

Speech acts in Indonesian high school EFL textbooks: Representation & learning implications

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Abstract: This study was aimed to analyze the representation and characteristics of speech acts in Indonesian high school EFL textbooks, with two focuses: the representation of speech acts; and the characteristics of their presentation. Using qualitative method and critical discourse analysis, the data were taken from the textbooks of grade X by Widiati, Rohmah, and Furidah (2017; 2018) and grade XI by Bashir (2017). The researcher acted as an instrument, using qualitative descriptive analysis. The results of this study are as follows. *First*, the presentation of speech acts already exists in the textbooks, but it is inadequate, because there are only four: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, while there is no declarative type. In addition, the representation is also less varied. *Second*, the characteristics of speech acts presentation are adequate to facilitate understanding for students in developing their English competence. The speech acts are presented in the form of speaking skill materials and dialogue examples. This study underlines the need to improve the representation and presentation of functional speech acts in Indonesian high school EFL education.

Keywords: *speech acts, EFL textbooks, high school education in Indonesia*

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INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a very important role in learning (Hutchinson, & Torres, 1994; Joo *et al.*, 2017; Supriyadi, 2018), including English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in schools (Rahimi & Hassani, 2012; Abbasian & Biria, 2017). As one of the main sources of teaching, textbooks for language learning, not only present linguistic materials such as grammar and vocabulary (Gilmore, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012), but also become the main guide for students in understanding and learning various aspects or domains of language, for example related to speech acts that accompany them (Bloomer *et al.*, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). When talking about speech acts, it is actually part of the context content of the study of the linguistic domain, known as pragmatics, where in addition to speech acts there are two other aspects in it, namely implicature and politeness (Kasper, 2006).

As is known, in language studies, the position of pragmatics in language learning is very important, because it focuses on language use in real communicative contexts (LoCastro, 2013). Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies the use of language in practical situations, including how context, purpose, and social factors influence meaning

(Leech, 2016). In language learning, understanding pragmatics helps students understand not only the literal meaning of words and sentence structures, but also how appropriate ways of speaking in various social situations (Leech, 2016; Ninio & Snow, 1998).

In fact, the last few decades have seen a major shift in our understanding of the science of language learning and teaching, resulting in a renewed focus on the way language is learnt and taught. One of the most important incentives behind this shift in focus is the fundamental change from the previous theoretical framework, towards a more communicative point of view, which considers language to be more than just a set of isolated grammar rules, but rather connected and even context-bound to the situations and conditions that exist and accompany it (Moradi *et al.*, 2013).

Accurate and appropriate representations of speech acts in textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of how to use language effectively in various communicative situations (Torky, 2006; Brandl, 2008). For example, in an English textbook, a dialogue between two characters can provide a concrete example of how to politely make a request in English. For example, "Could you please pass me the salt?" In this example, students learn not only about proper grammatical structures, but also about the use of keywords such as "could you please" to express politeness in conveying requests. This kind of representation allows students to see how language is used in real contexts and practise their communication skills. Thus, textbooks are not only a learning tool, but also an important bridge between theoretical concepts and communicative practice in English language learning (Gilmore, 2007; Thornbury, 2016).

Likewise, in the context of language learning, whether in the second or foreign language category, textbooks play a very important role as the main source of learning. In the context of language learning, textbooks function as tools that provide the structure and direction needed to guide students in understanding the learning material as a whole (Ivić *et al.*, 2013; Ornstein, 1994), including in relation to the domain of pragmatics, including in the specific context of speech acts for example. From a pragmatics perspective, speech acts are the basic unit in language analysis, involving the social functions and communicative purposes of language (Austin, 1975). Therefore, accurate representation of speech acts in textbooks, will give students a better understanding of how to use language in various communicative situations (Nguyen, 2011).

Thus, textbooks that present speech acts appropriately, help students understand communicative conventions and social norms in English, thus enabling them to communicate effectively in real-life situations (Cutting, 2005). Therefore, in the context of English language learning in schools, textbooks are not only a source of materials, but also the main guide that helps students develop their communicative ability in English.

