



# Teachers' Speech Acts on Students' Engagement in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

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## Abstract

Strategic use of teacher's language in the classroom has been acknowledged to play a pivotal role in shaping the extent of students' engagement. Despite extensive research on the subject, a limited understanding of the potential mismatch between teacher's practice and students' preference. This study examines how specific teacher's speech acts, as a part of the teacher's language, influence Indonesian EFL students' engagement and investigates which types of speech acts students perceive as most engaging. To achieve the objectives, the study collected the data through videotaped observations and a close-ended 20-item questionnaire administered to 47 seventh- grade junior high school students in Garut who were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The findings show that the teacher's speech acts, particularly Directives, Assertive, and Expressive, exert substantial influence on the students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Notably, despite the prominent role of those speech acts in fostering engagement during classroom interaction, students' self-reported preferences through questionnaires indicated that Expressive and Declarations were perceived as the most engaging. This discrepancy suggests that while teachers predominantly use instructional speech acts (e.g., Directives and Assertive), students exhibit a stronger affinity to Expressive and Declarations, which often incorporate elements of emotional connection, motivation, and humor. The Implications of this study emphasize the necessity for a balanced and dynamic pedagogical approach in EFL classrooms regarding the teachers' communication strategies, by integrating various speech acts to optimize students' engagement.

**Keywords:** *Speech Acts; Student Engagement; EFL Teaching; EFL Classroom; Classroom Discourse*

## Introduction

As a fundamental part of teachers' language that shapes students' learning experience, teacher's speech acts have been at the center of numerous studies, particularly those examining their impact on classroom learning (Such as Blum-Kulka, 1987; Darong, 2024; Thanh, 2024). Speech act theory, introduced by Austin (1975) describes speech act theory as a perspective on language that prioritizes the intended meaning in communication over the specific words or structures used. Based on the theory proposed by Austin, Searle (1976) categorizes speech acts into five types: (1) Assertive (or representatives) are speech acts where the speaker expresses a belief as truth, meaning the statement can be judged as true or false, to state facts, provide information, or describe something. (2) Directives are speech acts in which the speaker tries to get the listener to do something.

These can range from mild suggestions, invitations, or requests, to influence the listener's actions, with varying levels of force. (3) Commissive are speech acts that commit the speaker to a future action. They can range in strength, from promises and offers to more definite commitments like vows or guarantees, to express the speaker's intention to do something. (4) Expressive are speech acts that express the speaker's psychological state or emotions about a situation. They do not aim to change reality or convey factual information but instead reflect feelings like gratitude and the focus is on the speaker's reaction. (5) Declarations are speech acts that change reality simply by being performed. When stated under the right conditions, they make something true, the act itself brings the statement into effect.

In the context of teaching and learning, teachers' speech acts serve not only as a means of delivering instructional content but also play a crucial role in creating an efficient communication environment (Arbain et al., 2024; Arifah et al., 2024; Zhanibekova, 2024). Speech acts can influence how students respond, either encouraging them to act in a certain way or discouraging them from doing so (Adams, 2009; Beaver & von Fintel, 2007; Blum-Kulka, 1987). Thus, teachers' speech acts can significantly influence students' participation, motivation, and overall learning experience. This is aligned with a study conducted by Anisah et al. (2023) which demonstrated that the strategic use of speech acts by English teachers in EFL classrooms enhances classroom atmosphere, boosts student motivation, and fosters positive teacher-student relationships. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Although speech acts have been increasingly recognized as a critical aspect of effective teaching, there remains a limited understanding of how specific types of speech acts influence the various dimensions of student engagement, particularly in EFL classrooms. Understanding how different speech acts shape students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement is crucial, as engagement itself is a key factor in successful learning, as it is closely linked to students' active participation, motivation, and comprehension.

According to Yu et al. (2022), students' engagement refers to the extent to which they actively participate in class tasks and activities. It is also measured by their level of involvement in the learning process. For instance, Azizah et al. (2023) found that asking questions and giving directions predominantly foster cognitive engagement among EFL learners. Similarly, Liu & Mantuhac (2024) reported a strong positive correlation between multiple forms of teacher support—such as instructional, emotional, feedback, and interpersonal support—and student engagement in blended learning environments.

