

# LOCUTION AND PERLOCUTION IN ENGLISH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Yoel Wibowo<sup>5</sup>

## ***Abstract***

*This research was intended to provide an analysis on English teacher's locution influence towards students' perlocution in an Indonesian EFL classroom as well as an elaboration towards the aspects influencing it. This research observed the flow between teachers' locution and students' perlocution within two different secondary grade EFL classes by analyzing the transcription of verbal recordings taken during a classroom interaction. This research revealed that the teacher-students verbal interaction within the EFL classroom sample, may be assessed through the students' response; the use of English as the target language; the quantity of maxim disorders; the use of triggering questions, fillers, confirmation requests, and the rhetorical questions used by the students. On the other hand, aspects considered to be influential to build the students' perlocution upon the teachers' locution covered the teachers' physical appearance and grooming, respect from the students, teaching method, ability to handle the class, relationship with the students, teaching style, voice quality, consistency in using English as the target language inside the classroom, and willingness to assist.*

***Keywords:*** pragmatics, speech acts, locution, perlocution, classroom interaction, communicative competence

## **Introduction**

Interesting things may happen during ELT processes in an EFL class. Teacher-students interaction in English may sometimes lead to an interesting phenomenon, especially if the teacher is not a native speaker of English, as commonly found in Indonesian EFL

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<sup>5</sup> Yoel Wibowo (2013-2016), male, teacher, Gloria 2 Christian Junior High School; (2016- now), lecturer, Petra Christian University, Faculty of Economics, Hotel Management Program.

classes. Interestingly, this may occur without being realized by both the English teacher and the students (the participants of the interaction). The phenomenon may somehow be identified using a pragmatics study. In an EFL classroom context, both teacher and students have to choose the best utterances in order to maintain the harmony and the flow of the teaching-learning process. The teacher always tries to produce meaningful utterances when delivering the learning material across the interlocutors (the students), and vice-versa. However; realized or not, the utterances they speak are not merely a collection of words; moreover, they contain an action; as Yule (1996, p.81) describes, "In speaking, people do not only produce words and some grammatical structures but they also produce an action within their utterances.". Based on Yule's brainstorm stated above, the writer can remark that the action performed through the people's utterances is definitely inevitable. The actions contained within the utterances can be studied using a particular linguistics discipline, namely Speech Acts Theory. It is considered as a branch of pragmatics discipline which specifies itself in studying actions within a person's utterance. Austin is the first linguist who states an idea that a language can be used to imply an action, as written in Cummings (1999, p.8), "Austin is the first person who expresses his idea that a language can be used to imply an action through the separation between constative and performative utterance". Keith (2005, p. 673) describes Austin's basic idea as follows:

"Austin was convinced that we do not just use language to say things (make statements), but also to do things (perform actions). He formalized this opposition in his so-called performative hypothesis (which he would later abandon) by contrasting two types of utterances: constative utterances, or constatives, and performative utterances, or performatives."

Locution and perlocution, without putting the illocution aside, are inseparable between one another as they reflect an ongoing interaction. Locution may occur in the form of questions, orders or commands, requests, cautions or prohibitions, and many others. Basically, locution refers to the stimuli produced by the encoder of a message, which demands a suitable response. In relation to the locution, perlocution refers to the response towards the stimuli produced by the decoder of a message; a good

perlocution should be 'in-line' with its locution, it should meet the response that is expected by the encoder of the message.

Several previous researchers have tried to analyze the use of Speech Acts in an English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The one written by Kurdghelashvili (2015) was aimed to investigate EFL school children and teacher's communicative competence as reflected on the extent they practice politeness strategies and speech acts (such as thanking, requesting, complimenting, commanding, and so on) in an EFL classroom. A similar study was conducted by Zayed (2014) on his research entitled *Jordanian EFL Teachers' and Students' Practice of Speech Acts in the Classroom*. The research was aimed to analyze the extent Speech Acts (apologizing, complimenting, greeting, requesting, and thanking) being spoken by both teachers and students in the classroom. Another research study found was from Pishghadam and Kermanshahi's (2011) research entitled *Speech Acts of Correction: The Way Iranian EFL Learners Correct Their Teachers*, which was aimed to explore the way Iranian students corrected their teachers when they made mistakes in class. The previous researches mentioned before shared some similarities with this research: they analyzed the use of Speech Acts in EFL classroom interactions; nevertheless, since those researches were conducted using Georgian, Jordanian, and Iranian context and point of view, the results of this research are only suitable to be used there. Different culture means different way of thinking, and that is the gap that will be closed by the researcher, by conducting the almost similar research in Indonesian context.