However, although English textbooks often present linguistic materials such as grammar and vocabulary, attention to speech act aspects is often lacking in these textbooks. This creates a gap in students' understanding of how to use language in different communicative situations. For example, in a textbook, a dialogue between a student and a teacher about a change in timetable may only provide information about the change without paying attention to how the message is conveyed politely and effectively. In the same context, a textbook may not provide concrete examples of how to express disagreement with

another person's opinion without offending them, or how to express sympathy or empathy for someone who is experiencing difficulties. Due to the lack of attention to speech acts in textbooks, students may not have an adequate understanding of the communicative conventions and social norms contained in English (Pérez-Hernández, 2019; Ton Nu & Murray, 2020). As a result, they may experience difficulties in communicating effectively in real-life situations, such as when interacting with friends, family, or in the community..

Many studies in various countries have highlighted the problem of lack of attention to aspects of speech acts in English textbooks for high school students. For example, a study conducted by Namaziandost *et al.* (2019), with the title "A survey of high schools English textbooks in terms of using varying types of speech acts". The results show that the types of assertive and declarative speech acts are the most and least used speech acts in the textbooks, respectively. In addition, the speech acts in the textbooks were not evenly distributed. The findings of this study can help material designers to include different types of speech acts in secondary school English textbooks to help EFL learners develop their communicative and pragmatic knowledge. Likewise, the research conducted by Jiang and Deng (2022) entitled "Pragmatic Analysis of EFL Textbooks: The Explicit Representation of Speech Acts in Senior High Textbooks in China", shows that speech acts are still underrepresented in the textbooks. The range of speech acts is rather limited, some very conventional speech acts are not included, and the distribution of speech acts across the textbooks is unpatterned and unjustified. Through this study, important insights were gained on how textbooks can better take speech act aspects into account to improve students' English learning around the world.

Meanwhile, similar research in the context of Indonesia, for example, research by oleh (Nurdiana, 2017). One of the findings of this study is that most of the language functions discussed in the textbook are directive and expressive. Another finding is the lack of meta-pragmatic information. For example, there is no clear information about the relationship between speakers, such as how close they feel to each other. Then there is research conducted by Maknun (2019), the results of which show that the speech acts found in the dialogue of English textbooks for grade X high school students are declarative as a locutionary act with the highest frequency, representative as an illocutionary act with the highest frequency, and knowing something as a perlocutionary act with the highest frequency. Based on the interview with the teacher, there is no specific material in the K13 curriculum that discusses speech acts (meaning and context) for grade X SMA. It depends on the teacher himself who improvises the material to give some examples related to speech acts.

All in all, these studies provide important insights into the challenges and potential for improvement in the presentation of speech acts in English textbooks in the Indonesian educational context. Therefore, there is a need for greater attention to speech acts in the preparation of textbooks, by presenting concrete examples and exercises that enable students to develop their understanding and skills in using English appropriately and effectively in various communicative situations.

Therefore, attention to speech acts in English textbooks in senior high schools in Indonesia has significant implications in language learning. Based on a pragmatics perspective, an understanding of social functions and communicative purposes in language

use is important (Austin, 1975). This is reinforced by communication theory, which highlights the need for clear and precise message delivery in ensuring accurate understanding (Schiavo, 2013; Ruben, 2016; Cornelissen, 2020). Meanwhile, language learning theory emphasises the need for relevant and effective presentation of learning materials to develop students' understanding of language use in various communicative situations (Ellis, 2005; Littlewood, 2014). In addition, sociolinguistic theory highlights the importance of understanding communicative conventions and social norms in language use (Berns, 2013; Rampton, 2019). Finally, communication skills theory emphasises the need for concrete and situational exercises in language learning to develop students' communication skills (Burlison, 2007). Through understanding these theories, we can strengthen the argument about the importance of attention to speech acts in the preparation of textbooks to ensure the development of effective communication skills for students.