Despite these insights, limited research has specifically explored which types of teacher speech acts are perceived by students as most engaging and how these acts impact their classroom participation. Given that engagement is a strong predictor of academic success, overlooking this relationship could result in missed opportunities for improving pedagogical practices. Therefore, addressing this gap is essential to optimize classroom interaction and foster deeper student involvement in EFL learning contexts. Furthermore, this study's findings are expected to guide EFL teachers in selecting appropriate speech acts that enhance student engagement across emotional, behavioral, and cognitive domains.

Teachers can foster more interactive, motivating, and supportive classroom environments by aligning their communication strategies with students' preferences. This may improve participation, academic achievement, and teacher-student relationships in EFL settings.

In the light of the EFL context, several studies have explored the diverse roles of speech acts in the classroom discourse, highlighting their impact on teachers' and students' dynamics and teaching effectiveness. These studies can be grouped into three key themes relevant to classroom communication and student engagement. First, several studies have examined speech acts as a tool to manage classroom authority and discourse structure. For instance, a study conducted by Darong (2024) used the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach to show how speech acts play a role in distributing authority in the classroom.

Teachers have more control over the conversations that take place during the learning process, but students can also use speech acts to express their opinions and roles in classroom discussions. In line with the research conducted by Zhanibekova (2024) emphasizes the role of speech acts in maintaining teacher dominance during lesson delivery. Teachers have more control over the conversations during the learning process, but students can also use speech acts to express their opinions and roles in the classroom. Second, research has also explored how social and cultural factors including gender influence speech act usage. Putra & Tressyalina (2024) examine the role of gender differences in the use of directive speech acts and how they affect the interaction.

This study found that female teachers tend to use more speech acts in the form of advice and suggestions, while male teachers are more direct in giving orders. This shows that social and cultural factors can influence the way teachers communicate in the classroom and the choice of the speech act affects the learning

effectiveness. Third, some studies have examined instructional strategies and their alignment with speech act usage. research by Basra & Thoyyibah (2017) found that the majority of speech acts used by teachers which happened to be directive, reflect the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach that helps improve students' productive skills. Another study conducted by Santosa and Kurniadi (2020) also showed that the speech acts i.e. assertive (57%) and directive (40%) dominated teachers' communication, to provide clear instructions to students.

While all these studies have examined the roles of speech acts in classroom communication focusing on aspects such as authority distribution, gender differences, and instructional strategies, research on speech acts' direct influence on students' engagement, to the researchers' best knowledge, remains underexplored. The existing study addressing the issue is that of Amir (2023) highlighting the impact of speech acts on student engagement in EFL classes. His study found that the use of illocutionary speech acts, especially the use of directive words, helped increase student participation and clarify the learning tasks given by the teacher. Given the limited body of research in the area, further investigation is completely necessary to deepen the understanding of how the choice of various speech acts (not only directives) contributes to the engagement of the students.

Building on the results of the previous studies as well as the existing gap, to explore the role of teacher speech acts in fostering student engagement in EFL classrooms, grounded in the framework of speech act theory. Specifically, the present study intends to answer the following research questions: (1) How do specific teacher speech acts influence students' engagement in EFL classrooms? And (2) Which types of speech acts do students find most engaging? The results of the study are expected to offer further insights into how to enhance the teachers' and students' communication which may lead to a more supportive and encouraging classroom atmosphere.

## Method

This study employed an exploratory mixed method design that combined both qualitative and quantitative data to understand and examine the research problem comprehensively (Greene et al., 1989; Tashakhori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2005, as cited in Migiro & Magangi, 2011). By effectively integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, mixed methods pose a better comprehension than a single approach (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). Therefore, qualitatively, in this study, the data were collected through videotaped classroom observations to examine teacher speech acts and their influence on student engagement.

Meanwhile, with respect to the quantitative data, the present research used a questionnaire to uncover the students' preferences, allowing for numerical data analysis. Questionnaires collect original data and cannot be found from secondary sources, which is why this method is essential and commonly used (Karunaratna

et al., 2024).

The participants of this study consisted of 47 seventh-grade junior high school students from Garut who were selected using a convenience sampling. The selection started with a coordination between the researchers and the English teacher who assisted in identifying a group of students available and ready during the research period. The sampling technique was chosen due to the limited time and resources, and it aligned with the practical considerations and consent from both the teacher and the students. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study.

