

**TYPES OF SPEECH ACTS IN THE CLASSROOM**

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***Abstract:*** *This article explores the various types of speech acts that occur within classroom settings, emphasizing their significance in language learning, classroom management, and student-teacher interactions. Drawing on theories of pragmatics and communicative competence, particularly the work of John Searle and J.L. Austin, the article categorizes speech acts into their primary forms—assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives—while contextualizing their application in classroom discourse. Practical examples and pedagogical implications are also discussed.*

### **1. Introduction**

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a mechanism for action. In classroom settings, speech acts are fundamental to teaching and learning. Teachers and students engage in varied speech acts that serve to instruct, inquire, encourage, discipline, and reflect. Understanding these acts enriches teaching strategies and fosters effective communication in educational environments.

### **2. Theoretical Background**

Speech act theory was developed by philosophers J.L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969). Austin introduced the concept of performative utterances and differentiated between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Searle expanded on this, classifying speech acts into five categories:

- Assertives
- Directives
- Commissives



- Expressives

- Declaratives

### 3. Types of Speech Acts in the Classroom

#### 3.1 Assertives

Assertive speech acts state facts or beliefs. In the classroom, teachers use assertives to provide information or explain concepts (e.g., "The capital of France is Paris"). Students use them to demonstrate understanding (e.g., "I think this is the right answer").

#### 3.2 Directives

Directives are attempts to get the listener to do something. Teachers frequently use directives to give instructions (e.g., "Please open your books to page 10"). Students may use them to request help (e.g., "Can you explain this again?").

#### 3.3 Commissives

Commissives commit the speaker to a future action. In classrooms, teachers might say, "I will grade your tests by tomorrow." Students might say, "I promise to finish my homework."

#### 3.4 Expressives

Expressives convey psychological states or emotions. Teachers often encourage students using expressives (e.g., "Great job!"). Students use expressives to share feelings (e.g., "I'm nervous about the test").

#### 3.5 Declaratives

Declaratives bring about a change in the external situation. In classrooms, teachers use declaratives when making announcements (e.g., "Class is dismissed" or "You are now a group leader").

### 4. Classroom Discourse and Speech Acts

Classroom discourse is a structured form of communication governed by specific rules. Speech act theory helps analyze the dynamics of classroom interaction.

- IRF Pattern: Teacher initiates with a question (directive), student responds (assertive), teacher provides feedback (expressive). The effectiveness of this model depends on the appropriate use of speech acts.



- Questioning Strategies: Open-ended questions (directive) encourage thinking, closed questions (assertive) test recall.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Positive feedback (expressive) motivates, corrective feedback (assertive + directive) guides.
- Code-Switching (Bilingualism): Teachers might switch to students' native language for emotional support or clarification.

Understanding speech acts enhances communication, facilitates understanding, and creates an inclusive environment. It helps identify communication breakdowns caused by cultural differences or language barriers.

## 5. Pedagogical Implications

Teachers who understand and utilize different speech acts can:

- Foster communicative competence
- Manage classrooms effectively
- Build rapport with students
- Encourage active participation
- Scaffold learning

Speech act awareness can also be integrated into curriculum design and teacher training programs.

## 6. Challenges in Speech Act Usage

Some challenges include:

- Cultural differences in speech act realization
- Language proficiency limitations
- Overuse of certain speech acts (e.g., directives)

Teachers need pragmatic awareness and intercultural competence to navigate these issues.

## 7. Conclusion

Speech acts are integral to classroom communication. Recognizing their types and functions can significantly enhance teaching effectiveness and student engagement. A pedagogical approach grounded in speech act theory supports dynamic, interactive, and responsive learning environments.



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