Indonesian Journal of Innovation Studies

Vol. 18 (2022): April 2022
Article type: (Innovation in Social Science)

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ISSN (ONLINE) 2598-9936

INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION STUDIES

UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SIDOARJO

PUBLISHED BY

SCAN ME

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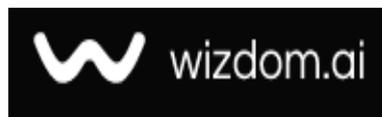How to submit to this journal (link)

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A Study on the Use of Speech Acts

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Abstract. In this study, it was tried to show by which strategies 150 participants continuing their education in Preschool Teacher Education Program carry out the acts of apologizing, complaining, refusing, and thanking. Data was collected through content analysis of the short memories that participants wrote. Accordingly, ten apology, six refusal and six thanking strategies were determined. While the participants generally express the acts of thanking, apologizing and refusing explicitly, they mostly perform the act of complaining implicitly. The research findings are suggested being verified and expanded by the other studies made on the speech acts.

Keywords: Speech act; apologizing; complaining; refusing; thanking, relationship, language

Introduction

Speech acts take part outside the language dimension of communication. People are required both to acquire the language and to have the knowledge to use the language they acquired in order to communicate. The appropriate use of the speech act acquired through the experiences within the culture is extremely important in the embodiment of the social relationships. In some cases, to determine what kind of speech acts are used by which strategies in Turkish, will provide some conveniences in teaching Turkish as a native language and foreign language.

The Speech Act usually dealt with in foreign language teaching research, is emphasized in that it reflects usage problems faced by people of different cultures. However, describing what kind of speechact strategies are used in a language itself is also significant. The findings of such studies can prove an understanding of communication conflicts in the same culture. Therefore, what kind of speech act strategies used by a group of teacher candidates while performing apologizing, complaining, refusing andthanking acts are tried to be determined in this study.

1. The Speech Act Theory

The speech act theory is a theory of language put forward by Austin (2009) and his student Searle (2000). Contrary to linguistics and semantics restricting their work to the linguistic structures created, the speech act theory also takes into account the non-linguistic communication situations. Austin (2009) in this regard focuses on the relationship between language and act. According to this, while using the language people do not produce only an isolated series of sentences, but also show an action. In other words, by using the language they either do something or make others do something. Thanking, requesting, promising and others (Marquez Reiter, 2000).

Searle (2000) highlights that speech act is presented in real language use situations. Accordingly, he says that the basic assumption on the speech act theory should be that the smallest unit in human communication is the implementation of certain types of acts. According to Bachman (1990), these acts in communication cases are related to the functional dimensions of language. As opposed to morphological, syntactic and rhetorical dimensions regarding organization of the language structures, pragmatic dimension are related to producing and understanding speech acts. These dimensions function reciprocally in

communication.

Austin makes a distinction associated with the speech acts as constatives and performatives. Constatives used to describe an incident or a situation, are statements. Constatives can be qualified as true/false values. However, contstatives are used to perform a task and cannot be characterized as true or false (Coulthard, 1985). Austin and Searle felt particularly attracted to performatives.

Austin (2009) indicates that three acts can occur simultaneously while performing a statement. One of these is the locutionary act. This describes only the action of *saying* something. Illocutionary act, on the other hand, is to do something by saying something. Perlocutionary act is related to the conclusion of something said. It tells the effect left on the hearer.

Austin (2009) collects the performatives under five headings. Searle (2000) reviews this classification and makes some changes. Accordingly, *directives* (ordering requesting, forbidding)aimed at leading the hearer to do something, *declarations (*resigning, appointing) that aim to create a change, *commissives* (promising) showing that the speaker undertakes to do something by expressing an intention, *expressives* (apologizing, celebrating) reveal the speaker's state of mind with regard to a situation, *assertives* (claiming, swearing) referring to the accuracy of what is said are the five types of speech act that Searle set up.

The following conditions must be provided for performatives' not functioning imperfectly:

1. There should be a negotiated process that being a negotiated influence on it. This process is to befulfilled with appropriate utterances in appropriate circumstances by appropriate people.

2. Conditions and people in a particular situation should be the appropriate conditions and people forprocess.

3. Process needs to be correctly and fully applied by all participants (Coulthard, 1985).

When a performative expression is carried out, the speaker does something at the same time. For instance, when saying *It is very cold*, the speaker states he/she feels cold, or he/she may request someone to close the window or to turn on the heater. Additionally, the speaker may perform an illucitionary act by using a lucitionary act. Asking someone *Can you pass the suar?* seems as if it is meant whether the hearer has such an ability; however, speaker actually makes a request. This is an illucitionaryact (Asher and Lascarides, 2006).