Before data collection began, the researcher clearly explained the purpose and procedures of the study to the participants and the school. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Their agreement was indicated in the signed informed consent.

In terms of data collection, the study utilized two main instruments. First, observation checklists were utilized alongside teacher-student interaction video recordings to document and analyze classroom interactions. The video recording was the classroom interaction that begins with the class opening until the individual assignment activity instructed by the teacher. This specific part of the class was chosen due to a high level of interaction and relevance to the research questions. While it may be acknowledged as a limitation, it encouraged the researchers to have a more focused analysis on the dynamics of the teacher and students' interaction and the interplay between the teacher's speech acts and the students' engagement.

The classroom observation was conducted twice. The first observation was carried out before the actual data collection to request formal permission from the school and to observe the teaching and learning process. The second observation was conducted during the actual research and was video recorded to capture the classroom interaction. The observation checklist was self-developed to align with the research questions, specifically to identify the types of teacher speech acts and their impact on student engagement. In developing the checklist, the researchers were informed by the theory of Searle's (1976) on speech act categorization which covers directives, expressive, assertive, commissive, and declarations. The checklist included sections for general information, a table to record the speech act type, teacher's utterance, student reaction, and engagement level, and a final section for notes and reflections.

The second instrument utilized was questionnaire which was used to collect quantitative data on the students' engagement and perceptions of teacher speech acts. The questionnaire was employed to collect the data due to its efficient way of gathering data from a large number of participants (Harris & Brown, 2010). As how questionnaires can be delivered through paper or electronic media (Sharma, 2022), this research utilized a paper-based questionnaire distributed in person to the students during class. The students completed the 20 items of questionnaires in

approximately 10-15 minutes, each statement using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire was structured around Searle's 5 speech act categories. Each category included four statements aimed at exploring students' perceptions of how different teacher speech acts influenced their classroom engagement. For instance, a directive item stated, "When the teacher gives direct instructions, I feel more focused during the lesson." An expressive item stated, "I feel more motivated to participate when the teacher gives praise," while an assertive item included, "The teacher's explanation of learning objectives helps me understand the material better." To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were reviewed and validated by two experts. A well-designed questionnaire can both save time for a researcher and efficiently support the finding of relevant information (Sharma, 2022).

In analyzing the data, the study carried out several systematic steps. For the data gathered through observation, the study employed content analysis. Many researchers affirm that content analysis is a flexible technique for investigating text data (Cavanagh, 1997, as mentioned in Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In their study, Hsieh and Shannon claimed that content analysis tends to focus on language characteristics as tools of communication, consecrating the content or contextual meaning of the text. In practice, the data obtained from the observation were categorized into the predefined speech acts' theme; assertive, directives, commissive, expressive and declaration. Students' engagement was examined through three dimensions: behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement.

The data were then mapped to students' responses and the analysis centered on identifying the emerging speech acts and how the different types of speech acts shapes the students' engagement in the classroom. Meanwhile, the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to determine the mean scores for each speech act dimension. The scores were calculated to identify the types of speech acts perceived by students as most engaging.

To ensure the inter-rater reliability, the researchers serve as individual coders who separately categorized the types of speech acts and students' engagement in reference to the predetermined criteria. The researchers have been trained to use clear definitions and examples for each category of speech act. Following the categorization, the researchers then discussed and compared the results by considering the input and feedback from two experts on the field. Discrepancy on the analysis and interpretation were resolved through consensus or further clarification.

## Results

This section presents the findings of the study and provides an interpretation of the analyzed data, which is further discussed in the subsequent discussion section. The results are systematically organized based on the research questions. Specifically, the section explains 1) the influence of the teacher's speech acts on the students' engagement and the types of speech acts that the students find most engaging.

### *The Influence of Teacher Speech Acts on Students' Engagement*

The findings indicate that the speech acts employed by the teachers comprise directives, assertive, and expressive. In regard to their influence on the dimension of the students' engagement, the study showed that the speech acts have a stronger influence on the students' behavioral engagement. The detailed findings are delineated in the following parts. According to the analysis, there were three kinds of speech acts that emerged in the observed classes. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of each speech act.