### **Locution, Illocution, and Perlocution**

Austin (cited in Levinson 1983, p. 236) gives a complete definition of locution, illocution, and also perlocution as the following:

- ) locution: utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference
- ) illocution: the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it
- ) perlocution: the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence. Such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance.

As people speak to their interlocutor(s), they produce a locution act, which is merely the sentence itself. Locution act is no more than an action to combine some words in a syntactical or grammatical agreement. Keith (2005, p. 675) defines locution act as the act of using words to form sentence that makes sense in a language with correct grammar and pronunciation.

Inside the sentence produced by people, there must be an intended meaning. Intended meaning can be described as a speaker's hope for the interlocutor(s). A speaker consciously or subconsciously hopes his/her interlocutor to do a particular action or feel a certain thing inside his/her utterances. The actions (either classified by Austin or Searle) exist in this 'dimension'. The actions are for example telling, ordering, reminding, doing, and some utterances which have conventional power (Austin, cited in Cummings 1999, p. 9). Last, perlocutionary act is the effect done by the addressee or interlocutor.

### **Classroom Interaction**

An interaction process, especially within an EFL classroom, is inseparable from a teaching-learning activity. As defined by Celce-Murcia (1987, cited in Nurmasitah, 2010), interaction is a process whereby two or more people engaged in reciprocal actions. In general, interaction can be classified into verbal and/or non-verbal; for example, a teacher commands the student to sit (verbal locution) and the student responds it by sitting down (non-verbal perlocution); other case: in a spelling ELT class, a teacher points a word written on the whiteboard using a pointer (non-verbal locution), then all of the students start spelling the designated word (verbal perlocution). Classroom interaction is normally dominated by teacher and students' talk, in which having their own dominant patterns (Rashidi and Rafieerad, 2010, p.100). The dominant patterns in teacher's talk are initiating acts (eliciting, directing, nominating, informing, recapitulating, framing, starting, and checking) and responding acts (evaluating, accepting, commenting, and providing clue); while the dominant patterns in students' talk involve responding (replying, apologizing), and initiating (requesting, eliciting, and interrupting). Interestingly, it is important to notice that actually both the teacher and students' talk may be in the form of locution (initiating) and responding (perlocution), which can be uttered based on the demand of the situational context.

According to Seedhouse (1996, p. 17), a good classroom interaction should be genuine or natural: decisions about who says what to whom and when, should occur spontaneously. Seedhouse (1996, p. 23) also argues that a natural and genuine interaction in EFL classroom can be achieved through a sociolinguistic approach to communication, meaning that interaction in an EFL classroom appears best when there is no pressure or intimidation from either the teacher to the student, and vice-versa.

### **Research Method**

This research focused on both the students and English teacher's interaction in an EFL classroom, as well as on Speech Acts-related utterances and responses found during the ELT process as a reflection of both parties' communicative competence.

For this research, the researcher decided to adopt a triangulation by data methods as a means of data triangulation. Triangulation by data method or methodological triangulation utilizes 'different research methods' to improve the research validity (Annie, 2014, p.277). The core of this type of triangulation lied on the comparison between methods used to gather the research data. By applying this type of triangulation, the researcher compared the data that was previously acquired by both methods (verbal classroom interaction and interview) to confirm the similarities and differences between those two, in order to achieve a good research validity rate.

