Speech Act Representation of Doctor – Patient Interactions in Grey's Anatomy Serial

Amanda Puspanditaning Sejati*, Sifa Rini Handayani, Dedah Ningrum, Emi Lindayani, Ahmad Purnama Hudaya

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia
**Corresponding author. Email: amanda.puspanditaning@upi.edu*

ABSTRACT
The transition from face-to-face learning to distance learning is an example of COVID-19 pandemic effect. This condition is a challenge especially for vocational-based nursing education providers because during the COVID-19 pandemic the experience of students interacting with patients tends to be restricted. To identify the context of the interaction between medical personnel and patients, this study aims to identify the linguistic representation used by doctors when interacting with patients based on the type of speech used in the conversations. This study used a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach. The data source used was the doctor's speech in Grey's Anatomy. The analysis followed a theory of the types of speech action initiated by Searle. The results of this study indicate that the speech acts used by doctors can be categorized into representative (48.57%), directive (37.14%), commissive (8.57%), and expressive (5.71%). The results of this study are expected to enrich the teaching materials of English for Specific Purposes subject for Nursing students.

Keywords: *English, Grey's Anatomy, speech act*

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in life patterns are evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on global society. One of these impacts is the shift in learning modes from face-to-face learning to distance learning, which is implemented at all school levels in countries affected by COVID-19 (Jain, Lall, & Singh, 2021). This academic climate brings its own concerns for education providers, especially at the higher education level. As stated in the results of the Inside Higher Ed and Hanover Research survey of higher education administrators in 2020, some of the concerns in the provision of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic include financial stability, decreased student enrolment rates, virtual classroom arrangements, training facilities, and readiness of technological resources (Yancey, 2020).

This study focused on one of the issues related to training facilities for students, especially nursing students. The training facilities included health services providers, that is, students' practical areas. Students can have experience in interacting with patients while participating in clinical practice, and having the opportunity to hone their communication skills with patients. However, policies in the world of education during the COVID-19 pandemic limit student access to practice areas. This situation can be a challenge for nursing education providers because they are required to find ways to keep students exposed to the experience of doing clinical practice (Spurlock in Yancey, 2020).

Students – patient interaction in clinical practice session can indirectly hone pragmatic competence because students are exposed to contexts and linguistic features used in medical context interactions. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language functions appropriately in a social context that is useful for understanding the meaning conveyed by the speech partner (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016). This competency is important to be mastered by medical service providers because effective communication can increase the effectiveness of nursing intervention (Miller, 2002). In this context, communication skills are necessary because during this pandemic some health services have been into telemedical form, so that communication skills of giving medical treatments need to be considered (Hogikyan & Shuman, 2020). However, the absence of clinical practice sessions can make the pragmatic competencies needed to communicate with patients less honed.

An alternative that can be taken by lecturers to enhance students' pragmatic competence is exposing students to natural interactions. One of the media that contains a natural socio-cultural interaction is film, so it can be used as learning media (Jeon, 2018). In addition, the interactions presented in the film can provide an overview of the context and the linguistic features, so that it can be used in language learning, especially foreign language learning. Films are considered more realistic in presenting examples of language than the examples of artificial speech contained in textbooks (Martínez-Flor, 2005). In this point of view, one of the medical themed films that has the potential to be used as foreign language learning material is the TV series Grey's Anatomy. Students will get an overview of medical-themed interactions, as well as the values attached to the health care profession (doctors, nurses) in the film (Quick, 2009).

Pragmatic competence can be built through understanding speech acts (Abels, Kilale, & Vogt, 2020). This notion is based on aspects that exist in the speech such as words and actions behind the utterances. The theory of speech acts was initiated by Austin stating that there are three types of speech acts, namely locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions, which were later elaborated by Searle (Wallace et al., 2013). Searle categorizes illocutionary speech acts into five, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Putra, Nababan, & Marmanto, 2019). The concept of speech acts emphasizes that there is an action in the utterance. The actions contained in illocutionary speech acts can be identified by considering the context accompanied (who is the speaker and speech partner, when, and where the speech occurs).

