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## Speech acts in English classroom: A case at a junior high school in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*Teachers' speech acts play a distinct role in teaching-learning in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The teacher transfers knowledge to the students and becomes a role model in students' interaction. This study aims to classify the kinds of representative speech acts expressed by teachers and students of the eighth grade at a junior high school in Indonesia. This discourse study implements a qualitative method using the observation technique. Collected from a natural pedagogical activity in the EFL classroom, the utterances were compared and analysed descriptively. The study revealed three speech acts: locution, illocution, and perlocution. Questioning and commanding adopted in 113 instances show that the teacher is aware of her/his role and has a higher position than the students. Moreover, speech acts impact EFL class, and they influence students' motivation and confidence in learning English through expressive and declarative speech acts.*

**Keywords:** *speech act; EFL; teaching and learning process; students' interaction*

### INTRODUCTION

In learning English, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the main components of mastering it. However, speaking appears intuitively the most significant as people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language (Penny, 1996). Speaking as a basic unit of language is a practical center of communication because they enable people to perform various functions, namely asserting, asserting, blaming, inferring, explaining, informing, informing, praising, and much more (Kusumo & Wardani, 2019). The speakers' intentions can be conquered properly by the speakers. Thus, several aspects should be considered. Speakers must understand the meaning of a speech as a whole, not only in terms of literal semantics but also the speakers' meaning from the pragmatics side (Goodman & Frank, 2016; Camp, 2011).

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Speech act phenomena happen everywhere, including pedagogical activities (Kurdghelashvili, 2015). Sometimes, some students and teachers face problems in the pedagogical process in the classroom. In her research, Nurani (2015) explained a puzzle in using speech acts in EFL classes. She argues that the implementation of speech acts in Indonesian EFL classes drives a debate caused by the improper practice of speech acts. Students may have different interpretations of simple words said by the teacher. A failure to use Illocutionary Strength Indicator (IFID) or decide to use direct or indirect speech measures in certain situations causes this to happen (Nurani, 2015). Culture gives various language styles used in producing utterances. Meanwhile, in Basra and Thoyyibah's (2017) study, speech acts distribution ascertains the teaching strategy and vice versa. It is suggested that English teachers assist students in attaining communicative skills to practice more directive speech acts. Meanwhile, Seifoori and Emadi (2015) found that Americans and Persians have various praising strategies. It is related to the way they see culture, the importance of social distance, status, and beliefs about how communication achieves in terms of politeness or directness.

Aside from the phenomena found in the classroom above, the study on teachers' speech acts, particularly in the EFL context, has much elaborated in different contexts. Some previous researchers focus on the speech acts used in some areas. Fathurrochman & Darmawan (2021), a teacher in MA Bilingual Muslimat NU Sidoarjo, uses the directive sentence mainly in the classroom since she believes enabling students to speak in English is necessary for learners of English as a foreign language. The teacher also delivers only 30,12% of utterances in the classroom interactions, which she also believes is essential to give students more options to speak in the class to enhance their willingness to talk in English.

Meanwhile, Siregar and Pulungan (2022) found that Command is the most regular of all the types of directive speech acts teachers conduct in EFL classroom interactions. Teachers apply this type to entice students' attention and obtain instructions during the teaching-learning process. Another case (Suryandani & Budasi, 2021) shows that the teachers' most regular type of directive speech act utilized by the teachers was question directive with occurrences of 185 utterances (46.95%). Teachers that use the question directive stimulate students to be interested in the world around them, improve their capabilities and perspectives toward science, and improve their speech communication and critical thinking.

Hence, the researchers are interested in identifying and analyzing the various speech acts used by the teacher and students of the eighth grade. The researchers conducted this study to analyze the speech acts implemented in EFL classroom conversation, including the speech acts types used by one of the English teachers in her classrooms and their functions.