*Table 1. Teacher's Speech Act Frequency*

<b>Speech Acts Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Assertive</b>	15	17.1%
<b>Directives</b>	61	69.3%
<b>Commissive</b>	0	0%
<b>Expressive</b>	12	13.6%
<b>Declarations</b>	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on Table 1, directives are the most frequent speech act category used by the teacher, comprising 69.3% of all teacher speech acts. This category primarily consisted of instructions, requests, and guidance, which played a crucial role in directing students' actions and structuring classroom activities. For instance, the teacher said;

*"Using the perfect sentence!"* to instruct students clearly (Directive: Giving Instruction);

*"How many pictures are there?"* to elicit a response (Directive: Asking for Information);

*"Did you see or open the book last night?"* to check students' engagement (Directive: Asking for Confirmation);

*"Yes, and what will we have to do?"* to prompt students to recall or plan an activity (Directive: Seeking Information).

The high frequency of Directives suggests that the teacher relied heavily on the speech acts to manage the learning process, maintain order, and facilitate student engagement by providing clear expectations and directions.

Aside from using directives, the teacher also utilized Assertive (17.1%), including statements and explanations that provided students with the necessary information. For example, the teacher stated;

“We have to learn the names of the furniture in your house and then the names of the rooms in your house tho” (Assertive: Stating Recapitulation);

“Ya, there some houses have porch to puts the fish in porch” (Assertive: Providing Information).

These assertive acts helped clarify lesson content and support student understanding.

Expressive (13.6%) were found to be less frequent, as the teacher occasionally used speech acts to convey emotions or reactions to student actions. For example, the teacher said “Okay thank you!” to show gratitude (Expressive: Expressing Appreciation) and “Because it is relaxing to see the fish” to share a personal feeling (Expressive: Expressing Opinion).

Notably, Commissive and Declarations were not present from the observed data suggesting that the teacher rarely employed speech acts involving commitments, promises, or obligations regarding future actions. Likewise, the lack of Declarations indicates that the teacher seldom used authoritative statements that could alter a situation's status, such as granting permissions, making announcements, or assigning roles.

In addition to observing the teacher's speech acts, it was essential to further analyze the relationship of these speech acts and the student engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Fredricks et al. (2004) categorize student engagement into 3 main dimensions: (1) behavioral engagement, which refers to active participation, encompassing involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular activities; (2) cognitive engagement, which refers to the investment- based concept, which involves deep thinking and a willingness to put in the effort required to understand complex concepts and develop advanced skills; and (3) emotional engagement, which refers to both positive and negative responses toward teachers, classmates, academics, and school.

It is believed to foster a sense of connection to the institution and impact a student's motivation to complete their work (Fredricks et al., 2004). Investigating these aspects would provide deeper insights into how students participate in classroom activities, respond to their teacher and peers, and engage with learning materials (Immanuella et al., 2023; M. Liu et al., 2023). Understanding the relationship between different types of engagement and the teacher's speech acts could help identify patterns of interaction that influence student motivation,



comprehension, and overall academic performance. By examining these factors together, researchers could gain a deeper comprehensive view of how speech acts contribute to fostering an engaging and effective learning environment. Table 2 presents the types of student engagement observed during classroom interactions in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

*Chart 1. Students' Engagement Frequency*

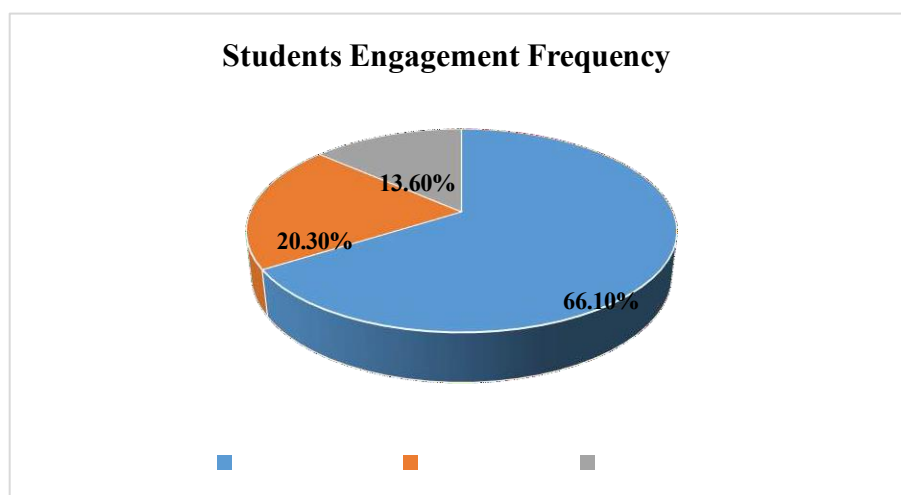


Chart 1 presents the types of students' engagement observed in the classroom. First, behavioral engagement (66,1%) appeared 39 times in the classroom observation, as evidenced by students' active participation, such as following the teacher's directives, answering questions, or engaging in tasks. For instance, in one observed interaction, the teacher asked, "In the living room, and what do you have in your bedroom?" A student responded, "Bed, cupboard.", followed by others adding "Chair, pictures".