Thus, a deep understanding of speech acts has enormous relevance in the context of EFL learning (El Hiani, 2015; Heidari *et al.*, 2020). Speech acts are the main key in acquiring effective communication skills in English (Cohen, 2005). In EFL learning, students need not only to master grammatical structures and vocabulary, but also to be able to apply the language appropriately in various communicative situations (Shumin, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003). Understanding the context and social norms associated with language use is crucial for students in developing good language competence (Martin-Beltrán, 2010; Richards, 2010). In a further spectrum, this will also be useful in relation to the world of work which requires multiple competencies of live skills (Agustina *et al.*, 2017), both knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Rabiman *et al.*, 2022), one of which is obtained through language understanding. Therefore, a good textbook should be systematically organised to cover multiple competencies and be easy for learners to understand (Yamtinah *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, not only teachers but also EFL textbooks need to give enough attention to speech act aspects in the learning process. The integration of speech act learning in the curriculum and learning materials will help students in developing their communication skills holistically (Vellenga, 2004; Goh & Burns, 2012), so that they can become more competent and confident language users in interacting with native English speakers as well as in real-world communication situations (Dai, 2023). Thus, it is important for EFL learning contexts to give adequate emphasis on the understanding and application of speech acts in the EFL learning process.

Based on this background, this research is focused on two main things. *First*, how is speech act representation in English textbooks for high school in Indonesia? The formulation of this problem includes an analysis of the types of speech acts represented in the textbooks, as well as an evaluation of the adequacy and diversity of these representations. This investigation aims to understand the extent to which EFL textbooks for high school in Indonesia represent various aspects of speech acts that are important in English communication. *Second*, what are the characteristics of speech act presentation in EFL textbooks for Indonesian high schools? The formulation of this problem involves analysing the way speech acts are presented in textbooks, including the format, order and method of information delivery. This exploration aims to understand whether the textbooks

give adequate emphasis to speech acts and whether the presentation of the information can facilitate good understanding for students in developing their English competence.

METHOD

This study applied qualitative descriptive approach, with a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Korstjens & Moser, 2017), which aims to examine the issues of representation and characteristics of speech acts contained in EFL textbooks for high school in Indonesia. The approach used is Critical Discourse Analysis, which is an analytical method used in language research to reveal the relationship between language and the various social contexts that accompany it (Blackledge, 2008; Catalano & Waugh, 2020).

The data of this study are sourced from EFL textbooks for high school grade X by Widiati *et al.* (2017; 2018) and grade XI by Bashir (2017). In this regard, this type of research belongs to the category of "library research" (Mann, 2015).

The instrument in this study is the researcher himself as a human instrument, as is one of the characteristics in the qualitative approach (Johnson *et al.*, 2007). As a human instrument, the researcher brings her perspective, experience, and background to the research process, and plays a critical role in determining how data are collected, managed, and interpreted (Knight & Ruddock, 2009). Therefore, self-awareness, reflection, and sensitivity to the role as a human instrument are important in ensuring the validity and reliability of research (Galleno & Liscano, 2013).

As for the data analysis technique is descriptive-qualitative, the model (Miles *et al.*, 2013), which in its application is carried out continuously, iteratively, and continuously during research activities, which includes three main things, namely, data reduction, data display (presentation), and conclusion drawing or verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of speech acts in EFL textbooks for high school in Indonesia. The substance of the study regarding the representation of speech acts in EFL textbooks for high school in Indonesia, includes an analysis of the types of speech acts represented in the textbooks, as well as an evaluation of the adequacy and diversity of these representations. As is known, there are five categories of speech acts that are commonly used in communication as affirmed by (Searle, 2002) namely speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

First, assertive speech acts refer to the type of speech used to state a fact or situation that is considered true by the speaker (Green, 2017). Assertive speech acts are often used to convey information, give judgements, or express beliefs (Labinaz & Sbisà, 2014). For example, when someone says "Today is Sunday". In everyday communication, an understanding of the concept of assertive speech acts helps in understanding the intent of statements made by others and strengthens clarity and trust in communication (Labinaz & Sbisà, 2014).

Second, directive speech acts refer to the type of speech used to give instructions, requests, or invitations to interlocutors to perform a certain action (Kaburise, 2012; Félix-

Brasdefer, 2014). It aims to direct or influence the interlocutor's behaviour. For example, when someone says "Please close the door". In everyday communication, understanding the concept of directive speech acts is important to create effective interactions and facilitate co-operation between individuals in achieving common goals (Schulz, 2007).