Hymes (1972) indicates that while learning a language, children acquire a set of social rules in addition to the grammatical structures. With this ability called communicative competence, appropriate usage patterns are learnt along with the grammatical knowledge. In this way, the knowledge of when to talk or not to talk, to whom, how, where, and what to talk is obtained. At the end of this process, a repertoire of speech acts is accomplished. Speeches of others are evaluated in the same way.

Hymes (1972) views a complementary relationship between the communicative competence and language. Language structures acquired are appropriately reflected in communication cases through experience. In other words, language acquisition includes language rules and grammatical structures together with their usage patterns. Children interpreting life, they develop the general theory of suitable forms of speech. This assumption is suggested on the unlimited number of experience with speech act, and on the basis of their relationship with socio-cultural features.

The act of apologizing is one of the most frequently used acts. It has a purpose of smoothing out resentment (Intachakra, 2004). Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) regard the act of complaining as a speech act performed when the speaker is adversely affected. Blum-Kulka and colleagues (1989) draw attention to culture specific dimensions of the act of refusing. Accordingly, social distance and power difference between the parties have a significant impact on refusal. According to Intachakra (2004), the act of thanking re-establishes the balance difference arising from the goodness made between people

communicating. Each of these acts is used with the aim of editing function of social relations through language.

Speech acts can be performed either in an explicit or implicit manner. Implicitness is defined expressions performed in a speech act indirectly by another act" (Asher and Lascarides, 2006, 18).

According to this, while such a sentence *I invite you to my birthday tomorrow* is an explicit performative, *I will be very happy if you come to my birthday party tomorrow* expression is an implicit performative. The state of being happy in the second example functions as an implicit invitation.

The reason for selecting the acts of apologizing, complaining, refusing and thanking in the study is to deal with two positive and two negative situations in terms of a certain communication case. While apologizing and thanking are viewed as favourable to maintain relationships, complaining and thanking are considered as negative acts. Accordingly, in this study it is aimed to determine which strategies are used in Turkish language in cases that require apologizing, complaining, refusing and thanking. The following sub-questions have been investigated in order to find the answer to this question:

1. What are the strategies used for apologizing?
2. What are the strategies used for complaining?
3. What are the strategies used for refusing?
4. What are the strategies used for thanking?
5. To what extend do they perform explicitly or implicitly the acts of apologizing, complaining, refusingand thanking?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of this descriptive study are 155 teacher candidates continuing their education in Akdeniz University, Faculty of Education, Department of Pre School Teacher Education. The participants are freshmen, sophomores, and juniors in formal education. During the analysis of the data collected, 5 dialogues written by the participants, as they did not adequately reflect the case required, were found invalid and excluded from the study. Therefore, the number of the participants of the study is determined as 150. Choosing Pre School Teacher Education program students as participants is directly related to ease of access.

3.2. Data Collection

Data in the study was collected through asking the participants to write the language structure they use in apologizing, complaining, refusing and thanking cases. The participants were asked to write short dialogues of theirs that they were to perform these speech acts as a subject. That they should write precisely the expressions used in these dialogues was emphasized. In order to reach real situations in which those performatives were used, data was collected in this way.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data collected from the participants was analyzed by three researchers. The data was evaluated by content analysis technique. Yildirim and Simsek (2011), emphasize that content analysis occurs by subjecting the data obtained from descriptive analysis to a deeper process. The data obtained from this process has been categorized and organized according to strategies used in each of the speech acts. During Categorization process, if more than one strategy has been found within a language structure, the most dominant one has been taken into consideration. The dominant strategy was determined with the approval of three experts. Strategies used to perform the acts of apologizing, complaining, refusing and thanking have been presented by being digitized as frequencies and percentages in the findings section.

Functions were taken into consideration in determining the strategies. For instance, it has been focused on what was offered to perform this act by the person who was going to

apologize, and these have been named properly. The literature was also benefited while identifying and naming the strategies. However, as for the functions and strategies which are not covered in the literature, the onomathesias determined by the agreement of experts analyzing the content were used. Particular attention was paid to difference to be significant between each strategy and others. For example, even though in the act of refusing, *reminding another priority* strategy is a *giving a reason* strategy in a way that the importance degree of the reason given is higher caused this strategy to be called another word.