A number of studies examining speech acts have been carried out in the realm of linguistic studies. Observations on speech acts lead to the conclusion that speech acts can be used to compare patterns of cross-cultural communication (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016; Abels, Kilale, & Vogt, 2020); and the pattern of doctor – patient communication in both American and Japanese cultures have its own characteristics according to the doctor's speech acts (Ohtaki, Ohtaki, & Fetters, 2003). In addition, speech act studies can also be used to observe communication patterns in the medical profession, including speech act observations can be used to assess the efficacy of interventions (Wallace et al., 2013); speech acts used by doctors in interacting with patients have their own characteristics (Černý, 2007); the study of speech acts in the interaction of doctors and patients along with the analyzed data can be used as teaching materials in foreign language learning (Martínez-Flor, 2005; Liu, Zhang, & Zhu, 2015) and observations regarding speech acts in The Good Doctor film show that there are types of assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive speech acts (Hayugraha, Nababan, & Marmanto, 2019).

Based on the previous studies on speech acts, the study of the types of speech acts produced by doctors when interacting with patients in the film has not been described. Therefore, this study aims to present an overview of the types of speech acts produced by doctors and their linguistic realization in the TV series Grey's Anatomy. The results of the analysis and the data can be used as teaching materials in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for nursing students, and are expected to be a medium to improve the pragmatic competence of nursing students as a provision to interact with patients. The significance of this study supports on building nurses' socio-pragmatic skills in spoken English professional communication (Lum, Dowedoff, Bradley, Kerekes, & Valeo, 2014). In addition, the development of pragmatic competence has a significant impact in increasing the nursing care ability of nursing students (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002). This notion shows that pragmatic studies can give contribution for ESP purposes (Triki, 2002). Moreover, understanding of linguistic feature selection that considers pragmatic aspects is necessary on delivering nursing care (Purwaningsih & Pratama, 2020; Robling et al., 2016).

2. METHOD

This study used a descriptive design by using qualitative approach. It was appropriated with the research objective, which was to describe social phenomena in the form of utterances that appeared in the interaction between doctors and patients. In line with this, descriptive research was used to describe phenomena, circumstances, perceptions, individual traits, and the spread of a symptom (Silverman, 2005). In addition, the data analyzed in this study were doctors' utterances. The data can be said as qualitative because they contained words (Somantri & Muhidin, 2011). In addition, this study used a pragmatic approach in data analysis step, because the analysis process examined the meaning of speech by considering the accompanying context.

This study does not have human subject as respondents because the data observed were doctors' speech in Grey's Anatomy series. The data source was Grey's Anatomy serial episodes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 18 in Season 15. The episodes selected had the highest number of doctor-patient interactions among other episodes in Season 15. The data were taken by using observation, listening, and note-taking techniques.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that speech acts that appeared include four types i.e., representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. The data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Doctor's Speech Acts in Grey's Anatomy Serial

Speech Acts	Frequency	%
Declarative	0	0
Representative	147	48.84
Expressive	25	8.31
Directive	101	33.55
Commissive	28	9.3

Based on the data in Table 1, several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. The first conclusion is the most dominant type of speech act used by doctors in doctor-patient interactions is representative (48.84%). This tendency can indicate the existence of communication that aims to build a patient's understanding of the medical treatment that will be received. The second conclusion is the next type of speech act that dominates the doctor's speech is directive (33.55%). The appearance of this speech act can indicate the doctor's efforts to direct patients to improve the quality of health. The third conclusion is the use of commissive speech acts (9.3%) which can be said to be minimal indicating the doctor's efforts to promise health services and the probability of recovery. The fourth is doctors tend to use less expressive speech acts (8.31%). This can be due to the existence of a doctor's professional code of ethics that requires being able to provide professional decisions independently. The appearance of commissive and expressive speech acts that are not so significant in doctor-patient interactions shows that these two types of speech acts are not very meaningful in doctor-patient interactions (Černý, 2007).