For the classroom interaction recording, the participants consisted of two English teachers (Ms. P and Ms. M, each teaching two English classes) with all of their students (from four different English classes) in junior high level grade seven and eight of a National Plus Christian Junior High School located in Eastern Surabaya. Both of the classroom interaction recording and the interview sessions were conducted in that school. The interview participants were also selected from the same English teachers (Ms. P and Ms. M), along with six representative students that were taught by those teachers. The researcher himself was the key instrument of this research, since the analysis was processed by him using the data obtained from the subjects of the research.

As the supporting tool, the voice recorder device was initially checked to ensure that it would be working during the recording process, and the device storage was also prepared to fit both classroom interaction and interview recording data. Since the researcher depended greatly on the transcription result to answer the first research question; a transcriber software program and a

checklist containing both teachers and students' request (locution) and response (perlocution) were utilized during the transcription and analysis process to help the researcher transcribing the recorded classroom conversation and interview sessions, and to list each locution and perlocution utterance occur during the conversation. In order to answer the second research question, the researcher utilized the data taken from the interview conducted to both the teachers and students. In addition to the research instruments mentioned above, an interview guide was also utilized to assist the researcher in compiling the guiding questions for the interview process.

Thorough verbal sentences in which the locution or perlocution settled in were considered as the unit of analysis. From this unit of analysis, the researcher sorted any verbal utterances that contained either locution or perlocution, these utterances were then considered as the research data, which were obtained from teacher-students classroom verbal interaction during teaching-learning activity within an ELT class at the designated Junior High School. For this classroom interaction, there were four recorded meetings from two different teachers (the senior and the novice).

The researcher recorded the English teachers and students classroom interaction using the voice recorder device to capture the verbal interaction during the teaching – learning activity, this was essential for the researcher, in order to answer the first research question. Before the classroom interaction recording process, the teacher was told to keep the recording device inside their pocket without the students knowing, in order to increase the natural level of the research. In addition, it was ensured that both the teachers and the students had not met each other for the first time when the recording took place. This was important to reinforce an impression that they indeed belong to the same member of a community (being in-group).

In relation of the second research question, any important information obtained from the recorded classroom conversation was kept to be analyzed at the later time. This data was then combined with the data acquired from semi-structured interview towards the sample (two English teachers and six of their representative students).

To answer the first research question, the researcher recorded the verbal communication occurring between the participants using the voice recording device. Transcriptions were later produced by the assistance of a transcriber software program. Based on the transcribed conversation, a list containing teachers' and students' request (locution) and response (perlocution) was then

created. For the next stage, the analysis was established to know whether the request (locution) had been spoken within appropriate or correct context within the conversation, as well as whether it received an appropriate response (perlocution).

In relation to the answer of the second research question, the interview transcription was intended to confirm the data resulted from the classroom interaction (as had been elaborated on the triangulation section). In order to be able to interview both of the teachers and student representatives in the school, the researcher had previously asked the permission to conduct some interview sessions during the school hours (working hours) from the school's principle.

### **Findings and Discussion**

It is known that there are some unique occurrences within all of the recorded classroom interaction, such as: the absence of a feedback or response, the use of non-English language, flouting maxims, maxim violations, maxim infringements, incomplete/unclear/convoluted answer, the use of triggering questions to the students, the use of fillers, the use of confirmation requests as well as rhetorical questions.

Students' absence of feedback had mostly been caused by their inability to answer the question (could not provide a justification towards a problem provided), the fear of delivering an incorrect answer, the lack of English competence and performance, and in smaller percentage, due to the non-verbal responses that were provided as the response (considering the research limitation, the researcher did not include the analysis of a non-verbal response). The occurrence of non-verbal response could be in form of a gesture (for example, a nod as a sign of affirmative), an action (student maintained silence, as ordered by the teacher), or even facial expressions, as explained by Dresner and Herring (2010, p. 3). As shown on the findings, Ms. P received more absence response mostly because their student simply had no idea about the answer and in smaller percentage, because the students were not paying attention while the question is given. For the first cause, this could be resulted by the questions themselves, which probably considered quite difficult for the students; however, this did not make any sense since actually student should have found the answer before (since the questions were part of the homework). This phenomenon implied that the Ms. P had poorly inspected or control her students (on whether they had finished their homework or not). The second cause was also resulted from a poor control in disciplining the

students; besides, boring or monotonous teaching style was also a possible cause which made some students losing their attention towards the activity.

