LIGHTHOUSE

Speech acts among young children: How does a young child use direct and indirect speech?

Mulyanto Widodo*
Aji Marhaban Bidzikrillah MSK

Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Lampung, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to compare direct and indirect speech acts among young toddlers using various speech situations. This study's main subject was a conversational interaction made by a four-year-old child. The data for this qualitative study were collected through non-participant observations and a recording device to record what the participant said. The findings indicate that the participant's speech acts, whether direct or indirect, were converted into direct speech that was justified and straightforward speech that was on point, whereas indirect speech was gained through praise, sarcasm, and complaints. Future research directions are also highlighted.

Introduction

Language is a tool that is used to affect and be influenced, to produce thoughts and feelings, desires, and actions (Dewey, 2013; Gee, 2018). In line with this, language also refers to an arbitrary sound symbol used by a group of people to communicate and identify themselves in their society (Monaghan et al., 2014; Reilly et al., 2012).

Since people use a different form of communication than animals do, language also has a human nature. One of the most defining traits that sets humans apart from other creatures is language (Berwick & Chomsky, 2016; Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Due to human nature, only humans can utilize language.

Language has been taught to people since birth. Cry is the earliest language of humans, and a healthy newborn will cry when it is born (Baker, 2014; Steinberg et al., 2013). The vocabulary utilized is sophisticated and varied as children get older. Because children have undergone growth in mental maturity or the cognitive side, speech produced by children cannot be predicted with ease (Snedeker et al., 2012; Stanovich, 2017).

Children can learn to understand and control themselves as their language skills develop. Children unintentionally acquire knowledge of phonological systems, syntax, semantics, and pragmatic systems as they learn to talk (Akmajian et al., 2017; Hamid et al., 2020). Children acquire this knowledge while growing up in their families, at play, or in the classroom.

After a child has learned a lot about language, she or he is typically able to use particular momentum to speak to people directly or indirectly. Children execute speech acts using these two items so that others can understand their speech and intents. Therefore, this study examined the direct or indirect speech acts of a young child.

Literature review

Speech events are linguistic exchanges in which speakers and listeners interact in one or more utterances at certain times, locations, and circumstances. Hymes divides speech events into eight categories. According to Hymes, there are eight speech events' constituent parts, and the acronym SPEAKING is made up of their first letters (Zand-Vakili et al., 2012). Setting and Scene, which relate to the setting of time, place, and psychological circumstance in the speech, make up the "S" in SPEAKING. The "P" stands for Participants, who are speakers and speech-related elements. The "E" stands for the End, which is also known as the purpose and intent. The "A" refers to the Act Sequences that match the utterance's structure and substance. The "K" Key has to do with the manner or tone of discourse. Instrumentation, which corresponds with the language's flow, is represented by the letter "I." The "N"

stands for the Norm of Interaction and Interpretation, which is concerned with these standards. The "G" refers to a genre that has to do with delivery style and modes.

Direct speech acts are those in which demands are made using imperative verb tenses. The following categories can be used to classify different direct speech acts: (1) direct speech action on target, which involves making a request and mentioning it directly without any preamble; and (b) direct speech action with reason or argumentation, which involves making a request and then using questions to convince or persuade the speech partner to understand it (Rusminto, 2010).

In addition, it is stated that making a request using a speech form whose performance meaning differs from the illusionary goal constitutes an indirect speech act. Different modes can be used to categorize indirect speech acts: (a) indirect speech act with question mode; (b) indirect speech act with praise mode; (c) indirect speech acts with the mode of stating facts; (d) indirect speech acts with satire mode; (e) indirect speech acts with "nglulu" mode; (f) indirect speech acts with mode of expressing pessimism; (g) indirect speech acts with the mode involving the third person; (h) indirect speech act by expressing complaint; (i) indirect speech acts with the mode of expressing presuppositions (Rusminto, 2010).

Methods

The authors' observations and methods for documenting what the research participant had said—which involved non-participating observation techniques—were used to gather the data for analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Thus, a descriptive approach was used to analyze the collected data for this qualitative study (Cresswell, 2009). The goal of this study was to investigate the various ways that context was used in speech during early childhood. This study also falls under the category of ethnography because the process involved observing the subject in a natural setting.

Participants

The information used in this research was gleaned from oral conversation discourse in which 4-year-old Ratu Rayala Shazia Rasyidi—known as Zia—performed speech acts. Existing conversations are those that one has naturally in their day-to-day interactions.

Instruments

Direct listening to subject's speech utilized in daily activities yielded the information shown. Several times, during routine interactions with her mom, dad or other family members, data gathering was done. Along with observation, we also used a data collection method involving documentation investigations.

Data analysis

An interactive analysis was the method of data analysis employed in this study. There are three parts to this analysis method: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and discussion

The participant under investigation produced a variety of speech acts, from direct speech acts to indirect speech acts utilizing diverse forms based on specific circumstances. The four-year-old child was found to do a variety of speech acts using different modes in order to attain their goal of having their speech understood and even approved by her speech partner.

Direct speech acts

Many words that a four-year-old child uses in direct speech acts—either directly at the target or in an argument—are ones that we frequently hear without noticing.

> Zia   : *Umi ayok keluar, mau maen Miii.*
>   *(menarik-narik tangan umiya).*
> Umii   : *Iya, nanti. Umi buka pager dulu.*

It is a direct speech act on the target in this dialogue. When Zia had finished her wash, she started talking. She usually plays with her buddies in front of the house after taking a bath in the afternoon.

