# EXPLORING THE USE OF SPEECH ACTS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING INTERACTION

**ADILAH APRILYA**
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**2025**

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## A Thesis

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education**


By:

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING**
**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI**
**K. H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN**


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## MOTTO

"…What you love may not be good for you and what you dislike may be full of wisdom. Allah knows what is best for you, and you do not".

— (QS. Al-Baqarah, 2:216)

"Don't stop, just go. Keep going till the end".

— (EXO – 3.6.5)

"Willingness brings hope, courage guides the journey, and prayers protect every step".

— (The Writer)

## ABSTRACT

Speech acts are one of the important components that play a role in learning. One of them is to encourage students' participation in class. This study analyzes the use of speech by teachers and the challenges faced in using it to encourage students' participation. This study is based on several theories, which includes speech acts theory by Searle (1979), students' participation theory by Muller-Khun et al. (2021), sociolinguistics theory by Holmes (2013), the theory of conversational inference by Gumperz (1982), and the theory of Communicative competence by Canale & Swain (1980). The study was conducted using a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observations conducted in 7$^{th}$ grade with 32 students and through semi-structured interviews with a 7$^{th}$ grade English teacher. Then, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This study found that in encouraging student participation in class, the teacher used four types of speech acts, namely directives for classroom management, expressives to express teacher's feelings, representatives to convey information about learning, and declarations to state a condition and give consequences. In addition, two challenges were also found in its use, namely language barriers and student understanding, as well as differences in student ability levels.


***Keywords:*** Speech acts, Students' Participation, Challenges, English learning.

## ABSTRAK

Speech acts salah satu komponen penting yang memainkan peran penting dalam berjalannya pembelajaran. Salah satunya adalah untuk mendorong partisipasi siswa di kelas. Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan speech oleh guru dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam penggunaanya untuk mendorong partisipasi siswa. Penelitian ini berdasarkan teori speech acts by John Searle (1979), teori students' participation by Muller-Khun etc al. (2021), teori sociolinguistics by Holmes (2013), teori conversational inference by Gumperz (1982), dan teori Communicative competence by Canale & Swain (1980). Penelitian dilakukan menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan case study. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi yang dilakukan di kelas 7 dengan 32 siswa dan melalui semi-structure interview terhadap seorang guru bahasa Inggris kelas 7. Kemudian, data dianalisis dengan thematic analysis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dalam mendorong partisipasi siswa di kelas, guru menggunakan empat jenis speech act yaitu Directives untuk manajemen kelas, Expressives untuk mengungkapkan perasaan, Representatives untuk menyampaikan suatu informasi, dan Declarations untuk menyatakan suatu kondisi dan memberikan konsekuensi. Selain itu, juga ditemukan dua tantangan dalam penggunaanya yaitu hambatan bahasa dan pemahaman siswa, serta perbedaan tingkat kemampuan siswa.



***Kata kunci:*** Speech acts, partisipasi siswa, tantangan, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

## PREFACE

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# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of Study

Speech acts in learning interaction are one component that plays an important role in building an effective learning atmosphere. This is because speech acts play a role in expressing thinking, effective communication, and language proficiency (Pérez-Hernández, 2020). According to Searle (1979), speech acts refer to actions in communication which include declarations, representative, expressive, directives, and commissives. In the learning process, speech acts are used to transfer learning information and build co-construction of social actions (Taguchi, 2019). Co-construction of social actions is a colaborative process that involves social interaction and awareness to achieve shared understanding in leaning (Reusser & Pauli, 2015). Co-construction itself can be formed through language in various contexts including peer interaction, problem solving, and learning communities. Speech acts in co-construction act as a facility for interaction. This function is very important in the context of English learning, because speech acts not only transfer knowledge but also encourage active students' participation.

Based on this, English learning interactions that effectively utilize speech acts will have a positive impact on student participation in class. Effective communication using directive speech acts such as command to ask students to open books, to organize assignments, to motivate engagement, and build commitment will create interactive, comfortable and positive classroom environment. According to Omar (2020), interactive classroom environtment can increase students' academic achievement, self-confidence, and participation. Furthermore, speech acts that facilitate co-construction can foster a collaborative and supportive atmosphere to make students feel they have opportunities to express their ideas, solve their problems, and engage in meaningful discussions.

Speech acts in English learning interactions are related to students' participation. With the use of a variety of speech acts, teachers and students get meaningful exchanges that encourage communication, critical thinking, and collaboration. The effective use of speech acts can create an inclusive learning environment where students feel supported so that they are encourage to contribute in learning activites. As according to Langman and Hansen-Thomas (2017), interactive learning environment that use speech acts can increase students' engagement and their learning abilities such as in using English effectively in real-life context. Thus, speech acts and studets' participation are related in the importance of creating effective communication in the classroom.