The foreign language to first language switch was commonly performed based on the situation instead of topic, referring to Wardhaugh (2015, p. 104). Most of the question could still be answered using English; however, students tended to switch their language to Indonesian when they felt confused and stressed out, surprised (being unprepared to answer the teacher's question), and in need of a comfort while explaining or reasoning a complicated matter, most probably, after receiving a difficult question. Nevertheless, as something not supposedly happened, the higher number of non-English responses implied on a question: how discipline was the teacher? Similar with the absence of response, Ms. P had also received more non-English language responses, which reflected poorer control as well as more lenient teaching style. This phenomenon, however, had sometimes also caused by Ms. P herself, who in several occasions spoke in her mother tongue, giving a bad precedent towards her students. Ms. M, nevertheless, had never caught using her mother tongue during teaching, as recorded, which implied on a fewer responses in non-English language.

Most of the maxims that being flouted and infringed were maxim of relevance and maxim of quantity. While the flouts were mostly caused by the students' lack of linguistic performance, the infringements were mostly caused by their poor linguistic competence, which hindered them in comprehending the question. In one or two cases, the infringements were also caused by the students' lack of focus towards the material or topic being discussed. Most of the maxim being violated was the relevance and quantity maxim. They generally occurred due to the misunderstanding or miscommunication between teacher and student, or the confusion and/or stressed-out feeling felt by the student while answering to the question. As known, Ms. P received higher numbers in maxim flouting, violations, and infringements mostly due to unclear instructions (usually, ambiguous, overly length or short instruction, or multiple question given at once) contained in her imperatives or interrogatives; though in several cases, it was part of the students' mistakes. Despite receiving those not always mean something bad or incorrect, they can simply hindered a smooth communication as written by Yule (1996, p.37) "to make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."



Students' incomplete/unclear/convoluted answer were mostly resulted from their inability to answer the question (could not provide a justification towards a problem provided), the fear of delivering an incorrect answer, and the lack of English competence and performance. The similar causes happened to the case where the students provided no response towards the teachers' questions or requests. Ms. M, compared with Ms. P, was more able to prevent this from happening, by using more triggering questions towards the students. The triggering questions were often used by the teachers to stimulate the students to either simply answer their question or to provide a more thorough answer. This is a form of reinforcement (by providing clues) whom teacher commonly done to the students, instead of spoon-feeding them with actual answers.

Fillers, as described by Erten (p. 70), are "...discourse markers speakers use when they think and/or hesitate during their speech." The use of fillers among the students clearly reflected the use of the fillers at their finest, since they were functioned to 'buy some time', when they were thinking about the answer they were going to deliver. Ms. M received relatively more fillers responses from her students, most probably caused by her questions that demanded more spontaneous answer from the students (while Ms. P's question were more to be material related ones).

Confirmation requests in this research were delivered in order to confirm an unclearly heard/convoluted request or question; most of the rhetorical questions were delivered as an insinuation towards a context, in-line with the one written by Sadock (1971, as cited by Han 2000, p. 202). Ms. P delivered more both confirmation and rhetorical question towards her students, compared with Ms. M. Most of the cases, Ms. P warned the non-cooperative students by using rhetorical question, which is a good thing; meanwhile, the confirmation questions were used by the teachers (Ms. P and Ms. M) either as a 'tool' to force the students to repeat the unclear answer (students' mistake), or negatively, to force the student to repeat an answer not being heard attentively by the teacher (teacher's mistake).

Teachers' physical appearance and grooming, dignity, teaching method, teaching style (involves here; the commitment to use the English the whole-lesson-time, as required by the curriculum), degree of teacher-student relationship (closeness), willingness to help, and voice quality are the aspects influencing teachers' locution on students' perlocution.