> Zia   : *Umiii kalau aku udah gede, beliin tas yang bagus ya.*
> Umi Silvi : *Iya. Nanti umi beliin, makanya makan dulu yang banyak biar cepet gede.*

When Umi Silvi was giving Zia rice in the afternoon, the event took place. When he boarded the motorcycle, Uncu (Aunt Zaia) abruptly arrived at home and passed in front of her. When Zia noticed the bag Uncu was carrying, she instantly said she wanted a good bag when she was older. Zia quickly said, "Yes," and proceeded to eat and devour her meal.

The evidence demonstrates that speech acts happen immediately but are not directed; rather, they happen directly for reasons (Petrey, 2016; Rusminto, 2022). When read as the first sentence, "Umiii tomorrow when I grow up, purchase a decent bag." reveals that the child is assuming that her speech partner will comprehend and agree to her request under certain circumstances.

Zia	: *Umi jajan ya. (menunjuk makanan ringan yang digantung).*
Umi Silvi	: *Jangan permen ya.*

When Umi Silvi visited a store fairly far from her home, the incident happened. When Zia noticed her mother leaving for the store, she hurried after her, went before her, and pointed to the goodies nearby. The direct speech act on the target includes the previously mentioned conversation. Because the child asks for a snack right away and without further explanation, that is, without being accompanied by any statement, it can be claimed that it is a direct speech act on the target. It was Zia's tendency to ask for her mother due to this snack request, without using the statement before or after.

Indirect speech acts

The participant's speech acts do not just happen directly. There are also indirect speaking acts, though. The information about indirect speech acts that follows.

Zia	: *Umi, Zia boleh mandi ya mi?*
Umi Silvi	: *Kok tumben mau cepet mandi?*
Zia	: *Mau sepedaan sama kakak Safira*
Umi Silvi	: *Iya udah, ke belakang.*

Around fifteen o'clock, this speech event took place. Zia typically bathes before the Asr prayer, which is about 4:50 p.m. She, however, wanted to ride a bicycle right away after seeing Safira riding one in front of her house. Zia instructed her mother to immediately take a bathe so that she could play with her bicycle outside. It was found that the speech act in this instance was carried out by searching for the potential of a supporting condition, "Umi, take a shower, mi?" in relation to the question, "Want to ride with Safira's sister?" In this setting, Zia's mother does not chastise her for wanting to ride a bike after taking a bath, inferring that such an event is an indirect speech act with a questioning mode from the data.

Zia	: *Abi, sendal aku jelek gk kaya dulu lagi.*
Abi Yudi	: *tapi kan masih keliatan gambar tayonya.*
Zia	: *tapi mau yang kaya dulu.*
Abi Yudi	: *nanti ya kalo ada duit.*

Zia was being fed by her aunt in the afternoon when the conversation took place. She abruptly remarked that the sandals she was sporting were unattractive while being fed by her father, pointing at the sandals. Her father, however, refused to abide by the justification "later, if there is money." Her father did this to make sure she was eating and not pouting. She complained in the dialogue above, "Dad, my sandals are ugly, I'm not beautiful anymore," complaining about one's own unfavorable circumstances. By rejecting the unpleasant things, the subject encountered in regard to anything she requested, she makes a request by complaining in this way. This qualifies as an indirect speech act with a complaining mode for this reason.

Zia	: *Abiii, motornya bersih lo.*
Abi Yudi	: *Terus kenapa Yom?*
Zia	: *Gak papa bi.*
Abi Yudi	: *Ya, nanti jalan-jalan.*

Zia was seated next to her aunt when this occurrence took place. She waited for the motorbike to be cleaned while she was standing close to her aunt. Zia exclaimed, "Dad, your motorcycle is clean," once it had been cleaned. Her father was aware of what she meant when she urged him to take a trip similar to the one his father took last week while his motorcycle was being washed. One could describe the speech act above as an indirect speech act with a praising mode (Matley, 2018; Rusminto, 2022; Terkourafi, 2014). This is demonstrated by the child's use of the words "motorcycle is clean" to begin their discourse. The child made a nice observation about the speech

partner in the sentence that they utilized. Her father is pleased since she would now find it simple to receive what she wants from his aunt.

Zia   : *Umi mah, sayang adek Aulia aja. (melirik ibunya yang menyuapi Aulia)*
Umi   : *Adek Aulia kan masih kecil.*
Zia   : *Aku juga kan masih kecil geh.*
Umi   : *Ia semuanya umi sayang gak cuma adek Aulia aja. Sini!*

Her mother (Umi) was feeding her neighbor's kid when the aforementioned speech act took place. Zia added that her mother only liked Aulia after seeing Aulia and giving her mother a quick glance. However, her mother clarifies that because Aulia is younger than Zia, she requires more attention. Zia, however, promptly retorted that she shared Aulia's characteristics. When her mother heard this speech, she promptly retorted that she loved them both. This type of speech act is sarcastic in nature and indirect. It is clear that the child is implying that her mother solely loves her sister by acting in this way. That sentence was employed as a speech performance in order to appear pitiful (Petrey, 2016; Rusminto, 2022). With such things, the subject believes that her mother will understand what she wants, which is to be loved by her as well.

Conclusion

After examining how a young child speech acts are produced, it is evident that a young child produces a variety of speech acts, including direct and indirect speech acts utilizing a variety of techniques. Early speech acts have been observed employing a variety of modes depending on the circumstance and settings in order to achieve the goal of the speech to be understood and even approved by the speech partner, whether it be using command sentences, news sentences, or interrogative sentences. Zia is highly adept at selecting speech that will be well-received by her speech partner, beginning with the use of place, time, and other settings. It is not unexpected that children can use context in speaking to their advantage depending on the circumstances.

Acknowledgements

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