



## The Relation Between Flor's Taxonomy and Trosborg's Modification in Giving Suggestions in Students' Spoken Presentation

Agus Dwiyanto<sup>✉</sup>, Dwi Rukmini, Widhiyanto Widhiyanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received 24 December 2020

Accepted 01 February 2021

Published 20 June 2021

#### Keywords:

EFL learners,  
Relation,  
Speech act realization,  
Suggestion.

### Abstract

Considering the intense presentation activity in the graduate classroom, the use of suggestion turns to be primary in delivering points. This triggered the researchers to study the issue. The primary objective of this study is to explain the relation between Flor's (2005) suggestion taxonomy and Trosborg's (1995) suggestion modification through the realization of speech acts of suggestion. The study applied a descriptive qualitative research method in which the data were gathered by using Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT). The participants of the study were 15 EFL students of a graduate program of a university in Semarang. The responses then were analyzed based on Flor's (2005) suggestion taxonomy and Trosborg's (1995) suggestion modification coding scheme. The results revealed that there were 146 suggestions produced. Conventionalized forms were realized more frequently than other Flor's taxonomies. Furthermore, negative imperative was the most used indirect strategy. The subjects realized more specific formulae of the most in conventionalized forms. The indirect strategy was realized equally. Politeness marker was used more frequently while grounder claimed the highest findings in external modification. The relation between the taxonomy and modification showed that direct taxonomy and external modification was the highest relation found in the suggestion realization. It is expected that this research can give profound contributions to university students, English teachers, and other fellow researchers to develop further research related to suggestion speech acts. At last, it is suggested that English teachers particularly are to raise EFL learners' pragmatic awareness by implementing appropriate teaching approach and method.

#### <sup>✉</sup>Correspondence Address:

Kampus Universitas Negeri Semarang, Kelud, Semarang, 50233  
E-mail: [august350203@gmail.com](mailto:august350203@gmail.com)

**p-ISSN 2087-0108**

**e-ISSN 2502-4566**

## INTRODUCTION

Language undoubtedly plays an essential role in being considered a useful tool to keep a relationship in expressing what people think, feel, and desire. People use language to construct and build interactions utilizing information exchange. They also make use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, both in oral and written forms, to communicate what they think, desire, and so forth. However, successful communication using language can be grasped when both speaker and hearer can convey and understand the right intentions, feelings, thoughts, and desires without conflict, leading to misunderstanding and miscommunication. Here, the hearers have to understand the words and sentences and the speakers' intention (Banerjee & Carell, 1988). The major difference between uttering sound and speech act is that one characteristically said to mean something by those sounds or marks (Searle, 1969; Bach, 2008).

Farnia et al. (2014) stated that the speech act of suggestion is regarded as a directive act in which the speaker gets the hearer to commit themselves to some future action. Speech act theory is closely related to the concept of politeness. Politeness is a familiar concept that can easily be found in every day human interaction and conveyed either verbally or non-verbally.

Brown and Levinson identified two kinds of face, namely negative and cheerful face. Negative face is the "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Positive face, on the other hand, is the positive self-image that everybody wants for himself (Brown & Levinson, 1987), a desire to be "ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired" (p.62).

The fundamental principle of the face-saving view is face-threatening acts. Face-threatening acts are the acts that intrinsically threaten face and are utterances that challenge either a person's positive face - with disapproval or contempt or negative face - through a request for action which impinges upon a person's

freedom from imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Though suggestion is given for the benefit of the hearer, Brown and Levinson (1987) regarded this speech act as a negative face-threatening act since the speaker imposes the hearer by getting him to perform an act. Failure to perform the act properly may represent the speaker as rude, offensive, or impolite (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2010). When making suggestions, people should take several points such as "urgency of suggestion, degree of embarrassment in the situation and social distance and social power between speaker and hearer" into account (Barenjee & Carrell, 1988, p. 319). Pragmatic as a science conveys the meaning that the various speech deliveries are strongly influenced by the speakers' background knowledge and culture based on the environment (Hartono, 2014).

