

## **Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in Short Dialogue of Listening Comprehension Test**

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**Abstract:** Listening comprehension is regarded as one of the most challenging tasks for students and the majority of students struggle to grasp the proposed meaning in TOEFL short dialogue of listening comprehension test items. The utterances in TOEFL short dialogue test can be analyzed using pragmatic through speech act classification by J. Searle. This study aims to investigate the kind and the dominant type of speech act in TOEFL short dialogue of listening comprehension test. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a content analysis research design to reach the objectives of this research. The objects were taken through 30 short dialogues in TOEFL listening test items. The results of the study show the distribution of each classification found as the following: 44% for directive, 42% for assertive, 11,5% for expressive, and 1% for commissive. It can be seen that the most dominant type is directive and commissive is less found. The study concludes that test takers must be familiar with the context of the speech to comprehend the proposed meaning of the TOEFL listening items. It is recommended for students to evaluate the meaning of the utterances using the speech acts theories to assist the students in identifying the different sorts of utterances and understanding the proposed meaning of the utterances.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, speech act, short dialogue, listening comprehension

## **INTRODUCTION**

Many students believe that the TOEFL listening comprehension test is too difficult for those who have never taken the test before. Many students fail the TOEFL test because they have difficulty answering the listening part (Cahyaningati, 2012). The type of listening materials is linked to a few different listening comprehension issues (Hasan, 2010). One of the significant challenges with listening comprehension is the pronunciation of words that differs from how they look in print (Halim & Ardiningtyas, 2018). The unusual words, hard grammatical rules, and the period of the spoken passages are the maximum critical factors that cause problems for learners' listening comprehension (Maulidyah, 2017).

Short dialogue is interesting to improve listening skills. Short dialogue is a kind of listening subject that has a short conversation (Bafadal & A. Rusmini, 2017). Dialogue is a means of indicating communication between two people who need the intention to understand one another. In dialogue, those involved share information, data, facts, thoughts, ideas, and opinions and try to consider, understand, and

accept one another. Listening comprehension is a measure of your ability to understand a brief and long conversation in English (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). It contains audio recordings, similar to what you may hear from a group of students at an English-language school or university. Listening comprehension aims to test your ability to understand spoken language (Corsetti, 2014).

TOEFL was first published in 1964 and has since evolved into a reliable English proficiency exam. The TOEFL exam type was formerly called PBT (Paper Based Test). However, as time and technology progressed, the type evolved to TOEFL CBT (Computer Based Test) and subsequently to the most recent version TOEFL IBT (Internet Based Test). According to its website, the TOEFL test assesses non-native English speakers' ability to use or understand the language as they talk, hear, write, and read (Taufiq et al., 2018).

The TOEFL short dialogue is in brief form, consisting of only 2-4 words between two people, followed by one question. Synonyms of the keywords stated in the listening, specific vocabulary, idioms, phrasal verbs, conditionals, wishes, causatives, modals, negative expressions, inferring meaning from intonation, and listening

for language functions are the points examined in this section (Rainy *et al.*, 2014).

This research aims to investigate the kinds and the dominant type of speech act in short dialogues of TOEFL listening test items. This research differs from others in that it focuses on speech acts observed in TOEFL questions, which contain brief conversations in the listening comprehension test. This research will contribute to the evaluation of pragmatic content material. In making authenticity within the test, the researchers must be listening to native speakers in certain situations in real life, and thus the researchers have truly considered the authenticity of the response (Rudner *et al.*, 2018). This research may contribute to further understanding of analyzing pragmatics speech acts in a listening comprehension test and this research would be the basic way how to identify a test item is considered as a pragmatics test.

Furthermore, researchers will focus on identifying pragmatic speech acts in short dialogues in TOEFL listening test items. This research is conducted for analyzing pragmatics content in the listening comprehension test. This research can be used as a resource for other researchers who want to perform research on the topic.

## METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative descriptive approach with a content analysis

research design to reach the objectives of this research (Koufogiannakis *et al.*, 2004). This research aims to investigate the kinds and the dominant type of speech act in short dialogues of TOEFL listening test items. The object which was investigated in this study was the TOEFL book entitled *CLIFFS TOEFL PREPARATION GUIDE* published by Wiley dream tech in 2005. This book contains a collection of test items from PBT, IBT, and CBT which are given in the practice test that has 3 sections namely listening comprehension, structure and written expression and reading comprehension but the researchers focused only on the Listening section (Fitria, 2021). Furthermore, this book is appropriate for this research because it includes an audio test that relates to the research objective. Therefore, the researchers chose 30 short dialogues to be analyzed in the Listening section.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Types of Speech Act found in Listening Comprehension Test Items of Short Dialogue

As a result, the researchers mainly used the speech acts theories to assess the data. There were 30 test items taken from Cliffs TOEFL Preparation Guide that were analyzed by the researchers. The following table described the types of speech acts found in listening comprehension test items of short dialogue.