Third, commissive speech acts refer to the type of speech used to express commitment, promise, or intention to perform an action in the future (Bilbow, 2002). This speech act shows the willingness or desire to take responsibility for an action or activity in the future. For example, when someone says, "I promise to be on time". Understanding the concept of commissive speech acts is important in building trust and maintaining good interpersonal relationships, because these utterances reflect a person's readiness to fulfil commitments and carry out his promises.

Fourth, expressive speech acts refer to the type of speech used to express feelings, emotions, or evaluations of a situation or event (Cowie & Cornelius, 2003). These speech acts allow speakers to convey their subjective reactions to certain situations or experiences. For example, when someone says "I'm glad to see you". In everyday communication, an understanding of the concept of expressive speech acts helps in clarifying one's personal feelings and views, as well as facilitating a deeper emotional connection between individuals.

Fifth, declarative speech acts refer to the type of speech used to declare a change in the status or state of something, such as stating a statement, announcing a decision, or changing conditions with speech power (Cohen, 2019). It has the power to change reality by expressing something that is then considered true based on social norms or legitimate authority. For example, when someone says, "I declare this event officially open". In communication, understanding the concept of declarative speech acts is important because it allows speakers to produce change and regulate situations by utilising the power of the spoken word.

Based on the analysis of the high school EFL textbooks curriculum 2013 class X and XI, it shows the representation of illocutionary acts of four types of speech acts, from the five types that exist in Searle (2002) speech act framework namely: assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive and no declarative speech act content is found, as shown in the text examples in Figure 1 to 5.

Figure 1 shows the dialogue between Rahmi and Sinta. In the instruction section, it has been explicitly mentioned that the reader is asked to pay attention to the expressions of praise and reply. Both of these expressions are representations of expressive speech acts. This is shown in expressions such as: "what a beautiful skirt you are wearing", "That's wonderful", "Terrific", "This book is excellent". In accordance with the function of expressive speech acts, these utterances are used to express the speaker's subjective view of the interlocutor and at the same time as an attempt to maintain a good relationship with the interlocutor. The first expression, "what a beautiful skirt you are wearing", for example, is an expression used by Rahmi (the speaker) to praise the clothes worn by her interlocutor, Sinta.

Figure 1. Examples of representation of assertive, expressive and directive acts of speech

Task 1:
Read the dialog silently and carefully. Pay attention to the complimenting expressions and the responses.

Rahmi : Hello. How are things going on, Sinta?
Sinta : Hi. Good, and you?
Rahmi : I'm feeling great today. How was your weekend with your family in Batu?
Sinta : Excellent! We had a lovely time there. You should have gone there with us.
Rahmi : Really? Hey, what a beautiful skirt you are wearing. It matches your blouse.
Sinta : Thanks a lot. My sister bought it for me last month.
Rahmi : Wow! That's wonderful.
Sinta : Oh, Rahmi, can I ask you something?
Rahmi : Oh, sure. Please.
Sinta : Have you finished writing the book we discussed two months ago?
Rahmi : Yes. Come to my room. Look at this. What do you think?
Sinta : Terrific. I like the cover. Let me see the contents. This book is excellent. You really did a great job.
Rahmi : Thanks a lot. You've inspired me to do this.

Source: English Book Class X (Widiati *et al.*, 2017, p. 32)

According to the instructions at the beginning of the dialogue, this dialogue is intended to teach expressions of praise and reply. However, it turns out that in addition to expressive speech acts, this dialogue text also features representations of assertive speech acts represented by expressions such as "You should have gone there with us", "My sister bought it for me last month", and "You've inspired me to do this". This is certainly very common considering that these two types of speech acts are closely related in interpersonal communication. Expressive speech acts are used to express one's subjective feelings or emotions towards a situation, assertive speech acts are often used to convey facts or beliefs that are considered true by the speaker. The link lies in their ability to express themselves clearly and emphatically. In this dialogue, the link between these two types of speech acts can be seen, for example, in Sinta's expression: "Terrific. I like the cover. Let me see the contents. This book is excellent. You really did a great job" is an expression used by Sinta to praise her friend's achievement and also assertively convey her personal opinion regarding the book written by her friend and also her belief in her friend's ability. This shows that the use of expressive and assertive speech acts together allows individuals to build stronger relationships and better understand each other's feelings and beliefs in daily communication.