4. Results

The first sub-problem of the study was aimed to show the apology strategies used by the participants. The strategies used for the act of apologizing, their frequencies and percentages are shown inTable 1.

Table 1. Strategies used for the act of apologizing and the frequency of item

	f	%
Giving a reason	70	46,7
Taking responsibility	34	22,7
Expression of regret	12	8,0
Displaying a positive behaviour	11	7,3
Making a commitment	9	6,0
Sharing responsibility	6	4,0
Putting responsibility on others	5	3,3
Stating being misunderstood	3	2,0
TOTAL	**150**	**100**

As shown in Table 1, the participants use 8 different strategies for the act of apologizing. The most commonly used strategy among them is *giving a reason* (% 46,7) strategy and the least used strategy is *stating being misunderstood* (%2) strategy.

The second sub-problem of the study was related to determining the complaining strategies used by the participants. The strategies used for the act of complaining and their frequencies of occurrence are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Strategies used for the act of complaining and the frequency of them

	f	%
Reflecting the results	61	40,7
Complaining directly	17	11,3
Warning	15	10,0
Reporting negligence	12	8,0
Reminding the rights	12	8,0
Using authoritative expression	12	8,0
Rebelling	10	6,7
Showing the inaccuracy of the known	9	6,0

Using Humour	1	,7
Stating a personal trait	1	,7
Reflecting the results	61	40,7
TOTAL	**150**	**100**

As illustrated in Table 2, participants use 10 different strategies to complain. The most commonly used strategy among them is *reflecting the results* (%40,7) strategy, the least used strategies are *using humour* (%0,7) and *stating a personal trait* (%0,7) strategies.

The third sub-problem of the study is in relation to identifying the strategies used to refuse by the participants. The strategies used for refusal act and their frequencies of occurrence are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Strategies used for the act of refusing and the frequency of them

	f	*%*
Giving a reason	62	41,3
Refusing directly	33	22,0
Reminding another priority	28	18,7
Offering another option	15	10,0
Expressing nonnecessity of offer	10	6,7
Using swear words	2	1,3
TOTAL	**150**	**100**

As is seen in Table 3, participants use 6 different strategies to refuse. While the most common one is *giving a reason* (%41,3) strategy, the least used is *using swear words* (%1,3) strategy.

The forth sub-problem of the study is with relation to identifying the strategies used to thank by the participants. The strategies used for thanking act and their frequencies of occurrence are shown in Table4.

Table 4. Strategies used for the act of thanking and the frequency of them

	f	*%*
Thanking Directly	62	41,3
Expressing gratitude	31	20,7
Complimenting	22	14,7
Emphasizing the positive impact	20	13,3
Expressing the loss of the interlocutor	8	5,3
Expressing indebtedness	7	4,7
TOTAL	**150**	**100**

As is seen in Table 4, participants use 6 different strategies for the act of apologizing. The most commonly used strategy among them is *thanking directly* (%41,3) strategy, and the

least used strategy is *expressing indebtedness* (%4,7) strategy.

The fifth sub-problem of the study is associated with determining whether the language structures reflect the speech acts explicitly or implicitly. Explicit or implicit use of the speech acts and their frequencies of occurrence are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Explicit or implicit usage rate of the speech acts

Speech Acts	Explicit f	%	Implicit f	%
Apologizing	127	84,7	23	15,3
Complaining	49	32,7	101	67,3
Refusing	82	54,7	68	45,3
Thanking	143	95,3	7	4,7
TOTAL	**150**		**100**	

As is seen in Table 5, the act of apologizing predominantly by expressing apology explicitly (% 84,7), the act of complaining mainly in an implicit manner (% 67,3), the act of refusing generally explicitly (% 54,7) and the act of thanking (% 95,3) is mainly performed in an explicit way.

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The results of this study showed that the participants used different strategies depending on the type of performatives. The variety of the strategies used is associated with specific conditions of the communication and qualities of the parties involved in a communication. On the other hand, there is a relationship between the various cases in that the acts carried out, as well. At this point, to determine at which points the strategies used in specific speech acts especially gathered is an important finding for further studies.