**METHODS****Research design and data**

This study is classified as a discourse study. Brandmayr (2020) stated that discourse research is applied to explain group interaction as having some part

influence it. Moreover, this study implemented a descriptive qualitative method. A natural setting of interaction between teacher and students in the English classroom became the primary data to analyse. All students and teacher were involved since they were interacting with each other during the class. The researchers randomly selected the class to be studied so that the natural setting of the conversation in class could take place as usual. The researchers chose 8th-grade students because, at this grade, they conditionally have been connected, in terms of character, especially with their class teacher. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) claimed that a qualitative study is a study that examines the feature of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. Besides, Nunan (1992) also stated that the descriptive study could investigate the description of a person, an event, a group, or an instrument.

### **Research instrument**

The second source of data was the related literature. Besides, the researchers took the role of being the key instrument. This study also used the observation technique because the teaching and learning occurred naturally in the classroom. O'Leary (2020) considered that classroom observation with a qualitative approach consists of an open-ended, sequential recording of what observers see the form of field notes.

### **Data analysis procedures**

The data were examined through some steps. First, collect the data when the class was on going. The conversations occurring in the EFL classroom by the teacher and students became the foremost data. Next, analyze the data by recording the classroom activity between the teacher and students for three meetings as it was used for pre-test, test, and post-test activity, transcribing the audio-form data manually and comparing and analyzing the speech acts occurring in the classroom interactions by observing the conversations occurring in the EFL classroom. Lastly, examine the data by scrutinizing the linguistic behaviors of the teacher and students in a classroom context. The data were discussed through Searle's theory (1999).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following are the results of locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act in students' interaction with the eighth-grade students at a junior high school in Indonesia. The total data in this study was 213 utterances.

Table 1. The research findings

<b>Speech act type</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Directive	Questioning, asking and ordering, interrupting, inviting, prohibiting, motivating, suggesting, and reminding.	62
Representative	Giving information, announcing, stating, and clarifying.	17
Expressive	Greeting, praising, thanking, appreciating, apologizing, and hoping.	15
Commissive	Promising	4
Declarative	Prohibiting, excommunicating	2

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Based on Table 1, the researchers found 213 utterances and four varieties of speech acts performed by the English teacher in the pedagogical activity. The directive is the first type of speech act that the teacher offers. Questioning, asking and ordering, interrupting, inviting, prohibiting, motivating, suggesting, and reminding could be the indicator to identify the directive existence. Besides, the percentage of direct speech acts is 64% consisting of questioning (67 speech), commanding (46 speech), asking (8 speech), reminding (4 speech), interrupting (2 speech), inviting (2 speech), suggesting (2 speech), prohibiting (1 speech), and motivating (1 speech).

Furthermore, commissive appeared 4% with a total of 8 words. Promising became the commissive existence to identify. Representative speech acts appeared 17% in the frequency of 40 speeches. Then, 4 points of illocution recognize the representative; giving information, announcing, stating, and clarifying. Lastly, informing appeared 22 times, including declaring (8 speech), announcing (7 speech), and defining (3 speech).

The second last is an expressive speech act. This kind of speech act presented 32 total speeches with 15%. Six illocutionary points indicated the expressive speech act, such as greeting, praising, thanking, appreciating, apologizing, and hoping. Greeting appeared the most (8 speech), praising (7 speech), thanking (5 speech), appreciating (4 speech), apologizing (3 speech), and hoping (5 speech). Lastly, declarative has the least words in pedagogical activity. It is only 2% or about 2 or 3 words. One of them is prohibiting expression.

Based on the findings, an English teacher and students performed four varieties of speech acts in pedagogical activities, namely directives, representatives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Searle (1999) emphasizes speech acts into these types. Directives appeared as the most prevailing speech acts used by the teacher since the teacher frequently requested the students to do something during the pedagogical activity. It matches the concept of directive speech acts regarded as getting hearers to initiate some actions for speakers. Meanwhile, declarative was the least commonly used speech act produced by the teacher during the study. The following explanation will describe the findings in detail using the Speech Acts Classification of Austin and Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts Classification.

