



REALIZATION OF PROMISES IN AN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION CLASS

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Info Artikel

Sejarah Artikel:

Diterima Januari 2016

Disetujui Agustus 2016

Dipublikasikan September 2016

Keywords:

promise;
conversation;
speech act

Abstrak

This study was aimed at analyzing kinds of promise strategies realized by the students of an EFL conversation class at LBPP LIA Semarang Candi. The objectives were to find out whether the promise strategies are realized by the respondents, to describe the kinds of promise strategies applied by the students, to find out the probable factors influencing the realization of promise and to explain the reasons behind it. This research is qualitative, descriptive. The data was gathered by two methods: DCT and role play. In conducting the research, the steps were transcribing the data, coding the data, classifying the data, interpreting the data, describing the finding and drawing the conclusions. In this research, I analyzed two kinds of data from ten students, consisting 12 DCT situations and 12 role play situations with integrated probable factors (dominance, relationship and imposition). Future-action is the most realized promise strategy. Non-strategy and promise-to-act came after that, while predictive-assertion is the least realized promise strategy. In conclusion, students' schemata resulting from the language learning process and their mother tongue, language transfer and their maturity influence the realization of promise strategy more than dominance, distance and imposition.

INTRODUCTION

In 1962 the term 'speech act' was introduced by Austin. The word 'speech' literally means the activity of talking, while the word 'act' refers to an activity of doing something for a particular purpose. According to Mey (1993: 111) speech acts are actions happening in the world, that is, they bring about a change in the existing state of affairs. Mey basically defines 'speech act' as utterance that can be seen as an action that has its own effect based on its intention and purpose. Whereas Richards, Platt & Weber (1985), defined speech act as an utterance as a functional unit in communication. From the definitions above I can conclude that speech act happens as a speaker communicates with others in the form of utterance that changes 'the existing state of affairs' (in which I borrow Mey's term) between the speaker and the hearer. Kinds of speech act, includes promise, request, apology, invitation, refusal, agreement and disagreement can be performed when a speaker makes an utterance.

One of the most interesting kinds of speech act is 'promise' since it deals with something that may happen in the future and it deals with the commitment of the speaker. Mey (1993)

quoted Searle that a promise should not be about things that are going to happen, or should happen anyway. This clears things up that someone cannot promise that the sun will rise tomorrow because it does not deal with commitment from the speaker, or in this case we call the speaker as 'promiser'.

When someone expresses a promise, he/she makes a commitment related to the future. The future commitment can be something the promiser does or something that will eventually be done in the future. Thus, the way in expressing promise determines the outcome of the promise itself.

English is structured in such a way that people will have to talk differently when they are speaking about things that are happening now, a story of the past, or even a plan for the future. When an Indonesian speaks in English, the person has to change his/her point of view of the way he/she uses a language since there is no time-related-pattern in Bahasa Indonesia, unlike in English. Thus, it is very interesting to see how Indonesian learners of English express a commitment for the future in their foreign language.

Bernicot and Laval (2004) categorized

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promise into three kinds of statements; they are promise-to-act, future-action, and predictive-assertion. *Promise-to-act* statements, which explicitly contain the verb 'promise' followed by a verb in the infinitive form. The grammatical subject of the sentence is the person making the promise. The social act intentionally posed by the speaker is a firm commitment (e.g. 'I promise to wash my bike'). *Future-action* statements, in which the verb is conjugated in the future tense. The verb 'promise' does not appear and the grammatical subject of the sentence is the person making the promise. The social act intentionally posed by the speaker is a commitment, but not a firm one (e.g. 'I'll wash my bike'). *Predictive-assertion* statements, in which the verb is in the passive voice and future tense. The verb 'promise' does not appear and the grammatical subject of the sentence is not the person making the promise. In this case, there is no commitment on the part of the speaker (e.g. 'My bike will be washed').

The questions that are proposed in this research are (1) What strategies are used by Indonesian students of an EFL Conversation Class in realizing promises?, (2) What factors influence those students in realizing promises?

Thus, the objectives of the study are (1) To describe strategies of promises realized by Indonesian students of an EFL Conversation Class. (2) To explain the factors influence the students in realizing promises.