**Table 1. The classification of speech act**

No	Speech Acts	Functions	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Directives	the question, suggestion, invitation, request, hope, and order	27	44
2	Expressives	greeting, thanking, welcoming, and apologizing	7	11,5
3	Assertive	informing, assuming, concluding, and accepting	26	42
4	Commissives	promise, agreement, and suggestions.	1	1,5
	Total		61	100

According to Table 1 above, there are four types of speech act found among the 30 test items on the Listening section of Cliffs TOEFL Preparation Guide Book, namely directives, expressive, assertive, and commissives. Each of

the speech act findings is detailed in the following analysis.

### 1. Directive

The speech act's point of the directive is that it makes some impact through the listener's

behavior, and it has a world to word direction of fit. In this case, the speaker persuades someone else to act. The directive expresses what the speaker desires. Directive communicative forces include question, suggestion, invitation, requesting, hope, and ordering. An example of this is given below:

Woman: How does Mike like his coffee?

Man: He likes sugar in it, but nothing else.

*How does Mike like his coffee?*

The woman's speech above could be categorized as a directive, a speech act in which the speaker attempts to persuade the hearer to do something, to guide him or her toward some purpose. She intends to get advice from the man by uttering the phrase. The man can see that she has a certain goal in mind.

## 2. Expressive

The expressive function of speech is to communicate or state clearly the speaker's emotional feelings toward the situation of objects conveyed by the illocution. It has no fit purpose and can express a wide range of psychological feelings. This type expresses how the speaker feels. Greeting, thanking, welcoming, apologizing, and other communicative forces in expressive are instances. For example, when the speaker says "I apologize for not announcing the test earlier." It may mean, the speaker doesn't announce the test so he feels guilty. The speaker expresses his feeling to get an apology. Here is an example of expressive:

Woman: Good afternoon, I'm Roseanne, your flight attendant. Welcome aboard.

Man: Hello. I've got seat A8. I hope it's by a window so that I can see the view.

*Good afternoon, I'm Roseanne, your flight attendant. Welcome aboard.*

The woman's speech above can be classified as expressive, speech acts that state what the speaker feels. This implies the woman expresses positive feelings towards passengers by welcoming them.

## 3. Assertive

The point of assertiveness in the speech is that it commits the speaker to the truthfulness of the expressed proposition. In this circumstance, the purpose of assertive is to make the words match the universe (of belief) in which a

viewpoint is presented. This type expresses whether the speaker perceives something to be true or false. Informing, assuming, concluding, and accepting are examples of assertive communicative forces. For example, when the speaker asserts "Mike loves his little family, but nothing else." It means that the speaker has a belief that Mike loves his little family and he expresses this through the statement. An example of this is given below:

Man: I heard Marlyn's entered college.

Woman: Yes, she was taking courses in statistics, economics, and accounting.

*Yes, she was taking courses in statistics, economics, and accounting.*

The woman's speech above could be categorized as assertive, a speech act in which the speaker states whether he or she believes something to be true or false. By stating that utterance, she gives information about Marlyn's study then she told the man what courses Marlyn taking was were.

## 4. Commissive

The speech acts point of commissive is that it commits the speaker (to different degrees) to some future action. It has a word-to-word fit in which an intention is expressed. In this scenario, the speaker commits to doing something. This kind expresses the speaker's intent. Commissive communicative forces include promising, pledging, and offering. For example, when a man says "I'll never leave you", it means that the man promises himself not to leave the woman. An example of this is given below:

Woman: Are you going to watch the movie on TV tonight?

Man: No, I think I'll watch the soccer game and then the documentary on Volcanoes.

*No, I think I'll watch the soccer game and then the documentary on Volcanoes.*

Man's speech above could be categorized as commissive. Because the woman asked the man if he was going to watch a movie on TV tonight. Then the man replied he wanted to watch a soccer game and then a documentary on Volcanoes.