The teacher acknowledged these responses with "Yes." highlighting student participation and maintaining the flow of interaction. Similarly, when the teacher asked, "Okay, do you have a television in your room?", students answered enthusiastically with "Yes, yes." and "No.", demonstrating their active involvement in the conversation.

Second, emotional engagement (20,3%%) was also observed, with students showing varying levels of emotional responses to the classroom environment, teacher feedback, and interactions with peers. For example, when the teacher prompted, "Okay, next, two more?", some students enthusiastically called out, "Me, me!" while raising their hands, expressing enthusiasm and willingness. Additionally, when the teacher asked, "Are you ready?", the students responded with an enthusiastic "READY!!", clearly showing their excitement and emotional readiness to engage in the activity.

Third, cognitive engagement (13,6%%) reflected the students' mental effort to process and understand the lesson material. For instance, when the teacher asked, "Can you give me an example of an imperative sentence related to cleaning the house?", a student responded with "Clean the window.", indicating their ability to generate an appropriate example based on their understanding. Similarly, when the teacher posed the question, "So the sentence uses 'there is' or 'there are'?", students correctly answered, "There are.", it demonstrates their comprehension of grammatical structures.

Based on the provided explanation, the relationship between teachers' speech acts and the students' engagement can be drawn. Table 2 indicates the interplay between the distribution of the teacher's speech acts and their impact on the students' engagement.

Table 2. The teacher's speech acts and its relation to the students' engagement

<b>Speech Category</b>	<b>Act</b>	<b>Teacher's Percentage</b>	<b>Related Type of Engagement</b>	<b>Engagement Frequency</b>	<b>Engagement Percentage</b>
<b>Directives</b>		69.3%	<b>Behavioral Engagement</b>	58	66.1%
<b>Assertive</b>		17.1%	<b>Cognitive Engagement</b>	18	20.3%
<b>Expressive</b>		13.6%	<b>Emotional Engagement</b>	12	13.6%

The table shows a classification of speech acts and their respective influence on students' engagement in the classroom. The majority of teacher speech acts—69.3%), directives have a strong relationship with behavioral engagement—66.1%). This is so because most directions are demands, requests, or instructions calling for quick response from the students. Whether by responding to questions or completing classroom assignments, these acts of direction force students to actively participate, hence increasing their behavioral involvement. The teacher's frequent use of directives aligns with a structured and action-oriented learning environment, where student engagement is largely determined by responding to explicit prompts. Conversely, assertive (17.1%) correlate with cognitive engagement (20.3).

Assertive function to deliver factual or descriptive information, so encouraging pupils' cognitive engagement, reflection, and critical analysis. Although assertive appeared to be less frequent compared to directives, their emergence solidifies the importance of teacher delivered content in fostering cognitive engagement and deep learning. Last but not least was expressive (13.6%)

which were linked to emotional engagement (13.60%), indicating the impact of the teacher's emotional expressions on students' emotional participation in the session. Expressive, encompassing comments that convey the teacher's emotions, empathy, or passion, can foster a supportive and emotionally impactful classroom environment. The correlation highlights the complex nature of teacher-student interactions, illustrating that distinct types of speech acts affect different aspects of student engagement.

### Most Engaging Types of Teacher Speech Acts

This section presents the findings that serve to answer the second research question "Which types of speech acts are perceived by students as most engaging?" The data presented in Chart 1 summarizes the mean score of the most engaging types of teacher speech acts perceived by the students.