The following discussion will describe the types of speech acts that appear and the examples. The classification of speech acts used refers to the category of speech acts according to Searle (in Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016).

3.1. Representative

Representative is speech act used to describe the world. Based on the data obtained, the actions that are realized by using this type of speech acts are to state, show, explain, assert, deny, describe, and agree. Examples of representative speech acts can be seen in speech [9a.32].

Cece: So, my broken-down heart is costing me my kidneys now?

Dr. Meredith Grey:
It's not your heart. It's the anti-rejection meds you take for your heart. They had a toxic effect on your kidneys. [9a.32]

Cece: I need a kidney transplant.

Meredith Grey's (doctor) speech shows the act of explaining health problems to Cece (patient). This can be seen from the patient's answer who concludes that she will receive a kidney transplant.

3.2. Directive

Directive is speech act used to ask someone to do something. The actions that are realized using this type of speech act are direct, ask, suggest, forbid, ensure, invite, stop, and command. Examples of directive speech acts can be seen in speech [1b.2].

Dr. Jackson Avery:

Hey, Nisha, I'm gonna check out you back, all right? I might sting a little bit. [1b.2]

Jackson Avery (doctor) said the words when dealing with traffic accident patients. The utterance shows the act of asking the patient to get ready to receive medical action that will make the patient less comfortable.

3.3. Commissive

Commissive is speech act that used to ask the speaker to do something. The actions that are realized using this type of speech act are: promise, refuse, and offer. Examples of commissive speech acts can be seen in speech [1a.1].

Dr. Maggie Pierce:

Cece, I'll be right back. I'm gonna let her finish your EKG [1a.1]. *You sit tight.*

Cece: Thank you.

Dr. Maggie Pierce: Okay.

Maggie Pierce's (doctor) speech shows promising actions to carry out examinations in the future.

3.4. Commissive

Expressive is speech act used to express the emotional state of the speaker. The actions that are realized using this type of speech act are surprised, condolence, greeting, congratulate, regret, apologize, proud, thanking, and amazed. Examples of expressive speech acts can be seen in speech [11b.30].

Dr. Meredith Grey: So sorry. She didn't make it. [11b.30]

Cece: I don't want it.

Meredith Grey's (doctor) speech shows an act of mourning the death of an accident victim. This was said to Cece (the patient) who was also involved in the accident.

The findings of this study indicate the dominance of two types of speech acts used by doctors in doctor-patient interactions i.e., representative and directive. The use of representative speech acts seems to indicate a flow of information from doctors for the purpose of explaining to patients. The use of directive speech act may indicate the doctors' efforts to provide direction to the patients (Adegbite & Odebunmi, 2006). In addition, expressive

speech acts are minimally used by doctors because these speech acts are commonly used by patients related with fact that patients need treatment and healing (Al-Masshdani, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the data collected were dominated by representative (48.84%) and directive (33.55 %) speech acts, it shows that the doctors have power in doctor-patient communication. In this side, doctors are considered as the source of information in providing explanations regarding the patient's health condition. This social function is in line with representative speech act. In addition, doctors have an important role in improving the quality of patient health, which is the doctor's professional duty. In an effort to meet these professional demands, doctors are required to provide direction to patients regarding suggestions that support the success of medical interventions received by patients. This social function is in line with directive speech acts.

The representation of doctors' speech acts presented in this study can provide an illustration that the selection of linguistic items is necessary on delivering medical health services. In this point of view, the speakers need to consider context of situation in selecting the linguistic features to use. This research is expected to contribute to the realm of ESP learning for medical dan nursing students. In addition, this study has several limitations, including the use of data in the film considered artificial. the use of limited theory on classifying speech acts, and the number of episodes being chosen.

REFERENCES

Abels, M., Kilale, A., & Vogt, P. (2020). Speech acts addressed to Hadza infants in Tanzania: Cross-cultural comparison, speaker age, and camp livelihood. *First Language*. 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0142723720972000

Adegbite, W., & Odebunmi, A. (2006). Discourse tact in doctor-patient interactions in English: An analysis of diagnosis in medical communication in Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *15*(4), 499-519.

