

**THE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN UNDERSTANDING  
PRAGMATICS MEANING OF WRITTEN UTTERANCES**  
*Prestasi Mahasiswa Dalam Pemahaman Makna Pragmatik Dari Ucapan  
Tertulis*

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research was attempted to find out the achievement of the sixth semester students of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar especially Academic Year 2008 in understanding pragmatics meaning of the written utterances. This study employed a Descriptive research method. The sample of this study consisted of 40 students of the Sixth Semester Students of English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar which was selected by using simple random sampling. The instrument of the study was an objective test in the form of checklist and identifying the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts of written utterances which consisted of 35 items. The test was administered to know the students' achievement in understanding the pragmatic meaning of written utterances. The data obtained from the test was analyzed quantitatively. The mean score obtained from the test was 5, 87 for locutionary act, 6, 12 for illocutionary act, and 6, 09 for perlocutionary act. The data showed that the students' achievement in understanding the pragmatics meaning of written utterances especially the three layers of speech acts was fair.*

**Key Words:** *Pragmatics, locutionary act, illocutionary act, perlocutionary act.*

*Penelitian ini berusaha untuk mengetahui pencapaian mahasiswa semester enam Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar terutama Tahun Akademik 2008 dalam memahami pragmatik arti dari ucapan-ucapan tertulis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian deskriptif. Sampel penelitian ini terdiri dari 40 siswa dari Semester Keenam Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar yang dipilih dengan menggunakan simple random sampling. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah tes objektif dalam bentuk checklist dan mengidentifikasi tindakan locutionary, ilokusi, dan perlocutionary dari ucapan-ucapan tertulis yang terdiri dari 35 item. Tes diberikan untuk mengetahui prestasi siswa dalam memahami makna pragmatik ucapan tertulis. Data yang diperoleh dari tes dianalisis secara kuantitatif. Rata-rata yang diperoleh dari tes itu 5,87 untuk tindakan locutionary, 6,12 untuk tindakan ilokusi, dan 6,09 untuk tindakan perlocutionary. Data menunjukkan bahwa prestasi siswa dalam memahami pragmatik yang arti dari ucapan-ucapan tertulis terutama tiga lapisan tindak tutur adalah seimbang.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Pragmatik, tindakan locutionary, tindak ilokusi, tindakan perlocutionary.*

Wijana (1996, 1) states that linguistics as the study of language has many branches such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Semantics and pragmatics as branches of linguistics cannot be separated from the language skill especially for an English language students. To know and



comprehend the meaning of a context is very important to get the same comprehension between the speaker and the listener or between the writer and the reader, so that the objective of the communication can be reached. Pragmatics as one of language study has the important roles because by learning and mastering it, students are not only able to understand the formal structure of the language but also the functional structure of language that concern about how the formal-structures have the function in communication. Another reason about the importance of knowing and understanding the pragmatics meaning in a context or sentence is in interpretation or translation. It is because sometimes there is an ambiguity context so that it causes misinterpretation or mistranslation.

Meaning is un-separated part from language so it cannot be denied the importance of the context of language use because the meaning is always changing based on the context of use. There are two types of meaning; they are semantic meaning (the fixed context-free meaning) and pragmatic meaning (the meaning which the words take on in a particular context, between particular people (Cook, 1990: 29). An ambiguity word, if stands alone will become semantic meaning, but if it is used in a context, it will become pragmatic meaning, for example, the word “*bank*”.

Semantic meaning : Place to save money, side part of a river  
Pragmatic meaning : I save my money in the bank.

From the sentence, we know that the word “bank” means the place to save money. Therefore, we can conclude that the word produced may be the same, but the meaning is different.

### **The Definitions of Pragmatics**

According to Wierzbicka (1991: 6) pragmatics as the branch of linguistics dealing with contexts in which people use language and with the behavior of speakers and listeners. Cahyono (1995: 214) further mention that the term *pragmatics* was preliminary developed by Charles Morris (1938) who outlined the general shape of signs, or semiotics. In semiotics, there are three branches of inquiry: 1) syntactics, the study of formal relation of signs to one another; 2) semantics, the study of the relation of signs to objects to which the signs are applicable; and 3) pragmatics, the study of the relation of signs to interpreters.



Leech in Wijana (1996, 4) defines that pragmatic is how the language is used in communication, and Parker in Wijana (1996, 2) also has the same definition that pragmatics is distinct from grammar, which is the study of the internal structure of language. Pragmatic is the study of how language is used to communicate.