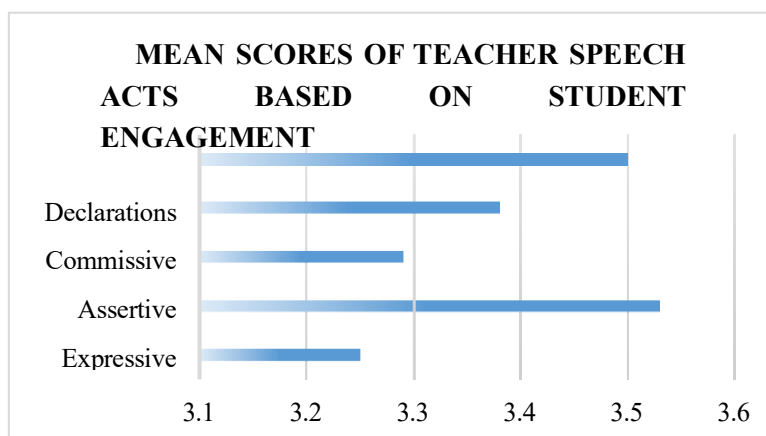


Figure 1. The Mean Scores of Teacher Speech Acts Based on Student Engagement

The chart indicates that Expressive received the highest mean score (3.53), making it the most engaging type of speech acts according to student perceptions. Declarations followed closely with a mean score of 3.50. In the middle positions, Commissive scored 3.38, while Assertive had a mean score of 3.29. Directives received the lowest score at 3.25, indicating that students found this type of speech act the least engaging. The findings indicate that there is a mismatch on the teacher's practice and the students' preference which are discussed in the discussion.

### Discussion

The study examines the influence of teacher's speech acts on the students' engagement as well as determines the types of speech acts that are perceived to be the most engaging. The first finding showed that the high frequency of Directives directly encourages a higher level of Behavioral Engagement. This may stem from the nature of directives which involve actions like questioning, requesting, commanding, instructing, inviting, prohibiting, motivating, suggesting, and

reminding, allowing the teachers to ask the students to do something (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Meanwhile, behavioral engagement refers to students' active participation, encompassing involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). Similarly, a definition of behavioral engagement also explained by (Nababan et al. (2021), in that it refers to the consistency of effort, participation, and other desired academic behaviors. It can be concluded that the teacher's frequent use of instructions, requests, and guidance as the form of directive speech acts likely encouraged students to take active roles in the lesson and respond to the teacher's cues. This finding is consistent with previous research, which suggests that providing clear prompts plays a crucial role in guiding students toward appropriate behavior and fostering structured classroom interactions (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, Assertives that provided valuable information to students (including stating, informing, assuming, hypothesizing, insisting, complaining, clarifying, assuming, informing, and announcing (Yanti et al., 2021), were less likely to directly prompt behavioral responses compared to directives. However, they still contributed to Cognitive Engagement by providing explanations and context that helped students process lesson content since cognitive engagement refers to investment in learning, depth of processing, and/ or use of metacognitive strategies (Nababan et al., 2021). Emotional engagement encompasses students' feelings and emotional responses in the classroom, such as enthusiasm, boredom, joy, sadness, and anxiety (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Lastly, Expressives played a significant role in the teacher-student interaction, the way the teacher thanked, congratulated, and greeted the students (Djema & Toumi, 2021; Yanti et al., 2021) during the interaction contributed to fostering emotional engagement and maintaining student interest (Nababan et al., 2021) or emotional engagement within the students (Waloyo et al., 2023).

The second finding indicates that the students found teachers' expressives as the most engaging/ top-rated speech acts. Expressives likely resonate with students due to their emotions, which encourage a sense of appreciation and motivation. (Izar et al., 2021) also affirm that praise, thanking, appreciating, motivating, encouraging, and empathetic interactions foster emotional and interpersonal connection with students. Meanwhile, the Declarations speech act, instantly changes a situation simply by being spoken, showing the teacher's power and clarity in the classroom (AlAfnan, 2022).

For example, announcing a decision or giving someone a role can immediately affect what happens next. The moderate ratings of Commissives and Assertives suggest that while they are essential for commitment and information delivery, their impact on engagement can be amplified when combined with more relational acts like Expressives. The lower score for directives preference may reflect their

more structured functional and less interactive, which might still contribute but not as much to the other speech acts.

However, it is important to note the discrepancy between the data gathered through the observation and the questionnaire. While observations indicated that Commissives and Declarations were not frequently used by the teacher, students still perceived Declarations as highly engaging. This contradictory finding suggests that while the teacher may not have used Commissives or Declarations as often, students might still prefer or value these acts because they relate to clarity, structure, and authority in the classroom.