## The Dominant Kinds of Speech Act in Listening Comprehension Test Items of Short Dialogue

**Tabel 1. Distribution of speech acts**

	Directive	Assertive	Expressive	Commissive
<b>Total</b>	27	26	7	1
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	44	42	11.5	1.5

According to Searle's speech act classifications, there are five categories of speech acts: directive, expressive, commissive, assertive, and declarative. Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that there are four (four) types of speech acts observed in 30 (thirty) Cliffs TOEFL Preparation Guide Book test items in listening section 1. The following table describes the dominant types of speech acts found in listening comprehension test items of short dialogue.

Based on Table 2 above, the frequency of occurrences of speech acts are rated in the following order:

- Directive 44%
- Assertive 42%
- Expressive 11,5%
- Commissive 1,5%

Based on the findings, this research finds that short dialogues in the listening comprehension test in Cliffs TOEFL Preparation Guide Book are made up of four speech act classifications. There are four types: directive, expressive, assertive, and communicative. The directive is found in 44% of the total 27 utterances, the assertive is found in 42% of the total 26 utterances, the expressive is found in 11% of the total 7 utterances, and the last commissive is only found in 1.5% of the total 1 utterance. It can be seen that the most dominant type is directive and commissive is less found.

## Discussion

The discussion elaborates on the research findings while also linking to expert theories that assist in justifying the research problems 'What kinds of speech acts are found in TOEFL listening comprehension test items of short dialogue?' and 'Which types of speech acts are found dominantly in TOEFL listening comprehension test items of short dialogue?' The goal of this research is to identify the kinds of speech act that manifest, as

well as the dominant types of listening comprehension test items of short dialogue.

According to Searle's speech act classifications, there are five categories of speech act namely directive, expressive, commissive, assertive, and declarative. Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that there are four (four) types of speech acts observed in 30 (thirty) Cliffs TOEFL Preparation Guide Book test items in listening section 1. The directive is found 44% in terms of a question, suggestion, invitation, hope, request, and order. The expressive is found 11,5% through greeting, thanking, welcoming, and apologizing. In addition, the assertive is found 42% with informing, assuming, concluding, and accepting. Finally, the commissive is only found 1,5% through promise, agreement, and suggestion. It can be seen that the most dominant type is directives and commissive is less found.

This study differs from several earlier studies. Previous research by (Karbalaee & Rahmanzade, 2015), and (Garcia, 2004) evaluated the pragmatic, which justified that pragmatism incorporated in the proficiency test. The significant similarity is that they do not discuss the proposed suggestions for test-takers. They only concentrated on how to measure pragmatics in a proficiency test using the students' scores as factors. It is an intriguing topic that has encouraged researchers to conduct research in this area of sociolinguistics in terms of pragmatic meaning.

Our findings contribute to pragmatics and speech act theories in two areas. First, speech acts denote a language practice that is not specifically concerned with grammatical form but rather with interaction units, namely locution. Second, performing a speech act is a language-proficiency concern that needs pragmatic competence for a learner (Youn & Bi, 2019). Furthermore, how speech acts are executed supports Searle's theories concerning general proficiency with speech acts. Therefore, our findings contribute to the research literature in the field of listening comprehension, for teachers to teach listening

comprehension material, and for test-takers to get insight before taking the TOEFL test.

However, this study has a limitation due to the lack of real data that was collected. In this research, the data collected is a document rather than an actual subject (Setyawan & Wiraatmaja, 2018). In this situation, the researchers may have misinterpreted the speech acts meaning if the true meaning presented by the test maker differs from what the researchers expected. This means that future studies should integrate classroom observations with those from social situations and that more in-depth interviews could assist find larger insights into each form of speech act.

## CONCLUSION

The majority of test-takers struggle to understand the proposed meaning of the TOEFL listening items. To comprehend the proposed meaning that is suggested in and beyond the speech itself, test takers must be familiar with the context of the speech. Because a small number of TOEFL listening items such as idiomatic terms, are American culturally oriented, they must sometimes have special knowledge of the speech. The speech will be useless to them if they do not understand the cultural context. Thus, test takers can evaluate the meaning of the utterances using the speech acts theories. The speech acts theories will assist the test taker in identifying the different sorts of utterances and understanding the intended meaning of the utterance. The findings of this study may be useful to people involved in the development of high-stakes assessments and proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and TOLIMO. This study may also be valuable for teachers and test developers who are making low-stakes decisions.

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