A number of researchers conducted studies on speech acts; for instance, a study focusing on expressive speech acts (e.g. Tauchid, 2016; Budiasih et al. 2017), illocutionary acts (Siagian et al., 2017; Aziz et al., 2018), representative speech acts (Orin & Issy, 2017), and directive speech act (e.g. Winarti et al., 2015; Hiani, 2015). There are also many studies investigating factors that influence speech acts performances such as gender (Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2018) and cross-cultural aspects (Pishghadam & Sharafadini, 2011; Heidari-Shahreza, 2013; Farnia et al., 2014; Aufa, 2018 that not only analyzed but also compared the output of suggestions produced by the native students with those of native students from English speaking countries.

The research findings from Shofwan and Mujiyanto (2018) show that most undergraduate students in UNNES could utter suggestions in direct, indirect, and even conventionalized forms. Aminifard et al. (2014) stated that despite the countless number of suggestions encountered in daily conversations, the literature is remarkably sparse concerning studies with this speech act (Fernandez Guerra & Martinez-Flor, 2005). This was very important that this study be done to improve the quality of the previous study. According to Wierzbicka (1985) cited in Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011), speech act

studies have suffered from ethnocentrism, and there is a necessity to include non-western cultures (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989 in Afghari & Kaviani, 2005).

These are the following research questions regarding this research: 1) What is the most frequentative type of Flor's taxonomy used by the research subjects? 2) What is the most frequentative type of Trosborg's modification used by the research subjects? and 3) What is the relation between Flor's Taxonomy and Trosborg's Modification in giving suggestions in students' spoken presentation?

## METHODS

This linguistic study used a descriptive qualitative approach, which contains data in the form of words and sentences. Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it. Qualitative studies try to capture the perspectives that actors use as a basis for their actions in specific social settings.

This study's research participants were the graduate EFL learners from the English Department in one university in Semarang. At this level, they were expected and assumed to possess the ability to communicate in English effectively. The researchers also intended to investigate the students' ability to apply their communicative competence, especially in giving suggestions in any particular situation. The data were collected via voluntary action of the students from two classes by the year 2020. The willing participants were 15 in total, consisted of 4 males and 11 females. They were also estimated to represent every suggestion type based on the two taxonomies in the form of situational contexts given. The object of the study is the realization of suggestion. The chosen of the participants were voluntary, which means that the participants from the two classes were offered to be the subjects of the research and out of two classes, there were 15 who wholeheartedly volunteered and willing to follow the step for the sake of this study from the very beginning until

the end. The reasons why the rest of the subjects offered were refusing are vary: mostly due to the distance between the participants and the researcher and covid19 pandemic. Many students were going straight back to their hometown so that the rest of them unfortunately rejected the offering.

The writer used two instruments in this research. They are the Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT) via roleplay and structured interview that would be conducted after the ODCT finish, which is chosen because its practicality. However, the writer personally agreed with Rose and Martinez-Flor's statements, which claimed that the research method is considered and criticized for being too artificial as it presents short written segments rather than real-life extracts (Abed, 2011; Martinez-Flor, 2005). That is what turns to be the choice of only one Completion Task (ODCT) because it can be considered natural since the data is gathered from a 'spontaneous' answer from the subjects (Tran, 2003).

In the roleplay, the scenarios in the DCT were based on certain variables, which determined an appropriate level of politeness for suggestion-giving (Brown & Levinson, 1978). They were social distance (D), relative power (P), and the degree of imposition (R). D and P were controlled to reflect interactions commonly observed in an academic context on campus. Unlike the other two variables, R, which may affect subjects' strategy choice in the interaction, was not specifically mentioned in the role play description. However, the description of the social distance (+/- D) and power (+/- P) in each scenario may affect the degree of imposition of the suggestion.