METHODS

This study is a qualitative and descriptive research. The research dealt a lot with expressions of promise produced by Indonesian students of an EFL Conversation Class, as a process of interaction of human beings in particular situation settings. The research is all about social interactions and the discussion of the data that were gathered based on the interactions. The subject of this study was taken from a 5th level of a conversational class in LBPP LIA Semarang Candi that consists of 10 students. The subjects were determined by assumption that they were English learners in an EFL class, that they were supposed to use English as a means of communication.

To gain the data, I used Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the written data and role play as the audio data. DCT includes a brief description of the situation and a one participant dialogue. Each situation consists of a brief description of the addressee's characteristics important to this study, namely, social distance (degree of familiarity between the interlocutors), social dominance (the relative degree of the social power

of the interlocutors over each other), and finally the offence being committed (Afghari & Kafiani, 2005). Meanwhile, Kasper & Rose (2002: 86) defined role play as a social or human activity in which participants take on and act out specified roles often within a predefined social network or situational blueprint. Thus, the subjects were given detailed information about the situations and their roles. Each of them was given time to read and understand the situation, and they are allowed to clarify their roles and situations beforehand. The role play itself will be recorded. Role play can be considered natural since the data is gathered from a 'spontaneous' answer from the subjects. Moreover, the authenticity of the data can be considered since the subjects are from a high level of an EFL conversation class, and mostly college students.

Thus, the two instruments of collecting data (DCT and role play) were made while considering the three factors; distance, dominance and imposition to be put in different situations. In order to cover all factors in all situations, I made pattern of the situations that can be seen in the table below:

Table 3. Details of Situations

DCT		Role Play	
1	-D, E, -I	1	-D, E, -I
2	-D, E, +I	2	-D, E, +I
3	+D, E, -I	3	+D, E, -I
4	+D, E, +I	4	+D, E, +I
5	-D, SD, -I	5	-D, SD, -I
6	-D, SD, +I	6	-D, SD, +I
7	-D, HD, -I	7	-D, HD, -I
8	-D, HD, +I	8	-D, HD, +I
9	+D, SD, -I	9	+D, SD, -I
10	+D, SD, +I	10	+D, SD, +I
11	+D, HD, -I	11	+D, HD, -I
12	+D, HD, +I	12	+D, HD, +I

Note:

D: Distance, -D: Close relationship, +D: Distant relationship/hardly know each other, E: Equal status, SD: Speaker dominance, HD : Hearer dominance, -I: Low imposition, +I: High imposition

Moreover, the analysis of the data were based on the promise strategies proposed by Bernicot and Laval (2004) which consist of three specific strategies: promise-to-act, future-action and predictive-assertion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After finishing the process of transcribing, co-

ding, classifying, and interpreting, the results of the study can be seen through the diagram below:

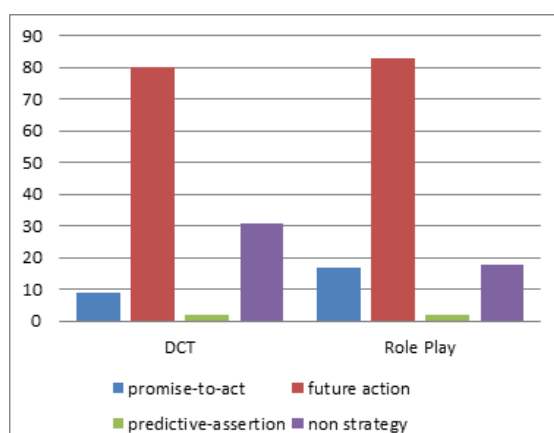


Figure 1. Promise Strategies Realization from DCT and Role Play Data

The graphic above shows the result of the research, both the DCT and the role play data. Although the data are not exactly the same, they shows some similarities. The highest bar shows the most expressed strategy by the subjects, while the lowest bar represents the least expressed strategy. The highest bar for DCT and role play are the same strategy called *future action* strategy (with 80 for DCT, and 83 for role play). The second place is the *non strategy* (with 31 for DCT and 18 for role play) and the third place belongs *promise-to-act* strategy (with 9 for DCT and 17 for role play). Lastly, the *predictive-assertion* strategy is in the last place with the shortest bar in the graphic and the total number is 2 for each DCT and role play data.