In Longman Dictionary (1987), pragmatics is defined as the study of language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used, while Kempson (1975, 138) states that a pragmatic theory is a theory which has to explain how language is used to enable any speaker to communicate with any hearer.

According to Levinson (1987, 21), pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding. Hence it is stressed that in order to understand the utterance meaning, it is important to have knowledge out of the sentence meaning, such as social-culture and context of the utterance. While Mornes in Levinson (1976, 1) argues that the notion of pragmatics is the study of relation of signs to interprets.

Another linguist who works on pragmatics, Atchison (1995, 93), argues that pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies aspects of meaning which cannot be captured by semantics theory. Hence, pragmatics deals with the discussion about all aspects of utterance. Different scholars define pragmatics differently, but they all agree that pragmatics deals with the study of language in use by highlighting the importance of context to reveal the meaning employed in an activity, deed, or practice.

### **Some Aspects in Pragmatics**

Leech in Wijana (1996, 10-13) point out a number of aspects that should be considered in pragmatic study:

1. *Speaker and hearer/writer and reader*

This is concern about age, social-economical background, gender, level of intimacy, etc.

2. *Context of utterance*



It is a context in all physical aspects or social setting which is relevant with the utterance. Context is all the knowledge background which is understood together by the speaker and hearer.

3. *The aim of the utterance*

The forms of utterance that are expressed by the speaker have certain aims and functions. The speaker expresses various kinds of utterance to express the same aim or various aims can be uttered with the same utterances. In pragmatics, speaking is a goal oriented activities.

4. *Utterance as an action or activity*

Pragmatics is connected with verbal act which happens in a certain situation

5. *Utterance as a result of verbal act*

Utterance that is used in pragmatic is a form of action. Therefore, utterance that is produces is a form of verbal act. For example, in a sentence “Is your hair not too long?” can be interpreted as question or command. In this relation can be seen that there is a basic difference between sentence and utterance.

**The Study of Pragmatics.**

Pragmatics includes in its study such things as deixis, presupposition, conversational implicature, speech acts, and other aspects of discourse structure (Cahyono, 1995: 214-220).

Verschueren (1999: 18) mentioned that topics that are common in pragmatics are deixis, speech acts, implicit meaning, and conversation; while Trosborg (1995: 6) stated that deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and conversational structure are treated as key areas of linguistic pragmatics.

According to Richards, et al (1987: 224), pragmatics includes the study of:

1. How the *interpretation* and use of utterance depend on knowledge of the real world.
2. How the speakers use and understand speech act
3. How the structure of sentences is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

**METHODOLOGY**



This research employed a descriptive method. It aimed at giving a description about the students' achievement in understanding pragmatics meaning of the written utterances. The population was the sixth semester students of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar that consisted of 40 students as the sample which were selected by using simple random sampling. The research instrument was the objective test in the form of identifying the locutionary, perlocutionary, and illocutionary acts in the written utterances that consisted of 35 items in which 10 items about locution, 10 items about illocution, and 15 items about perlocution.

## FINDINGS

### 1. The comparison of the students' achievement on the three layers of speech acts.

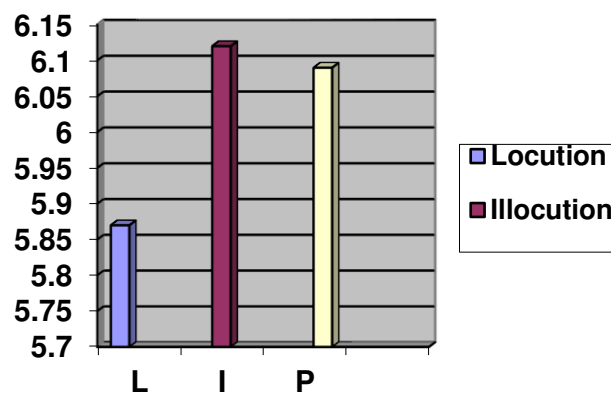


Figure 1: The students' mean score

From the chart above, we can see the distribution of the students' understanding about the three layers of speech acts are locutionary act 5.87 classified as *fair*, illocutionary act 6.12 classified as *fair*, and perlocutionary act 6.09 classified as *fair*, too. The higher mean score of the students in understanding all three layers of speech acts is illocutionary act. Therefore, the students' achievement in understanding the pragmatics meaning of written utterances is 6.03 and classified as *fair*. It can be concluded that the students have the lowest achievement in understanding locutionary act, and the students have the highest achievement in understanding perlocutionary act, while the students' achievement in understanding illocutionary act is lower than perlocutionary act and higher than locutionary act.