Furthermore, there are also representations of directive speech acts, such as in the expressions: "Come to my room", and "Look at this". These two expressions are used by the speaker to invite the interlocutor to do something, which in this case Rahmi invites Sinta to enter her room to show the book of her work.

Figure 2 shows an example of a conversation between a hotel guest and a hotel clerk. The dialogue begins with an opening greeting and a question from the hotel clerk that is intended or contains illocutionary power to offer help to the potential guest. The interlocutor responds with a greeting and a statement that the guest needs a room for the night. This brief and incomplete dialogue is enough to illustrate the illocutionary power of each statement uttered and that an understanding of grammatical rules and knowledge of vocabulary is not sufficient to understand a communication event without linking it to its full context. The

phrase "Can I help you", for example, cannot simply be interpreted as a question, but needs to be understood as an expression to offer help to the interlocutor.

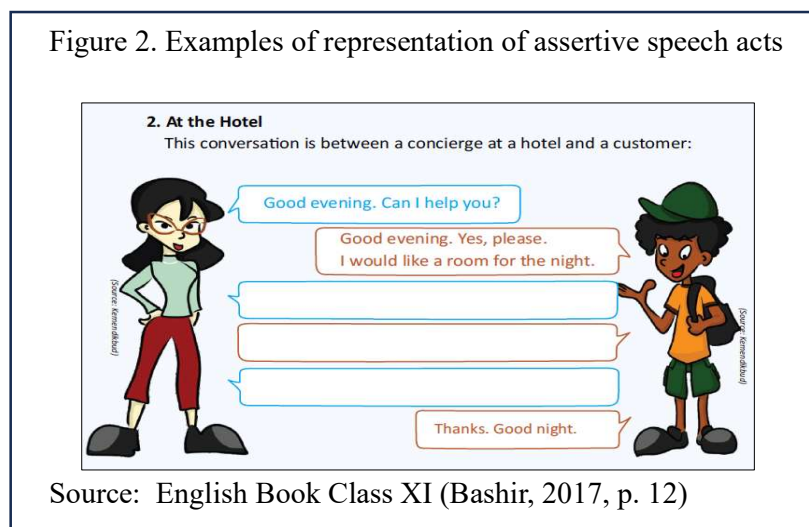


Figure 3 shows a conversation between a passenger and a ticket officer at a bus terminal. This dialogue shows the representation of assertive speech acts in the form of statements, such as: "I need to go to Jakarta", "This is Arjosari bus station, "It takes about 22 hours from here to Jakarta", and also suggestive expressions, such as: "You can get in a 'Trans Jakarta' bus, metro mini, bajaj, taxi as well as ojek, "You can ask the bus driver there." In addition, the dialogue also found representations of directive speech acts, namely: "Wait a moment, please".