Yule (1996) stated that pragmatics discusses the relationship between linguistic and the user's form. In other words, the relationship of an utterance is to understand the formation and get the utterance's purposes. Pragmatic is also to discover people's meaning, purpose, and type of speech act (Santoso et al., 2014). In terms, semantics consists of linguistic semantics, the semantics of logicians, and general semantics (Cosieru & Geckeler, 1974). The relevant use in this study is linguistic semantics, which is concerned with all kinds of linguistics meaning, including grammatical purpose (Frawley, 2013). In pragmatics, language use is analyzed in speech acts (McCarthy, 1991). John Langshaw Austin, the British philosopher, was the first person to expand the theory of speech acts. Austin (1975) stated that speech acts are divided into three:

### **Locution**

One of the acts of saying is the locutionary act (Austin, 1975:92). Saying something has different senses and causes its analysis should proceed further. It also distinguishes the act of phatic, phonetic, and rhetic (Moltmann, 2017). Besides, Cruse (2000) defines locutionary act as an act where the speaker performs speech containing certain noises, certain words in satisfied construction, and speech with a certain sense and a specific reference. The locution results in interaction learning of eighth-grade students are directive and imperative speech acts. Briefly, locutionary act is the original form of words used by the speakers and directly uttered.

### **Illocution**

Illocutionary acts are speech acts not only to declare something but also to do something, and speech act illocution depends mainly on the context (Austin, 1975; Basra & Thoyyibah, 2017; Searle, 1976). Austin in Oishi (2020) distinguishes illocutionary acts based on the varieties of effects that they cause and defines five classes: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. Meanwhile, Cruse (2000) delivers several types of illocutionary acts: bequeathing, promising, and ordering. Although known as ordinary language philosophy, Austin (1975) was very careful of any simple classification of locutionary meaning with 'use'. However, he also avoided classifying all "uses of language" with illocutionary acts.

### **Perlocution**

Perlocution is a speech that has an effect caused by the speaker's utterance to the partner's utterance (Austin, 1975; Kurzon, 1998). It is deemed as an act employed to produce an additional influence for the hearer. Besides, the common examples of perlocutionary acts are persuading someone to do something or getting them to believe in something (Cruse, 2000). Moreover, this act has a social function in the utterance and feedback by the listener, and it is part of a response to what the speaker says.

The difference between Locution, Illocution, and Perlocution is in what to say, the purpose, and the effect of what the speaker says (Cutting in Widya, 2017). A speaker produces an act of locution or speech by uttering a sentence; the cat bears speech called an illocutionary act, and the effect of its speech on the listener is called an act of perlocution (Sadock, 2008). People can do a single utterance with more than one action through speech acts, and people can make requests, orders, apologies, and promises (Kurdghelashvili, 2015). Besides, Aitchison (2003) describes speech acts as word sequences that behave like actions. Speakers often try to accomplish some outcomes with those terms. Moreover, those effects might have been achieved by an alternative process.

The act of speaking is a theory that analyzes the consequences of speech on the relationship between the speaker and the listener's behavior (Hirsch, 1996). Inspired by Austin's theory about speech acts, various scholars expanded their taxonomy of speech acts classification. Oluremi (2016), for instance, revealed that Austin's speech acts classifications involve verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositive force. Nonetheless, one of

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the famous classifications comes from Searle's work (1999), a prominent American philosopher who classified five types of illocutionary acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Meanwhile, Yule (1996) believed that speech acts are frequently correlated with the term illocutionary acts. Speech acts and illocutionary acts have the identical concept that the communicative force is back the production of a response.

Table 2. The Searle's taxonomy of speech acts classification

Speech act type	Direction of fit	S = Speaker; X = Situation
Declarative	Words change the world	S causes X
Representative	Make words fit the world	S believes X
Expressive	Make words fit the world	S feels X
Directive	Make the world fit words	S wants X
Commissive	Make the world fit words	S intends X

### Locutionary act

The locution results in interaction learning of eighth-grade students are directive and imperative speech acts.

#### **Directive**

A directive is the most eminent rank recurrence since, in classroom discussion, the English teacher uses much guidance for the students to make a special assignment, such as asking the students to do the task, collecting the assignment, opening the textbook, or erasing the whiteboard.