While one student considered Ms. P's appearance to be just usual and normal, two others considered that her appearance was

good and modern (in a good way). This went in-line with Ms. P's self-assessment towards her own physical appearance, which considered herself as having an attractive appearance and grooming. However, the teacher needed to be more careful in selecting a proper outfit and grooming, as one of the student argued that her appearance somehow was 'distracting' (triggering students to make some comments, then being noisy). Meanwhile, according to the interview towards Ms. M and her students, her appearance and grooming were considered appropriate, neat, and tidy as well. It could be said that Ms. M had a 'safe' grooming and appearance, which was not distracting students, despite not being as modern as Ms. P.

Considering herself to be respected by the students, as well as having a quite good dignity in front of her students, Ms. P's assessment was confirmed by her students, who mostly argued that she was quite being respected as a teacher. Based on the classroom interaction recording, it was also known that she often delivered some rhetorical questions and some imperatives to insinuate and warn noisy (or non-cooperative) students. Ms. M, on the other hand, received a mixed students' assessment, while claiming that she herself had a quite decent dignity in front of her students. Nevertheless, based on the finding, it has been known that Ms. P received worse result in students' control by obtaining more no responses/answer from the students who supposedly knew the answer (because they did not do their homework). This fact proves that having a good dignity does not always go parallel with the ability to control and to discipline the students (in this case, to check whether the students had finished their homework).

Ms. P's attractive teaching method, while having a good mood, was in-line with the students' opinion saying that this teacher managed to teach them in a fun way. While one of the students said that her teaching style was flat and monotonous, two others argued differently. One of the student even claimed said that among three, Ms. P was her favorite English teacher during her high school. The fun and attractive teaching style was, nevertheless, not being well-compensated with poor class handling, as claimed by both the teacher herself and her students. Teaching eight graders, Ms. P was struggling to control (for example, to calm the students) and gain appropriate response from her students, as shown by the use of rhetorical questions as well as the absence of responses received. Ms. P had also reportedly received more absence responses from the students, caused by her poor control in disciplining the students during the class. Nevertheless, for the teaching style, Ms. P

considered herself to be able to balance her style, depended on the circumstance (lenient at one time, more rigorous at the other; balanced teaching style, like using a 'pulling and pushing' style in teaching, was beneficial to help the student to learn enjoyably but also seriously). Ms. M seemed also be able to deliver more enjoyably teaching and learning process, as all of the interview subjects (as well as Ms. M herself) claimed a good and enjoyably teaching-learning ambience. Some students mentioned 'games' as one of the means frequently used by Ms. M in teaching. Ms. M's experience in teaching a much younger children (at her previous job), contributed at her recent job, as she has already been used to think creatively on how to create a fun teaching-learning process, which prevented the students from being bored and stressed-out.

Larson (2011, as cited in Sanchez 2013, p. 118) wrote, "If students feel comfortable with the teacher and the environment in the school, they can construct more positive relations such as friendship, develop a better way to behave in the social context and improve their social skills." Creating a close (but somehow healthy) relationship between teacher and student would be beneficial for both of them. Student would be motivated and participate actively while the teacher would be aware of the students' emotional and academic needs (Nugent 2009, as cited in Sanchez 2013, p.118). Both Ms. P's claim on her teacher-student relationship was confirmed by most of the students who also argues that she they were having a close (and healthy) relationship with her. Ms. M, on the other hand, had a more distant teacher-student relationship, according to the interview. This could also be obviously seen on the recorded classroom interaction process, in which Ms. P's students seemed interacting more informally than Ms. M's. Nevertheless, Ms. M was claimed to be more proactively willing to help students who was having a learning problem in the classroom, while Ms. P would only help the student whom she thought really deserved to be assisted, to prevent from 'spoon-feeding' other students who actually not really demanded for an assistance.