Moreover, speech acts play significant role in develop students' participation. According to Zulianti (2018) speech acts have some implication in politeness, classroom atmosphere, students' motivation, and build a good relationship between teacher-students. Then Hidayat et. al. (2022) states speech acts have an impact in the EFL classroom, especially in students' motivation, and students' self-confidence. Good relationship between teacher and student, which is formed through the use of speech acts, is important to increase students' motivation and leaning outcomes (Suryani, 2018; Soares & Da Luz, 2015). Good relationship between teacher and students make them comfortable to paticipate dan express their opinions. This is in line with the use of speech acts in learning interaction such as to guide discourse, ensure students can express their ideas, respond to questions, and engage in meaningful dialogue (Halenko & Wang, 2022). Therefore, this research, by exploring the specific use of speech acts by teachers and students in junior high school English learning interactions, aims to contribute valuable insights for educational practices. Understanding how these linguistic actions shape classroom dynamics can inform teacher training programs, leading to more effective communication strategies that foster active student participation, enhance motivation, and build a more conducive learning environment in English language classrooms.

In this research, the title "Exploring the Use of Speech Acts in Junior High School Students' English Learning Interaction", was based on several reasons. This research will be conducted in school with limited technology facitilies. With limited facilites of technology in english learning make the teachers must try harder to use speech acts to encourage students' participation. Additionally, this study also will focus on 7th grade students. This is because they are still in the transition phase from elementary school to junior high school. In this phase students in a step of adaptation. Apart from that, they still shy to participate in learning such as ask a questions and expressing their ideas, so it is important for teachers to encourage them to actively participate in learning interaction.

Although previous research has explored the role of speech acts in creating effective communication and increasing interaction in the classroom there is still limited research that focuses specifically on the application of speech acts in the context of junior high school English learning interactions to encourage student participation. Other previous research only emphasizes the importance of the interactive environment but does not discuss in detail how types of speech acts such as directive, expressive, and commissive, declaration, and representative used by teachers and students to increase engagement in English learning. Besides, other research highlights the social impact and level of motivation of the use of speech acts, but does not adequately discuss the impact in the dynamics of junior high school classes, where this class is a phase of students in transition and critical development. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the utilization of speech acts in junior high school students' English learning interactions and their role in encouraging students' participation.

## 1.2 Formulation of the Problems

This research provides two research questions:

1. How are the speech acts used by English teacher in 7th grade students' English learning interaction?
2. What are the challenges in using speech acts to encourage students' participation?

## 1.3 Aims of the Study

This research has two aims:

1. To analyze the use of speech acts by teachers during the English learning process at junior high school.
2. To find out the teacher's challenges in using speech acts to encourage students' participation.

## 1.4 Operational Definition

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Speech acts | : | Speech acts are action performance through utterence (Searle, as cited in Yule, 1996). |
| 2. Learning interaction | : | Learning interaction refers to interaction between student-student, student-teacher, and student-content in the learning process (Razali et al., 2020). |
| 3. Students' participation | : | Students' participation refers to active participation of students in the process of learning both individually and groups (Hidayah et al., 2022). |

## 1.5 Significance of the Research

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Theoretical significance | : | This research will contribute to the theory of speech acts by John Searle (1979). |
| 2. Empirical significance | : | This study will provide empirical insight about the using of speech acts to encourage students' participation. |
| 3. Practical significance | : | This research provides knowledge for English language education study program students and prospective English teachers in using speech acts to encourage students' participation in class. |

# CHAPTER V
# CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Summary of the Findings

Based on the findings and discussions, this study found that teacher use four types of speech acts to encourage students' participation, which include directives, representatives, and declarations. Directives speech acts are used by the teacher to manage the class, which includes controlling activities, organizing learning, and ensuring students' involvement in the class. Then, expressives speech acts are used to express the teacher's feelings towards a condition, which includes giving praise, giving reprimands, and other emotional states. Next, representatives speech acts are used by teacher to conveying information related to learning such as to address students' needs and provide moral support. The last, declarations are used to state a situation and condition in the classroom, which can be in the form of giving consequences or punishments to students and conveying time conditions related to learning that can make students have an understanding of their responsibilities and bounderies as students.

The use of speech acts also has several challenges faced by the teacher. The first challenges is students' language and comprehension barriers. This is because English is a foreign language that has diffferent vocabulary, pronounciation, and meaning, so that there is the potential for students' misundertanding in capturing the meaning of speech acts delivered by the teacher. The second challenge is students' ability level. Students with low individual English skill will difficult in interpret, respond to instuction, and explanations given by the teacher. Then, to overcome this challenges, the teacher applies a strategy, namely translating (code-switching) the sentences she conveys into Indonesian, so that students can understand what the teacher is saying and at the same time learn new vocabulary.

## 5.2 Recommendation

The researcher realizes that this study still has weakness and requires further development. Due to the absence of the use of commisive speech acts in the findings, the researcher suggests that future research investigate the reasons for their absence and explore their potential role in classroom interactions. Then, the researcher suggests broader research to discuss the role of code-switching strategies in addressing the challenges of students' understanding related to the use of speech acts by teachers in classroom, as well as their role in developing students' understanding and abilities in English. In addition, the focus of this study is still as a certain grade level. Therefore, the future research can be expanded to various educational levels to identify and compare the use of speech acts and the challenges faced in their used.

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