To put it in another way, from the contextual description given for each situation (+/- D, +/- P), the subjects would infer the weight of imposition required for each suggestion situation. The ODCT was presented in 12 natural situations, which will be defined elaborately. The format of the twelve situations was taken from the research conducted by Aufa (2018), who employed the research of suggestion production involving Indonesian students in Australia. This

method was aimed to find out how learners realized the production of suggestion. A situation was read to each participant at a different time, and the participant needs to answer or give responses to the situation. This ODCT is expected to be able to elicit students' utterances in using Trosborg's (1995) notices in the form of external and internal modification, before or after the realization of suggestion.

In this step, before the ten situations were thoroughly explained to the research subjects, the detail regarding what to do during the roleplay was provided. The roleplay would not be started as long as the research subjects grasp the full comprehension of what to do and what not. After everything was settled, then the ten situations based on the real-life event were read one by one, and the research participants had to give suggestions based on the situation given. The researchers read the ten situations up to the time the participant answers would be recorded using an audio-tape recorder. After conducting and recording the ODCT result, the structured interview was conducted to obtain information about the participants' perception of speech act suggestions. Every respondent was asked to take part in the post-structured interview. The questions were read to the respondents, and their answers to the questions were audiotaped.

A preliminary study was conducted before proposing this study to the reviewers. The preliminary study was conducted to measure the appropriateness of this study to be implemented in the educational environment of the subject research. In the end, the preliminary study showed heterogeneous suggestions uttered based on both taxonomy and modification, resulting in the acceptance of this proposed study. Thus, according to those explanations, the writers were interested in witnessing how the graduate students of one university in Semarang realized the speech act of suggestions regarding the context given in any situation.

The triangulation adapted for this research was that the data triangulation. It was determined by the number of the research subjects, which acted as the main source of data. Data

triangulation was adaptable since the source of the data was more than one subject.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results revealed 146 suggestions produced by the speakers considering ten constellations of situations and parameters. Answering research question number one, the speakers realized conventionalized forms more frequently than other Flor's taxonomies; direct and indirect strategies. Furthermore, in realizing direct strategies, the speakers preferred employing negative imperative more often than the performative verb, noun of suggestion, and imperative. The subjects realized more specific formulae than possibility/probability, a modal should and need, and conditional in terms of the employment of conventionalized forms. The indirect strategy was realized equally in both impersonal and hint. The politeness marker was used more frequently than the other internal modification, i.e., conditional clause, interrogative, negation, appealer, hedge, subjectivizer, and understate. In the external modification, grounder claimed the highest findings than preparatory, imposition minimize, and disarmer. The relation between the taxonomy and modification showed that direct taxonomy and external modification was the highest relation to be found in the suggestion realization.

This study also revealed that students employed conventionalized form more frequently in realizing the speech acts of suggestions than other strategies, such as direct and indirect strategies. This goes hand in hand with the study conducted by Aufa (2018) where the subjects produced conventionalized forms more than the other types of suggestion taxonomy. The direct strategy was highly realized by using negative imperative to explicitly force speakers' ideas toward the hearers. They employed a negative imperative without noticing the formality of the situation. Besides, making suggestions using direct strategy may be too formal for most occasions, particularly among

equal status speakers. Therefore, the direct strategy realizations indicate that few speakers preferred to use explicit strategies to deliver their communication intention.

The conventionalized form performance was dominated by choosing specific formulae than other types of strategy. The specific formulae functioned differently in terms of formality and demonstrated different degrees or authority of the speaker's urgency. It proved that culture and two main systemic factors, like social distance and social status, affected students' performances in giving suggestions. At last, the indirect strategy performances in this present study were frequently low. There were only a few students who performed utterances which hearer should infer than giving choices as a suggestion to do an act for his/her benefit. Further, they tried to redress the face-threatening act of suggestion using other strategy types that could not be classified under Martinez-Flor's (2005) coding scheme. These strategies were adjunct to suggestions, which were classified as modification strategies.