#### **Excerpt 1:**

(1) Student : "Ya Bu, saya akan menyampaikan hasil diskusinya."  
(Yes Mrs., I will present the results of the discussion)

Data (1) stated by a speaker (student) in the eighth-grade level against interlocutors, namely the teacher functions as providing. It responds to the teacher's question to students to present what has been discussed in the course. The pattern used in this function is the future form: will + verb 1. Speech spoken by the student above has a purpose in providing information to the teacher. Thus, that expression in which the student responded to the teacher's question can be categorized as a locutionary act.

#### **Excerpt 2:**

(2) Teacher : "Ok, before our lesson is started, *ada yang gak masuk gak hari ini?*" (Ok, before our lesson is started, are there any students absent?)

Statement (2) above shows the locution question form expressed by the teacher to eighth-grade students. This activity occurred at the beginning of the lesson, and the teacher only wanted to make sure whether there were students who were not present. Speech data (2) is intended for the speaker to ask against the interlocutor; thus, that expression can be categorized as a locutionary act.

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### **Imperative**

#### **Excerpt 3:**

- (3) Teacher : “*Silahkan Aris mempresentasikan tugas kamu di depan teman-teman*” (Come on please, Aris to present your task in front of your friends).  
Aris : “*Ya Bu*”. (Yes, Mrs.).

Speech "Come on, please, Aris!" In the data (3) are localized forms of the command invitation. The expression includes a distinct purpose as a command to present his work in front of the classroom. It is created using the imperative form: verb 1 + object/adverb. That is the fundamental pattern for delivering a commanding function.

### **Illocutionary acts**

Based on the research, speech act in eighth-grade class learning interactions was representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative.

#### **Representative**

Representative is a set of illocutionary acts emphasizing those kinds of speech acts that affirm what the speaker considers to be the case (Kalisz, 1989). The representative includes a statement of truths, assertions, completion, and description.

#### **Excerpt 4:**

- (4) Student: “*Kami akan mempresentasikan hasil tugas kami*”.  
(We would like to present the result of our task).

Speech (4) is a reported utterance. Speech data (4) is intended for the speaker to show his/her intention to speak up. In this speech, the speaker reviews the speech act by discussing, presenting, and reporting it in front of the class. Thus, that expression can be categorized as an illocutionary act.

#### **Directive**

#### **Excerpt 5:**

- (5) Student: “*Bu, tolong koreksi tugas kami. Apakah sudah betul?*”  
(Mrs., please check our task. Is it correct?).

Speech (5) is an instructing utterance. In the speech, the speaker (student) asked the speech partner (teacher) to check the group assignments that he had finished. The pattern used in “Mrs, please check our task” is a request form: Please + verb 1. Speech spoke by the student above aims to gain information from the teacher. Thus, that expression in which the student asked for the teacher’s opinion can be categorized as an illocutionary act.

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### **Expressive**

Expressive acts focus on the remarks of the speaker's feelings or attitude toward a distinct situation (Searle, 1976). Based on the research findings, expressive placed the third rank of the most frequently found in classroom communication in the English pedagogical activity. There are several kinds of expressive functions obtained from the data. One of them is complimenting.

#### **Excerpt 6:**

(6) Teacher : "*Sepertinya presentasi kamu bagus*" (Your presentation is good).

In this speech, the speakers praised the speech partner because his/her presentation was good. Speaker expressed speech acts praising, "I think your presentation is good". In a classroom situation, it is commonly found when students finish their tasks and get checked by teachers.

### **Commissive**

Commissive illocutionary speech acts are speech acts involving the speaker in several upcoming actions (Searle, 1976). In this study, offering, promising, and granting belong to commissive. The offering was the most practiced commissives used by the teacher during the English pedagogical activity. It is delivered to ask someone if they desire to do or own something. The commissive illocutionary expressions in this study can be elaborated as follows:

#### **Excerpt 7:**

(7) Student : "*Bu, boleh izin ke WC? sebentar kok Mrs.!*" (Mrs., may I ask permission to go to the toilet? Just a moment please!).

Student expression in the excerpt above shows that the student performed an act of polite requesting. In showing the act, she implemented an interrogative mood ("May I....?"). This case is the same as the case of an offering. In the case of requesting, however, it is the speech partner who undertakes the action.

