speech act by saying "Thank you," as a form of appreciation for Sinta's support. At the end of the dialogue, Alif uses a directive speech act by saying, "I cannot forget your collaboration with me, and I will still need your help," subtly asking for continued support from his colleagues.

This dialogue shows how various speech acts, such as expressive, representative, and directive, play an important role in building supportive working relationships (Kuo & Yin, 2011).

Sample, 3 Dialogue 3: Task 1, page 102

Orville: Our dad gave us a toy helicopter that flew with the help of rubber bands. We've been interested in the idea since then. (Representative)

Wilbur : Orville has always liked to build kites, so, we have experimented with making our own helicopters for a while now. (Representative)

Host : But that was only a toy, what about the actual plane? (Directive)

Wilbur : Orville made the first flight with our first plane at Kitty Hawk on December 14, 1903. (Representative)

Host : Why did you choose Kitty Hawk? (Directive)

Orville : Kitty Hawk had a hill, good breezes, and was sandy. The condition would help soften the landings in case of a crash. The first flight lasted 12 seconds and they flew for 120 feet. (Representative)

Wilbur : We have worked and experimented with gliders to perfect the wing design and controls since then. (Representative)

The dialogue between Orville, Wilbur, and the Host consists primarily of assertive and directive speech acts. Orville and Wilbur use representatives to convey historical facts, experiences, and the development of their airplanes, showing how their interest in aviation emerged and developed from toys to real airplanes. The directive speech act by the Host serves as a prompt for Orville and Wilbur to provide further details, enriching the audience's understanding of their aviation history.

This dialogue supports Searle's theory that representatives are often used to convey information and facts, especially in the context of sharing experiences or historical knowledge, while directives are effective in probing for further information to clarify understanding.

The use of representative and directive speech acts plays an important role in conversations that aim to inform or educate the audience about historical events or personal experiences. Previous research in narrative communication has shown that representative is dominant in conveying facts (Norrick, 2016), while directive is used to explore additional details, as seen in this dialogue.

In addition, in educational interviews, directive encourages active participation from the speaker to share further information. This is in line with research that highlights the function of directive in deepening discussions. This dialogue supports the finding that representative provides factual information, and directive enriches the conversation, resulting in an in-depth and informative discussion (Searle, 1976).

Sample 4, Dialogue 4: Task 1, page 129

Ami: Riza, look! That heroic monument stands high and strong. (Expressive)

Riza: Hmm.... It is a remembrance for us to our heroes' struggle this country. (Representative)

Ami: Yeah, many of them became casualties of the war. (Representative)

Riza: I had an unforgettable experience there. (Expressive)

Ami: Really? What was it? (Directive)

Riza: When I was in Junior High School, my school held a program called "Keep our city clean and green!" (Representative)

Ami: What did you do? (Directive)

Riza: My schoolmates, my teachers, and I rallied in the monument area at 6 a.m and began to clean the area around the monument until it's clean and tidy. (Representative)

Ami: That's a very good program. (Expressive)

Riza: Yes, it was. We also planted some trees around it. (Representative)

This dialogue illustrates the use of several types of speech acts according to Searle (1976), namely assertive, expressive, and directive. Riza and Ami use assertive to convey historical facts and experiences related to the monument and the cleaning program they are doing. In addition, expressive appears when Ami shows admiration for the monument and appreciation for the school cleaning program. Directive speech acts also appear when Ami asks for further information from Riza, encouraging a more detailed response. This analysis supports Searle's theory that each type of speech act has a specific function in conversation, and that assertive and expressive are very effective in building appreciation and respect in the context of historical and experiential communication.

The dialogue above shows that the use of speech acts in the context of historical and experiential communication serves to build appreciation and respect for heroic and social values. Based on previous studies, for example in the study of speech acts in patriotic texts or conversations with the theme of nationalism, representative/assertive speech acts are often dominant in conveying historical facts or achievements of influential figures (Laongpol, 2020). This is in line with the dialogue between Riza and Ami, where assertiveness is used to provide information and convey views related to monuments as symbols of heroic sacrifice.

Sample 5, Dialogue 5: Task 1, page 140

Nadia: Who is your idol, Rima? (Directive)

Rima: My parents. (Representative) What about you? (Directive)

Nadia : BJ Habibie. (Representative)

I like him very much. (Expressive)

Rima: He is one of geniuses from Indonesia. He studied in Germany. (Representative)

Nadia: You're right. (Expressive)

Rima: He worked and stayed in Germany, (Representative)  
right? (Directive)

Nadia: He did. But he never forgets his country. He once made us proud for his achievement in making planes avowed by the world. (Representative)

Rima: He relinquished his good job in Germany to develop his own country. (Representative)

Nadia: He promised that he would share his knowledge to everyone needing it. (Representative)

Rina: Now, he seems to enjoy his retirement with family. (Representative)

Nadia: That's why I love him. (Expressive)

The dialogue between Nadia and Rima consists of various types of speech acts, especially representative and expressive, with some directive elements. Nadia and Rima use representative to convey their facts and views about BJ Habibie, including his sacrifice and dedication to Indonesia. Nadia uses expressive several times to show her strong feelings for Habibie, especially when she expresses her love and admiration for Habibie's contribution and patriotism. On the other hand, directives appear in the form of questions to invite responses or confirmation from the interlocutor. This dialogue not only describes admiration for the national figure but also reflects appreciation for BJ Habibie's patriotism and dedication to Indonesia.

The dialogue above, which uses Searle's speech act theory, supports the basic concept of Searle's (1976) theory on types of speech acts in social communication. Based on Searle's (1976) theory, speech acts are divided into several categories, namely expressive, assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative. Nadia and Rima's dialogue fits this division, because they use expressive to show feelings of admiration and love, representative to state facts about BJ Habibie, and directive to ask for or invite a response from the other person. This dialogue illustrates that various speech acts can be used simultaneously to enrich social interactions and emphasize values that are appreciated in the context of everyday communication (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019; Searle, 1976).

## CONCLUSIONS

There are two conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. First, the distribution of speech acts in the course book is still inadequate. This inadequacy may hinder learners' pragmatic development, particularly the ability of using speech acts



within various social contexts. Proportional use of all types of speech acts can help learner establish a good social relationship with people. Second, future coursebook development should consider proportional inclusion of all types of speech acts so that learners can gain optimized learning experience of using multiple speech acts in multiple contexts.

Furthermore, in order for students to comprehend and employ speech actions successfully, teachers must give them clear teaching and practice opportunities. This can assist students in developing their capacity to properly manage social interactions in addition to their linguistic skills. Furthermore, adding real-world examples of speech acts and authentic materials to the course book might improve students' comprehension and use of these language functions in various contexts. All things considered; students' language learning journeys can be much aided by a more thorough approach to teaching speech acts in course materials.

Future research in this field is needed to look at more comprehensively at the use of EFL course books for EFL learners' pragmatic development. Mainly, textbook evaluation of all grades at senior high school level. This study may offer insightful information about how to best design EFL course books to improve students' pragmatic abilities. Through an examination of the content and organization of these textbooks, teachers can modify their pedagogical approaches to more effectively assist students in enhancing their communicative skills. In the end, this can result in EFL learners becoming more proficient in the language and becoming more assured and capable English speakers. Furthermore, looking into how senior high school EFL course books contribute to pragmatic development may reveal areas where EFL instruction may be innovative and improved.

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