The findings of the study showed that there were eight different strategies in dimension of apology. *Giving a reason*, especially, appears to be the most common used strategy of apology. This result supports the findings of the study conducted by Tuncel (2011). In his study, Tuncel (2011) did not encounter any consistent use in speech acts application of undergraduates. Eight different apology strategies also achieved in this study are indirectly associated with this finding. The strategies determined regarding the speech act of apologizing are similar to the data obtained from the study carried on Korean students learning English by Jung (2004). Expression of apology that Jung (2004) discovered for the act of apology and *expression of regret*, explanation and *giving a reason*, acknowledgment of responsibility and *taking the responsibility*, offer of repair, promise of non-recurrence and *making a commitment* in this study are the strategies that have the same functions.

In the act of complaining, a total of ten strategies were determined. The most frequently used strategy among these is *reflecting results* strategy. Reflecting results in the act of complaining provides an implicit justification for the person aggrieved to eliminate the negativity emerged. Reflecting results strategy which serves as an indirect expression, in some cases can be treated as a gentle form of communication. Other strategies are used according to different variables in the communication process. Some of the strategies obtained in this study (2010) are similar to the functions in the study of Deveci (2010). Complaint strategy which was identified in the research on the act of complaining in Turkey conducted by Deveci (2010) is similar to *complaining directly* in this study in terms of function. However, justification, candidate solution, explanation of purpose and criticism discovered by Deveci (2010) are the complaining strategies identified differently than this study.

In the act of refusing, a total of six strategies were determined. The most frequently

used strategy among these is *giving a reason* strategy. Giving reasons his study. These are "expression of regret", "excuse" and "offer of an alternative" strategies. Excuse strategy is important compared to other strategies in terms of justifying a refusal to offer. Direct refusal, refusing particularly by using swear words and expressing nonnecessity of offer among other strategies, can be explained by the low level of respect between the parties communicating. However, refusing directly can be considered as one of the strategies applied in some cordial relations, as well. Al-Eryani (2007) has focused on three strategies in among these and giving a reason in this study, offer of an alternative and offering another option have the same function with each other. Guo (2012), likewise, has focused on strategies such as direct, reason, alternative, avoidance and criticism. Among the strategies Guo (2012) identified, reason, direct and alternative function in the same way with some strategies in this study.

The last speech act dealt with in this study is thanking. A total of six different strategies were determined with regard to thanking. Among these, thanking directly is the most frequently referred strategy. Thanking has a reinforcing function in relations as it shows that the parties recognize the goodness done and it reflects their corresponding sensitivities. That *thanking directly* is a frequently referred strategy may be associated with this. The other strategies used have the characteristics of linguistic expressions conveying thanking more implicitly. In his study, Intachakra (2004) also discovered strategies, similar to those in this study, related to thanking in English and Thai languages. An explicit expression of gratitude and *expressing gratitude* in this study, an account or acknowledgment of favour and *emphasizing the positive impact*, an expression of admiration and *complimenting*, a promise of repayment and expressing indebtedness have the same functions. An indication of unnecessity of favour is a different finding that Intachakara (2004) determined. Zarei (2011) obtained more strategies about the act of thanking in his study, and he divided them into sub-strategies. These are the sub-strategies Zarei (2011) determined: thanking, appreciation, repayment, recognition of imposition, apology, positive feeling et al. Most of the strategies of Zarei (2011) have the same functions with the strategies determined in this study.

One of the responses tried to be reached in this study was related to explicit or implicit usage rate of the speech acts. It was identified that the act of apologizing performed explicitly in terms of explicitness and implicitness. Generally being expressed this act explicitly is a reasonable case as apologizing is associated with the fact that the speaker does not want the fault made to damage the relationship. However, it is not the same case for the act of complaining. The act of complaining is mainly performed implicitly. The reason for this may be that the speaker complaining is under the risk of continuity of relationship with the other party. Therefore, such a risk-free way of thanking was performed considerably in an explicit manner. As for the act of refusing, it was conducted nearly to the same degree in a similar manner in terms of explicitness and implicitness.

In this study, it was aimed to determine which strategies have been used while performing the speech acts undertook. The other studies on speech acts are generally in regard to determining to what extend and how foreign language learners perform those in the target language. However, discovering the strategies generally used in a language shall facilitate interpretation of results obtained from comparative studies. In this regard, following suggestions may be made for further studies:

1.   Forms of realization of other speech acts in Turkish should be described by other studies.

2.   The findings obtained regarding the use of speech acts should be reconstructed with different patterns in order to determine response types that different participants may give in the same contexts.

3.   Studies should be done on the level of competence of the responses given in communication cases in terms of admissibility and courtesy.

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