Besides, speech (7) is an act of promise. In this speech, the speaker (student) promised the speech partner (teacher) to ask for permission to leave the classroom for only a short time ("just a moment, please!"). Thus, it belongs to the function of promising.

### **Declarative**

Declarative illocutionary speech is speech in which successful performance will lead to a good correspondence between proposition and reality (Searle, 1976).

**Excerpt 8:**

(8) Teacher : "*Bagaimana pekerjaan tugas grup yang lain?*" (How have the other groups been? (want to replace the material displayed on the LCD).

Student : "*Ya Bu, sudah siap*". (Yes, Mrs., ready).

The other students: "*Belum Bu, sebentar lagi*". (No, Mrs., wait for a little longer).

Speech (8) is a prohibiting speech. In this speech, the speaker (another student) prohibited that the material should not be replaced first because the speaker had not finished recording it. Speakers expressed speech acts prohibiting by saying, "No, Mrs., Just wait a little longer".

**Perlocution**

Based on the study of the learning process of the eighth-grade students, the researchers found some features of perlocution acts, as follows:

**Irony**

The irony is rhetoric or a stylistic form of speech. Conceptually, this definition is focused on two criteria: (1) stating the contrary of what you intend and (2) stating something distinctive from what you intend (Haverkate, 1990).

**Excerpt 9:**

(9) Teacher : "*Anak-anak, mengapa suara mereka sangat kecil?*" (Children, how come their voices are slow?)

Speech data (9) appeared when the teacher was explaining the material to the eighth-grade students. Speech in data (9) contains a locus of other student information. The illocution in the speech data is in the form of an insinuation to silence immediately because the situation was noisy. Perlocution from eighth-grade students is calm and does not make noise.

**Understanding**

**Excerpt 10:**

(10) Teacher : "*Mengapa kamu tidak masuk kemarin?* (Why didn't you come yesterday?).

Student : "*Ayahku sakit, Bu*". (My father is sick, Mrs).

Utterance (10) was said by the teacher to eighth-grade students when a student attended the class. Utterance (10) contains a locus of information for other students. The focus is to apologize for not attending school so that the teacher understands it.

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### **Submission**

#### **Excerpt 11:**

(11) Teacher : "*Ya, silahkan lanjutkan! Opini pertama akan dibacakan oleh Ida*". (Yes, go ahead! The first opinion will be read by Ida).

Data narration (11) happened when the teacher told Ida to express their group's opinion. Speech locus (11) is the teacher informed Ida related to the discussion that will be presented. Illocutionary speech in data (11) is in the form of instructions given by the teacher to Ida. Perlocution from the speech is Ida immediately expressed their group's opinion.

### **Convincing**

#### **Excerpt 12:**

(12) Student : "*Recount text lebih menjelaskan ke pengalaman kita di masa lalu dan bersifat nyata, berbeda dengan narrative.*" (Recount text explains more of our experiences in the past and is different from the narrative).

Next, the speech data (26) appeared when the learning in the classroom was in progress. The questioner demanded answers delivered by students in front. Speech data locus (26) is in the form of information on the questioner. The illusion of speech is maintaining the answers given by students who present to other students. Data (26) contains perlocution.

There are four types of speech acts occurring in the English pedagogical activity. Speech directive actions have the most percentage among other varieties of speech acts committed by teachers. It is indicated by the frequency of directive speech acts which has 133 total utterances with a portion of around 62% of the data.

Then, it is followed by representatives of 40 utterances with a percentage of about 17% of the data. Thus, representative speech acts stand in place of the two varieties of speech acts applied by teachers. The next is expressive speech acts with a total of 32 teacher utterances. The percentage of expressive speech acts is around 15% of the data. Therefore, teachers must express their feelings during the teaching process to present certain functions of utterance.

Meanwhile, the commissive recognized only one illocutionary point that was promising and presented only about eight utterances. Besides, the percentage was about 4% out of the data. Then, the teachers did not perform the declaration during the English pedagogical activity. The last one is declarative. The percentage of declarative was only 2% of all. Declarative classification is less than other classifications since the conversation between the students and the teacher frequently used locutionary and illocutionary acts to express their feeling and attitude in the English pedagogical activity.