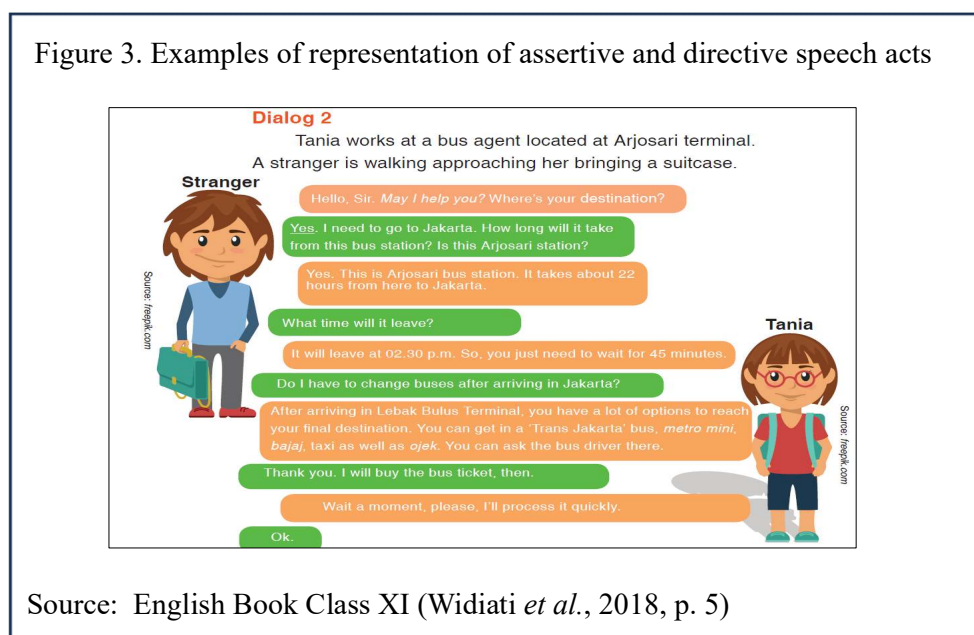


Figure 4. Examples of commissive speech act representations



Source: English Book Class X (Widiati *et al.*, 2018, p. 25)

Figure 4 shows a short dialogue between Mr. Luqman and Nyoman. The dialogue begins with Mr. Luqman's statement which contains a suggestion to Nyoman to offer a programme to improve the school environment. The statement was answered briefly by Nyoman by expressing approval of the suggestion. Mr. Luqman's short answer not only shows approval of the suggestion given by his interlocutor, but also shows another intention, namely campaigning.

Figure 5 shows a learning material that begins with instructions stating that students are asked to read notes about expressions for praising (complimenting), and then short notes about praising expressions and followed by 5 pictures containing short dialogues containing expressions used for praising along with with the answer. This expression of praise represents an expressive speech act, or a speech act expressing feelings, emotions and subjective opinions regarding a phenomenon. The picture also shows in a limited way the situation setting when the expression of praise is used.

Based on the data presented in figures 1 to 5 above, it can be said that the pragmatic content of speech acts is represented in high school EFL textbooks as intended. However, Richard in 2001 states as with the significance of textbooks which have been seen as "a key component in most language programs" (McGrath, 2013), it can be said that the representation of these speech acts is inadequate, especially related to the absence of declarative types of speech acts and also in terms of their variations. This will of course reduce the meaningfulness of the complete knowledge about speech acts that students should have.

Characteristics of presentation of speech Acts in EFL textbooks for high schools in Indonesia. The substance of the data and its discussion, related to this, includes an analysis of the way speech acts are presented in textbooks. This is important, to understand whether textbooks place sufficient emphasis on speech acts and whether the presentation of such information can facilitate good understanding for students in developing their English language competence.

Figure 5. Examples of expressive speech act representation

Task 3: Read the following notes about complementing expressions. After that perform the dialogs in the following that with your classmates.

Notes:

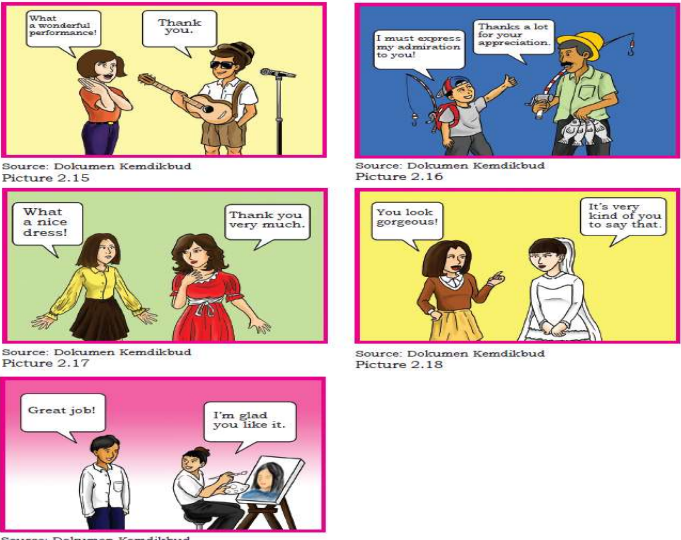
COMPLIMENTING

Compliment is an expression to appreciate or praise other people. Compliment is useful to give encouragement so that people will keep on doing their best and even improve their performance.

When to express compliment:

- On daily basis,
- When someone has done his/her best,
- When you visit someone's house for the first time,
- If you notice something new about someone's appearance.

Can you think of other situations when you need to compliment?



Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud
Picture 2.15

Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud
Picture 2.16

Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud
Picture 2.17

Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud
Picture 2.18

Source: Dokumen Kemdikbud
Picture 2.19

Source: English Book Class X (Widiati *et al.*, 2017, pp. 33-34)

Based on the results of the analysis of the three EFL textbooks for high schools in Indonesia, it shows that there is integration of pragmatic content, especially speech act content, in the teaching material presented, even though there are only four of the supposed five. There is one speech act, namely the declarative, which does not exist. The pragmatic content found in learning materials is mainly in the form of conversation examples. In general, it can be said that the pragmatic content covered in the material in this textbook is in accordance with the learning competencies to be achieved in each unit, although the variations are limited.

Regarding the integration of pragmatic content in this textbook, there is one thing that would be interesting to study further, namely related to the way the author represents this content. From the results of the analysis that has been carried out, pragmatic content is presented in the form of illocutionary speech acts, which are structured by presenting the form of lingual units, in the form of utterances that have certain linguistic functions, such

as greetings, thanking, congratulating, ordering, promising, praising, communing, refusing, offering, inviting, questioning, and so on.

These language functions appear in the form of instructions given in each assignment. Here is an example of the instructions found.

Task 1: Read text 1 carefully. Pay attention to the expressions used to congratulate people (in this case, Alif). Pay attention also to the responses.

Source: English Book Class X (Widiati *et al.*, 2017, p. 23)

This linguistic function is also shown explicitly as the linguistic content taught, especially in teaching speaking skills. Figure 6 is an example of material content that contains linguistic functions.

Figure 6. Examples of material content that contains linguistic functions

Responding to Suggestions		
Making Suggestions	Accepting Suggestions	Declining Suggestions
Let's go to movies.	Yes, let's go.	No, thank you. I do not feel like going.
Why don't you do your homework before going out?	Ok, I will.	Sorry, I think I will go out first and then do my homework.
How about going to Sam's place first and then to the supermarket?	Yes, let's go. It is a good idea.	No, Let's just go to the supermarket.
I think you should go and meet her.	Ok, if you say so.	Sorry, I can't. I have previous engagement.

Source: English Book Class X (Widiati *et al.*, 2017, p. 6)

Apart from that, this linguistic function appears implicitly as part of the expressions in the learning material in the form of dialogue, as shown in Figure 1 above. The integration of various variations of linguistic functions in the teaching material presented in textbooks, both in the form of speaking skills material and examples of dialogue, further strengthens the role of pragmatic content, including in the context of this study speech acts, as part of the material that must be taught to students. in order to achieve the general goal of language learning, namely to enable student participants to communicate in English accurately and acceptably.

CONCLUSION

Textbooks, as one of the main components in language learning practice, are required to accommodate all linguistic components needed to achieve the goals of learning practice, including EFL learning of course, namely making students have the ability to communicate in English well and acceptably according to the context of its use. Therefore, the existence

of pragmatic content in textbooks is an inevitable necessity. By mastering the concept of pragmatics in communicating, students will be able to use English to communicate according to the context of use and also the person they are speaking to correctly and appropriately/acceptably by their conversation partner.

Based on the analysis of EFL learning textbooks for high school level in Indonesia, two important conclusions are conveyed. First, information about speech acts is already in the textbook, but it is inadequate, because there are only four of the supposed five, namely speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive. However, there is no single type of declarative speech act. Apart from that, the representation is also less varied. shows that there is integration of pragmatic content in the form of speech act content which includes directive, assertive/representative, commissive and assertive speech acts, although still on a limited scale. The speech act content is displayed in the form of language functions which are generally integrated into the instructions for each task or as the main material for teaching certain functional content. This study shows the lack of quantity of pragmatic content in English textbooks. Therefore, it is highly recommended for textbook compilers and developers of English teaching materials to insert more pragmatic content in the teaching materials they prepare, without reducing the level of readability and also the quality of other linguistic content.

Second, related to the characteristics of the presentation of speech acts in the textbook, providing adequate emphasis on speech acts and whether the presentation of this information can facilitate good understanding for students in developing their English language competence. These speech acts are presented in a variety of ways, both in the form of speaking skills material and examples of dialogue. This research provides an in-depth understanding of the importance of better representation and more functional presentation of speech acts in the future context of high school EFL education in Indonesia.

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