Answering the research question number two, the internal modification was found numerous in this research compared to the external modification. This finding supports the studies conducted by Aufa (2018) and also Shofwan and Mujiyanto (2018). The findings show appeler as the highest findings in external modification. This indicated that this study's research subjects often softened and decreased the impositiveness of the suggestion utterances toward the hearers. Also, Pamungkas et al. (2018) uttered that internal modification rich in various utterances was used due to Indonesian society being highly stratified. Mafaza et al. (2018) added, according to Indonesian culture, it can also be concluded that the speakers give advice largely as an expression of friendliness or concern. The last research question will be answered in this section.

The answer for the third research question is that based on the research findings, the highest findings linking the relation between Flor's taxonomy (2006) and Trosborg's modification (1996) in suggestion uttered by the research

subjects is the relation of conventionalized form and internal modification. The linking or connection between the taxonomy and modification has never been conducted beforehand by the previous researchers, so that it made this study novel. Since both modification and taxonomy branch possess similar characteristic, for instance, the using of conditional clause to soften the impositiveness of suggestion utterance (Trosborg, 1995; Martinez-flor, 2005). In the end of the day, it was resulting in the founding of the relation between Flor's conventionalized form and Trosborg's internal modification to be the highest since each taxonomy and modification were the highest findings in their taxonomy and/or modification as well. It goes without question if the relation of the taxonomy modification would also be the highest compared with other relation found such as; direct-external, direct-internal, conventionalized-external, and lastly, indirect-internal. As explained before, Indonesian society is highly stratified that in terms of giving suggestions, it is likely that a greater variety of linguistic realization is employed so that conventionalized form is taken as the preference in uttering suggestion. Besides, the intention of the suggestion is expected to be understood by the hearer since the illocutionary force indicator appears in the utterances. The taxonomy will then come fit with the tools meant to employ to soften the impositiveness of the suggestion utterances in the form of downgrader. The downgraders were found in the internal modification, which goes the same with the conventionalized form of Flor's taxonomy in terms of a greater variety of categories. So it can be inferred that the relation of both taxonomy and modification would likely happen in suggestion utterances because both taxonomy and modification are linked to one another. It can also be said that modifications are tools that are used to employ a variety of suggestions available in the taxonomy.

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the realization of speech acts of suggestion by graduate EFL learners of one university in Semarang applied Conventionalised Form more frequently than Direct or Indirect strategies. They preferred to use negative imperative more frequently than noun of suggestion, negative imperative, or imperative strategies to perform direct strategy. Besides, conventionalized form was mostly realized by using specific formulae more than the others. On the other hand, they preferred to realize the indirect strategy by using hints more often than impersonal strategy. In addition, to redress the threatening toward the hearer, they used modification, in which internal modification was used more than the external one. The findings are expected to give profound contributions to university students, English teachers, and other fellow researchers to develop and conduct further research related to suggestion speech acts.

Finally, it is suggested that English teachers should raise the EFL learners' pragmatic awareness in the implementation of both teaching approaches and methods. Learning a language does not only know about meanings of the target language but also able to identify and employ pragmatic or language use in any situation and context. This pragmatic competence is very important for speakers to be successful in communication. Moreover, EFL learners need to learn native cultures, particularly in language use performance, so there will be no misinterpretation toward any utterances performed. Dealing with this current study it is expected that in teaching the English language to EFL learners, the language instructors need to explain the use of language and appropriate strategies to perform any utterances, particularly in producing speech acts of suggestions.