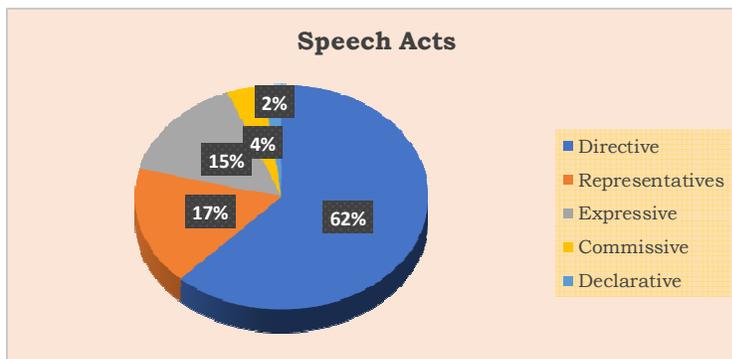


Figure 1. Speech acts occurring in the English pedagogical activity

Based on the results above, speech acts could affect teaching and learning in the classroom and the effectiveness of communication between the teacher and students. The observation results also showed that the direct speech act mostly uttered by the teacher influenced the students in getting the essence of the utterance. It is easier for students to receive what the teacher says using direct speech acts than indirect utterances. Hansen (2008) supported that statement.

Besides, it needs students' ability to understand the context and indirect speech act between the structure and the meaning. Paltridge (2006) revealed that second language learners frequently face difficulties identifying whether requested or ordered to do something. On the other hand, Yule (1996) stated that indirect speech acts correlate with someone's politeness rather than a direct speech act. Factors such as culture, experience, and background knowledge, become one reason students fail to get their teachers' implied meaning.

Another result showed that declarative and interrogative provided an implied meaning. Furthermore, declarative and interrogative made the interaction between the teacher and students get closer in the ongoing class. For example, students used polite words when asking their teacher to check the assignment. In this case, students added the word "please" to modify explicit politeness when speaking to their teacher.

Another expressive speech act could also influence students' motivation to interact with their teacher in the EFL class. When the teacher said, "I think your presentation is good", the students would be confident, happy, or motivated. Another example of submission, such as "go ahead" is a simple phrase uttered by the teacher. However, it signs the affirmation that the teacher was pleased to let the students speak. Finally, the students will consider that they receive more attention from their teacher during the EFL class.

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To sum up, the close interaction between the teacher and the students in pedagogical activity shall improve the students' achievement in EFL class. The relationship between the teacher and the students is crucial (Zulianti & Febriyanti, 2018) since that close relationship will lead students to gain higher-level achievement in EFL learning (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, n.d.).

**CONCLUSION**

This study is focused on the pragmatic review of speech acts performed by the English teacher and students in the English pedagogical activity to recognize speech acts used in classroom discussion. The study was carried out naturally in the classroom by observing conversations during teaching and learning activities. The researchers conclude that three varieties of speech acts were used on various occasions by both the teacher and the students in the learning interactions of the eighth-grade students at a junior high school in Indonesia. Specifically, locutionary includes directive and imperative; illocutionary covers representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative; and perlocutionary includes forms of irony, understanding, submission, and convincing.

In the teaching-learning activity, directive classification was performed by the teacher to get the students to engage in some actions. Questioning and commanding adopted in 113 instances became the most prevailing directive the teacher and the students produced. Their repeated use means that the teacher realizes her/his role as a teacher; more convincing than the students, more convincing than the students. In such a restricted context as a classroom setting, it is prevalent that the teacher status is higher than the students as the relation between them is naturally asymmetrical. Through directive, the teacher used his/her power over the students. Finally, the researchers expect that speech act study in eighth-grade student learning interactions could contribute to teachers and students in general, and other future studies in particular.

**AUTHOR STATEMENT**

**Didin Nuruddin Hidayat:** Conceptualization, writing the introduction, methodology, results and discussion, editing, corresponding author. **Fadhilah:** Data collection, data management, data analysis, writing abstract and conclusion, supporting results writing. **Yudi Septiawan:** Reference management software, proofreading, refining the overall manuscript.

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