In contrast, Directives, while often being necessary for classroom structure and organization, received the lowest scores in the questionnaire, which likely reflects students' preference for less rigid and more emotionally engaging forms of communication. This could be explained by the difference between actual classroom interactions (observed behaviors) and student preferences for communication that fosters emotional and interpersonal connection. Even though Directives are important for guiding student behavior, they may be perceived as less engaging or enjoyable compared to Expressives and Declarations, which have a stronger impact on emotional engagement.

These findings align with existing research that emphasizes the importance of relational teacher behaviors in fostering student engagement. For example, studies by Han (2021); Izar et al. (2021); Zheng (2022) underscore the worth of positive teacher-student interactions and the need for a balanced approach to teacher communication. This study indicates that students found Expressives and Declarations speech acts engaging as they provide the students with emotional connection and structural clarity. The preference for expressives suggests that teachers should focus on building strong personal connections with students by showing empathy and support. Besides that, declarations were also preferred in order to create structure and authority in the classroom.

The possible explanation that is worth highlighting for the teachers' choices of the directives as well the students' different preferences on what deems to be most engaging may stem from the cultural factors. In the Indonesian education context, there is a sort of hierarchical relationship in which the teachers were seen as an authority figure which may explain the high appearance of directives. This reflects the cultural value that is placed on respect for teachers and following instruction which results in behavioral engagement. In addition, there was also a great emphasis on collectivism in which individuals should adhere to group harmony and respect for authority (Iswani et al., 2024). This situation at some point may limit the students to express themselves or engage in critical thinking which explains the relatively low cognitive engagement. The cultural factors may promote the mismatch between the teacher's directive approach and students' expectations.

While this study provides valuable insights on the influence of teacher's speech acts on students' engagement and their perceptions of the most engaging speech acts, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Carrying out the study with 47 students from one school at West Java and based on two observations, the study may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the focus on only the opening and main activities of the lesson may restrict the full understanding of how speech acts shape the engagement throughout the entire lesson. Future studies could address the gap by involving a more diverse sample and analyzing the entire lesson structure. Additionally, the study could also examine how speech acts may vary across different age groups and proficiency levels.

## **Conclusion**

The study investigates the influence of teachers' speech acts on the students' engagement and determines the types of speech acts that are perceived most engaging. Based on the findings that are described in the previous part, it can be concluded that while Directives, Assertives, and Expressives were found to be the three influential speech acts in shaping students' engagement (including behavior, cognitive, and emotional) in the classroom, students' self-reported preferences (through questionnaires) suggest that Expressives and Declarations are perceived as the most engaging. This contrast implies that teachers tend to rely on instructional and informative speech acts, whereas students respond more positively to speech acts that convey encouragement, motivation, and humor.

The difference between the observed speech acts and student preferences highlights the complexity of classroom communication. While directive and assertive speech acts are essential for delivering instruction and maintaining structure, expressive and declarative acts may foster a more engaging and dynamic learning atmosphere. This distinction suggests that student engagement is influenced not only by the content of communication but also by the way language is used to interact and connect within the classroom setting.

## **Implication**

In general, the mismatch between the teacher's heavy reliance on the directives and the students' preference for expressive speech acts can have significant implications. English learning often requires not only the good command of linguistic structures but also the communicative competence which involves emotional engagement and cognitive processing. The frequent prevalence of directives in this case may limit the opportunities for students to engage deeply during the learning since they focus more on following the given instruction rather than meaningfully participating in the class. Furthermore, the lack of expressives may reduce the emotional connection that the students need to stay motivated and

supported in the process of learning. As a result, the situation may hinder the students' confidence and interest in learning.

To address the issue, teachers are recommended to be able to incorporate a more balanced use of speech acts into the learning to foster a more engaging and supportive learning environment. For instance, using more motivational speech acts, such as encouragement and humor, alongside instructional ones may improve student participation. In addition, teachers could introduce more interactive and student-centered activities that promote cognitive engagement such as problem solving and discussion. For teacher training, these findings suggest that developing communication strategies can enhance classroom interaction. Future research could conduct broader surveys across different educational, age and proficiency level and examine the direct relationship between specific teacher speech acts and those variables.

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