## REFERENCES

- Abed, A. Q. (2011). Pragmatic transfer in Iraqi EFL learners' refusals. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 1(2), 166-185.
- Afghari, A., & Kaviani, V. (2005). Apology speech act realization patterns in Persian. *IJAL*, 8(2), 1-28.
- Alzeebaree, Y., & Yavuz, M. (2018). Suggestion and refusal strategies in English by Kurdish undergraduate students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(5), 151.
- Aminifard, Y. et al. (2014). Speech act of suggestion across language proficiency and gender in Iranian context. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 3(5), 198-206.
- Aufa, F. (2018). The use of discourse completion task (DCT) as explicit instruction on Indonesian EFL learners' production of suggestion acts. *Journal of English and Education*, 5(2), 21-43.
- Aziz, A., Maqsood, B., Saleem, T., & Azam, S. (2018). The investigation of pragmatic transfer in the speech act of congratulations by Punjabi EFL learners. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(6), 240.
- Bach, K. (2008). Speech Acts and Pragmatics. *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language*, (January 2008), 147-167.
- Banerjee, J., & Carrell, P. L. (1988). Truck in your shirt, your squid: Suggestions in ESL. *Language Learning* 3, 8(3), 313-364.
- Budiasih, L. T. et al. (2017). Illocution in speech acts by foreign students in Indonesia as a foreign language classes. *IJOLTL*, 2(3), 213-225.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions on politeness: Strategies in social interaction*, 56-289. Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Farnia, M., Sohrabie, A., & Qusay, H. (2014). A Pragmatic analysis of speech act of suggestion among Iranian native speakers of farsi. *Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics (JELTAL)*. 2(2), 48-61.

- Fernandez Guerra, A., & Martinez-flor, A. (2005). Is teaching how to suggest a good suggestion? An empirical study based on EFL learners' accuracy and appropriateness when making suggestions. *Porta Linguarum*, 5, 91-108.
- Hartono, R. (2014). Translation analysis on utterances used in daily communication (a pragmatic view based on the English and Indonesian cultural perspectives), *Arab World English Journal*, 5, 248-261.
- Heidari-Shahreza, M. A. (2013). A sociolinguistic and cross-cultural investigation into the speech act of suggestion. *International Journal of Culture and History*. 1(1), 1-18.
- Hiani, K. E. (2015). Performing speech acts among Moroccan EFL advanced learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 479-485.
- Mafaza, S., Rustono, & Awalya. (2018). Teachers' directive speech in character building values in learning and teaching activities at SDN 05 Kebondalem Pemalang. *English Education Journal*, 7(1), 96-103.
- Martinez-Flor, A. (2005). A theoretical review of the speech act of suggesting: Towards a taxonomy for its use in FLT." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 18(1), 167-187.
- Martinez-Flor, A., & Uso-Juan, E. (2010). *Speech act performance: Ttheoretical, empirical and methodological issues*. John Benjamins Pub. Company.
- Orin, K., & Issy, Y. (2017). Representative speech acts performed by the debaters in an English debate competition. *English Education Journal*, 6(2), 76-86.
- Pamungkas, B. T., Rustono, & Utanto, Y. (2018). The Function of directive speech acts in Gamal Komandoko's Indonesian archipelago folklore text. *English Education Journal*, 7(2), 211-219.
- Pishghadam, R., & Sharafadini, M. (2011). A contrastive study into the realization of suggestion speech act: Persian Vs English. *Canadian Social Science*, 7(4), 230-240.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shofwan, M., & Mujiyanto, J. (2018). Realization of speech acts of suggestion by EFL learners of Universitas Negeri Semarang. *English Education Journal*, 8(1), 87-95.
- Siagian, E. S. L., Suwandi, S., & Andayani, A. (2018). Speech acts and functions of expressive speech of Polish BIPA Learners at UPT Bahasa UNS. *Lingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*, 12(1), 12.
- Tauchid, A. (2016). *The performance of expressive speech acts on Wayne Rooney's Facebook* [Master's Thesis, Universitas Negeri Semarang].
- Tran, G. Q. (2003). The naturalized role-play: an innovative methodology in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic research. *Reflections on English Language Teaching*, 2, 1-24.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Request, Complaints, and Apologies*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Winarti, D., et al. (2015). Variations of directive speech act in *Tembang Dolanan*. *Humaniora*, 27(3), 305-316.