Based on the brief glance at the graphic above, it can be seen that the result of the data from DCT and role play are quite similar in numbers. Thus, both of the data are basically strengthen each other in this research.

The result of the DCT data and the role play data is quite similar. This supports the researcher's believe that those two data would support each other in this research, instead of opposing as a comparison. The similarities of the data can be seen from the domeneering strategy used by the respondents. Most of the respondents applied future-action strategy in both DCT and role play data. Not only future action strategy is the most applied, but also predictive-assertion is the least applied strategy of all. Moreover, the second place after future-action strategy is the surprisingly the non-strategy, which means that many respondents forwent using the promising-

strategy at all. Thus, promise-to-act strategy is used sporadically by the respondents since it is in the next place after the non-strategy.

There are several reasons why the promise strategies were realized that ways. First, the probable factors of the realization of promise strategy that are mentioned above (social status or dominance, distance, and imposition) do not influence the use of specific promise strategy. This result is not mindblowing and surprising because those factors are relative and hold different value for every individual. For example, an imposition can be 'high' for someone, and it can also be considered 'low' by another person eventhough the *thing* that is being promised is the exact same thing. This can happen to someone who promises to buy another a car; for a poor person, it is a massively high imposition since it is considered an expensive thing, yet for a billionaire, it can be seen as a low imposition because a car will not make a dent in his money. This relativity issue also applies in distance and dominance because there is no exact meassurement to measure a relationship between two people to decide whether a relationship can be considered close enough or distant enough.

Second, all respondents from this conversation class are Indonesians and the have never been to an English speaking country. This results in more or less similar output from them because future-action strategy is way higher than all the others in the application of promising strategies. Similar learning process is suspected to be the key answer for Indonesian language do not have time-related words and tenses. As a result, they learn the same way of expressing something in the future with the word 'will'. Interestingly, many responses do not have time-related words at all and they do not belong to any strategy. It is highly likely that the mother tongue of the respondents influenced the quite massive use of non-strategy in expressing their promises and the lack of predictive-assertion strategy.

Finally, the actual use of the word 'promise' is mostly used by children, or by parents of children who happen to demand the parents to use the actual word. It is only natural that children are prone to literal meaning because of their young age, thus, their comprehension of 'meaning' behind words are also limited. This results in their preferences to use the word 'promise' when they are making a promise, or listening to others making a promise. Moreover, the respondents are all adults who attends conversation class in an advanced level. Maturity and higher comprehension level made promise-to-

act strategy not so popular even though it is still applied by several respondents randomly.

In conclusion, the writer is proposing a hypothesis that the promising strategies that are applied by the students of an EFL conversation class are mostly influenced by their learning process and not by distance, dominance and imposition. This learning process manifests itself into their schemata (previous knowledge) and language transfer.

CONCLUSION

The purposes of the study are to describe promises realized by Indonesian students of an EFL Conversation Class, to investigate the factors influence them in realizing promises, and to explain why such factors influence the realization of promises.

According to the research and discussion that has been done, it is concluded that Indonesian people as non-native English speakers do realize promises and use all the strategies in realizing promises on certain situations. This is supported by both DCT and role play data results. Moreover, the results show that 'future-action' is the most widely applied promise strategy in both data. The realization of promise itself comes naturally for Indonesians even as non-native speakers for the second strategy which is called future-action with the use of the word 'will'. The first strategy that is called promise-to-act that uses the actual word 'promise' comes the second in numbers, and the predictive-assertion is the last. There are several responses, though, that do not belong to any of the strategy mentioned above. Thus, they are put together in a non-strategy group.

The situations in DCT and role play data themselves are created by considering several probable factors; distance, dominance and imposition. Those factors, in fact, do influence the realization of these promises only to a certain degree. This happens because the probable factors are interwoven with each other in all situations so that it is impossible to only have one probable factor in a situation.

In addition, students' schemata of the language learning process and language transfer influence the application of promise strategies more than distance, dominance and imposition. This phenomena happens because those factors (distance, dominance and imposition) are relative for every individual.

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