As an important part in a message encoding and decoding process, teachers' voice quality is important to be investigated. The voice quality aspects being investigated were the clarity, volume, and pitch/inflection. All of the students claimed that Ms. P spoke clearly when teaching, in-line with her claim saying that she herself spoke clearly and balanced (not too fast nor slow); similar assessment also received by Ms. M, with all of the students claimed that she spoke clearly. However, the excessive use of fillers as well as six confirmation requests in Ms. P's interaction, contributed

negatively in a smooth interaction. Ms. M, on the other hand, as shown on her negative aspect revealed in the interview, tended to spoke using a low volume when teaching, which was problematic to some of the students. The voice qualities themselves are closely related with the appearance of maxims disorders, which hindered a good communication, as written by Yule (1996, p.37) “to make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” Reflecting from the finding section, it has been revealed that Ms. P received more maxims disorders (flouts, violations, and infringements) than Ms. P. This fact goes in contrary with the interview result. Claiming herself had a clear and balanced speech; Ms. P indeed received more maxim disorders, compared with Ms. M. One possible cause for this might be influenced from the students themselves (who were unprepared to join the class or had a poor English performance/competence), or the class circumstances when the interaction happened (for example, noisy and distracting class situation).

The use of non-English language during the English class was actually considered as ‘something taboo’, according to the curriculum adopted by the school (Cambridge curriculum). Both teachers, indeed, claimed to theoretically not allowing the use of the mother tongue (Indonesian) in the class; however, this commitment should be sacrificed for the sake of communicativeness. Students taught by Ms. P tended to deliver more utterances in Indonesian than the ones taught by Ms. M. Ms. P, despite always encouraging her students to speak in English, was more compromised in the use of Indonesian during the class. One of the students said that even Ms. P herself frequently spoke in Indonesian during the class. This favoring the communicativeness yet unfortunately, sacrificing the students’ performance.

Ms. P and her students claimed that her fluctuating mood as the negative aspect that should be getting rid in order to improve the order-response process between she herself and her students. Ms. M received more mixed assessment, based on the interview, which showed that there were more negative aspects that hindered a smooth communication between her and her students.

Both Ms. P and Ms. M received relatively similar positive assessment from their students: fun and enjoyable teaching method. Nevertheless, teachers’ own assessment were more interesting; while Ms. P claimed that the way she prepared for the teaching activity had always been her positive aspect (indirectly benefited to her teaching confidence and relatively uninterrupted classroom

interaction and activity), Ms. M claimed herself to use the English wholly during teaching (she never spoke or ordered in Indonesian, in order to 'push' her students to talk or answer in English).

In regard to the connection between teachers' experience and their communicative competence, it was known that teacher's experience really influenced the way they interact with their students. Based on the data, Mrs. P (has been teaching for two and a half years) triggered more negative responses (such as some absence responses, non-English responses, students' fillers, maxim flouting, infringements, and violations) than Mrs. M (who has been teaching for 7 years). Mrs. M, on the other hand, was known to deliver more reinforcements towards the students, as shown on the higher use of triggering questions chart on the table (please refer to *Figure 1*).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis conducted towards the classroom interaction as well as the interview; it is found that the teachers' locution on students' perlocution could be analyzed from the availability and the clarity of the students' response, native language responses delivered in the classroom (in regard of an English-speaking classroom), the use of fillers, confirmation requests, rhetorical questions, and the implicatures (specifically, in form of maxim violations, floutings, and infringements). The result definitely confirms the theoretical framework of this research, which emphasizes that perlocution is indeed the bringing about effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence (locution), as written by Austin (cited in Levinson 1983, p. 236).

It is also revealed that physical appearance and grooming, dignity, class handling, teaching method, teaching style, relationship with students, voice quality, consistency upon the pre-set rules (in this context, the full use of English in the classroom, and the willingness to support, are indeed the aspects that influence teachers' locution on students' perlocution. Those result also indirectly goes in-line with the teacher's experience, as it is known that novice teacher tend to trigger more negative responses from the students when communicating (interacting between each other).

This research, on the other hand, also warn the teachers that even a simplest action or personal aspect may contribute in the way students cooperate with them (in this case, verbally), therefore, upon reading this research, they are also expected to do a self-review on their classroom verbal interaction been performed this far.

Based on the data analysis, it was known that there were inconsistencies between the interviews and classroom actions due to the limited research period and relatively small number of participants; therefore, in order to prove the result to be more consistent and the validity value to be higher, future researchers are also encouraged to investigate similar topics using more research subjects with longer observation or recording sessions and in more than one institution.

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