## 2. The students' achievement in understanding the speech acts of written utterances.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the students' score

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9.6 – 10	0	0 %
2.	Very Good	8.6 – 9.5	2	5 %
3.	Good	7.6 – 8.5	14	35 %
4.	Fairly Good	6.6 – 7.5	12	30 %
5.	Fair	5.6 – 6.5	9	22.5 %
6.	Poor	3.6 – 5.5	3	7.5 %
7.	Very Poor	0 – 3.6	0	5 %
Total			40	100 %

The table below shows the frequency and percentage of the students' score of speech acts in written utterances. In the table, we can see that no student get *excellent* and *very poor* score. There are two students get *very good* score, 14 students get *good* score, 12 students get *fairly good* score, nine students get *fair* score, and three students get *poor* score. The highest percentage of the students' score is in the *good* level where there are 35 % of the students can achieve it, and the lowest percentage is in the *very good* level where there is only 2% students can achieve it.

## 3. The students' achievement in understanding the locutionary act of written utterances.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the students' score

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9.6 – 10	0	0 %
2.	Very Good	8.6 – 9.5	0	0 %
3.	Good	7.6 – 8.5	8	20 %
4.	Fairly Good	6.6 – 7.5	6	15 %
5.	Fair	5.6 – 6.5	8	20 %
6.	Poor	3.6 – 5.5	16	40 %
7.	Very Poor	0 – 3.6	2	5 %
Total			40	100 %

The table above shows that no students get *excellent* and *very good* score. There are eight students get *good* and *fair* score, six students get *fairly good* score, 16 students get *poor* score, and two students get *very poor* score. From the percentage above, we can conclude that the highest percentage of the students'



score is in the *poor* level where 40 % students get it, and the lowest percentage of the students' score is in the *very poor* level where there is only 5 % student get it.

#### 4. The students' achievement in understanding the illocutionary act of written utterances.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of the students' score

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9.6 – 10	0	0 %
2.	Very Good	8.6 – 9.5	0	0 %
3.	Good	7.6 – 8.5	4	10 %
4.	Fairly Good	6.6 – 7.5	8	20 %
5.	Fair	5.6 – 6.5	18	45 %
6.	Poor	3.6 – 5.5	10	25 %
7.	Very Poor	0 – 3.6	0	0 %
Total			40	100 %

The table above shows that no student get *excellent*, *very good*, and *very poor* score. There are four students get *good* score, eight students get *fairly good* score, 18 students get *fair* score, and ten students get *poor* score. From the percentage above, we can draw a conclusion that the highest percentage of the students' score is in the *fair* level where 45 % students get it, and the lowest percentage of the students' score is in the *good* level where there is only 10 % student get it.

#### 5. The students' achievement in understanding the perlocutionary act of written utterances.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of the students' score

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	9.6 – 10	0	0 %
2.	Very Good	8.6 – 9.5	0	0 %
3.	Good	7.6 – 8.5	1	2.5 %
4.	Fairly Good	6.6 – 7.5	16	40 %
5.	Fair	5.6 – 6.5	8	20 %
6.	Poor	3.6 – 5.5	15	37.5 %
7.	Very Poor	0 – 3.6	0	0 %
Total			40	100 %

The table above shows that no student get *excellent*, *very good*, and *very poor* score. There are one student gets *good* score, 16 students get *fairly good* score, eight students get *fair* score, and 15 students get *poor* score. From the percentage above, we can conclude that the highest percentage of the students' score is in the *fairly good* level where 40 % students get it, and the lowest



percentage of the students' score is in the *good* level where there is only 2.5 % student get it.

## DISCUSSION

The fact that the students have the lowest ability in understanding the locutionary act is because the students can not recognize the literal meaning of the utterances. On the contrary, the students get better score in understanding the illocutionary act than the locutionary act. Different from the locutionary act, the illocutionary act is very understandable so that the students are easy to recognize and identify it. Meanwhile the students get better score in understanding the perlocutionary act compared with the locutionary act, and get lower score in understanding it compared with the illocutionary act. It is because the perlocutionary act is almost the same with illocutionary act so that the students get confused in distinguishing between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the data analysis and findings, it is concluded that the sixth year students of English Department, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar have fair achievement in understanding the pragmatics meaning of written utterances especially the three layers of speech acts. It is indicated by the mean score 6, 032 and classified as fair.

Realizing that the students only get fair achievement in understanding the three lowers of speech acts, it is suggested that the teachers be careful in teaching semantics, pragmatics, syntax, and discourse analysis because these four subjects related to one another and most students thinks that these are difficult subjects.

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