Al-Masshdani, F. M. T. (2019). *Speech Acts in Doctor-Patient Linguistic Communication*. (Master's Thesis, Middle East University, 2019). Retrieved from https://scholar.alaqsa.edu.ps/6064/

Bosher, S., & Smalkoski, K. (2002). From needs analysis to curriculum development: designing a course in health-care communication for immigrant students in the USA. *English for Specific Purposes*, *21*(1), 59-79. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00002-3

Černý, M. (2007). On the function of speech acts in doctor-patient communication. *Linguistica*, 1-15.

Jain, S., Lall, M., & Singh, A. (2021). Teachers' voices on the impact of COVID-19 on school education: Are Ed-Tech companies really the panacea? *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *18*(1), 58-89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184920976433

Putra, A. H. W., Nababan, M. R., & Marmanto, S. (2019). Speech acts found in the movie "The Good Doctor". *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, *6*(5), 840-848.http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v6i5.1150

Hogikyan, N. D., & Shuman, A. G. (2020). Otolaryngologists and the doctor-patient relationship during a pandemic. *Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery*, *163*(1), 63–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0194599820922990

Jeon, M. (2018). Analyzing Novel Interactions in Science Fiction Movies in Human Factors and HCI Courses. *Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting*, *62*(1), 336-340. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541931218621078

Liu, Y., Zhang, S., & Zhu, L. (2015). Analysis the Positive Role of Speech Act Theory in Promoting the Oral English Skills of Doctor-patient Communication. *Chinese Medical Ethics*, *5*, 734-736.

Lum, L., Dowedoff, P., Bradley, P., Kerekes, J., & Valeo, A. (2015). Challenges in oral communication for internationally educated nurses. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, *26*(1), 83–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659614524792

Martínez-Flor, A. (2005). A theoretical review of the speech act of suggesting: Towards a taxonomy for its use in FLT. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingles*, *18*, 167-187.

Miller, E. A. (2002). Telemedicine and doctor–patient communication: a theoretical framework for evaluation. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, *8*(6), 311–318. https://doi.org/10.1258/135763302320939185

Ohtaki, S., Ohtaki, T., & Fetters. M. D. (2003). Doctor–patient communication: a comparison of the USA and Japan. *Family Practice*, *20*(3), 276-282. https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmg308

Purwaningsih, N. K., & Pratama, A. D. Y. (2020). Caregivers experience in performing interpersonal communication and directive speech acts with elderly in Japan and Bali nursing home. *Retorika: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, *6*(1), 78-84. https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.6.1.1659.78-84

Quick, B. L. (2009). The effects of viewing Grey's anatomy on perceptions of doctors and patient satisfaction. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *53*(1), 38-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150802643563

Robling, M., Bekkers, M. J., Bell, K., Butler, C. C., Cannings-John, R., Channon, S., ... & Torgerson, D. (2016). Effectiveness of a nurse-led intensive home-visitation programme for first-time teenage mothers (Building Blocks): a pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet*, *387*(10014), 146-155. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)00392-X

Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research, a practical handbook* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Somantri, A., & Muhidin, S. A. (2011). *Aplikasi statistika dalam penelitian* [Applied Statistics in Research]. Bandung: Pustaka Setia.

Triki, M. (2002). Pragmatics for ESP Purposes. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, *2*(1).

Wallace, B. C., Trikalinos, T. A., Laws, M. B., Wilson, I. B., & Charniak, E. (2013, October). A generative joint, additive, sequential model of topics and speech acts in patient-doctor communication. In *Proceedings of the 2013 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (pp. 1765-1775).

Yancey, N. R. (2020). Disrupting Rhythms: Nurse Education and a Pandemic. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, *33*(4), 299-302. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894318420946493

Yazdanfar, S., & Bonyadi, A. (2016). Request Strategies in Everyday Interactions of Persian and English Speakers. *SAGE Open*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016679473