

Khảo sát các hành vi ngôn ngữ trong các đoạn hội thoại trong sách Solutions Sơ cấp xuất bản lần thứ hai

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát sự phân bố và cách thức thể hiện của các loại hành vi ngôn ngữ (hành động ngôn từ) trong các đoạn hội thoại được trích từ sách *Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary Student's Book* của các tác giả Tim Falla & Paul A Davies năm 2012. Mười đoạn hội thoại thuộc nhiều chủ đề khác nhau đã được lựa chọn ngẫu nhiên làm dữ liệu để phân tích. Việc phân loại hành vi ngôn ngữ được tiến hành dựa trên một khung lý thuyết đã được điều chỉnh từ các phân loại có sẵn, đồng thời bổ sung những sửa đổi cần thiết để có thể bao quát hết các hiện tượng trong dữ liệu thu thập được. Kết quả cho thấy các hành động ngôn từ thuộc nhóm biểu hiện, biểu cảm và yêu cầu có xu hướng xuất hiện nhiều nhất. Xu hướng này phản ánh mục tiêu giao tiếp của nội dung trong giáo trình, trong đó người học được khuyến khích trao đổi thông tin, miêu tả trải nghiệm và đặt câu hỏi trong các hoạt động tương tác. Đáng chú ý là một số lượng lớn lượt thoại không chỉ thể hiện các hành vi ngôn ngữ đơn lẻ mà còn bao gồm sự kết hợp đa dạng của nhiều loại hành vi khác nhau. Hiện tượng này cho thấy việc sử dụng ngôn ngữ trong thực tiễn thường bao hàm những lực ngôn trung chòng lấn, phản ánh tính năng động và phụ thuộc ngữ cảnh của giao tiếp, khi người nói đồng thời thực hiện nhiều chức năng để truyền đạt ý nghĩa hiệu quả hơn. Những kết quả của khảo sát này mang lại một số ý nghĩa quan trọng cho giảng dạy. Việc nắm rõ cách thức hành vi ngôn ngữ hoạt động cả ở dạng riêng lẻ lẫn kết hợp có thể giúp giáo viên nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy và bồi dưỡng nhận thức ngữ dụng cho người học. Bằng cách nhấn mạnh tính đa chức năng của phát ngôn, việc giảng dạy có thể tiệm cận hơn với diễn ngôn thực tế và trang bị tốt hơn cho người học trong giao tiếp đời sống.

Từ khóa: các dạng hành vi ngôn ngữ, phân tích hội thoại, Sách Solutions Sơ cấp xuất bản lần thứ hai

An Investigation into Speech Acts Types in Conversations in Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the distribution and realization of speech act types in conversations extracted from *Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary Student's Book* written by Falla & Davies in 2012. Ten conversations on varied topics were randomly chosen as the dataset. The analysis employed a speech act classification framework adapted from established taxonomies, with modifications introduced to capture all instances found in the data. The findings indicate that representatives, expressives, and directives are the most common single speech act types. This prevalence reflects the communicative goals of the textbook, where learners are encouraged to exchange information, describe experiences, and ask questions in interactive activities. Notably, a considerable number of speaking turns involve combinations of speech acts rather than isolated realizations. These combinations appear in diverse forms, demonstrating that language use in practice often entails overlapping illocutionary forces. Such patterns highlight the dynamic and context-dependent character of communication, in which speakers simultaneously perform multiple functions to convey meaning effectively. These results bear pedagogical implications. For teachers, a better understanding of how speech acts operate both individually and in combination can enhance classroom practice and raise learners' pragmatic awareness. By drawing attention to the multifunctional nature of utterances, instruction can more closely approximate authentic discourse and better prepare students for real-life communication.

Keywords: *speech acts types, conversation analysis, Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis has emerged as one of the most dynamic and interdisciplinary branches within the field of linguistics. Over the past few decades, it has gained increasing attention from researchers and educators alike, not only within the realm of language studies but also across various academic domains such as sociology, psychology, education, and communication. Scholars including Nguyen Hoa¹, Hymes², and Clyne³ have contributed significantly to the development and application of discourse analysis in both theoretical and practical contexts, highlighting its relevance in understanding language beyond sentence-level structures.

Among the diverse methodological frameworks employed in discourse analysis, the pragmatic approach stands out for its emphasis on the functional aspects of language in real-life communication. In particular, speech act theory - a cornerstone of pragmatics - offers valuable tools for examining how speakers perform actions through

words, such as requesting, apologizing, complimenting, or refusing. This theoretical lens is especially useful when analyzing cross-cultural communication, where the interpretation of speech acts can vary widely depending on social norms and linguistic conventions.

This research focuses on the exploration of speech acts realized in conversations in *Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary Student's Book*, written by Tim Falla & Paul A Davies, a widely adopted English language textbook in Vietnam. The reason for choosing the textbook for this study lies in the fact that it is designed for beginner-level learners. Being used to teach English in plenty of schools and English centres in Vietnam, this textbook also provides a range of dialogues intended to foster communicative competence in everyday situations. By systematically analyzing the speech acts embedded in these dialogues, the study aims to uncover patterns in language use that reflect both

pedagogical intentions and cultural nuances. Ultimately, the findings are expected to offer practical insights for English teachers and learners, helping them to better understand how speech acts function in authentic communication and to

2. CONTENT

2.1. A review of notion and classification of speech acts

The concept of speech acts was first systematically introduced by Austin⁴. Austin⁴ proposed that language is not merely a vehicle for conveying information but also a means of performing actions. He defined speech acts as actions performed via language and can be analyzed in three levels: the *locutionary act* (the actual utterance and its literal meaning), *illocutionary act* (the intended function or force behind the utterance, such as asserting, questioning, or commanding), and *perlocutionary act* (the effect the utterance has on the listener, such as persuading, frightening, or inspiring). Of the three levels, the illocutionary act is considered the most central to understanding communicative intent and is therefore the primary focus of many linguistic and pragmatic studies, including the present one.

Building upon Austin's⁴ foundation, John Searle⁵ refined the theory of speech acts by proposing a widely accepted classification system. He categorized illocutionary acts into five major types based on their communicative function: *declarations*, *representatives*, *expressives*, *directives*, and *commissives* which are, to some extent, in turn similar to the terms *effectives*, *constatives*, *acknowledgements*, *directives*, and *commissives* in Bach and Harnish's⁶ classification. There are some differences in the two ways of

2.2. Aims and objectives of the study

This study is conducted with the aim of investigating speech acts in conversations in *Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary Student's Book*, with a focus on the following objectives:

2.2. Research methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data. The quantitative analysis helps the researchers find out the occurrence

enhance their ability to use English effectively and appropriately in diverse contexts. Besides, no studies of speech acts have been conducted with the data in the textbook, as far as the researchers know.

classification, however. For example, while Searle⁵ puts *suggestions* and *predictions* in the categories of *directives* and *commissives*, Bach and Harnish⁶ put both of them in *constatives*, the similar term to *representatives* by Searle⁵.

Speech acts have also been classified into two broader categories, named: *direct* and *indirect speech acts* by Yule⁷ and others, but it is not the focus of this research.

Despite the utility of these classifications, scholars have noted that they may not fully account for the intricacies of natural language use. Real-life utterances often exhibit multiple illocutionary forces, where a single statement can simultaneously function as a directive and an expressive, or a representative and a commissive^{1,2}. Additionally, cultural and contextual factors can significantly influence how speech acts are interpreted and performed, suggesting that rigid taxonomies may oversimplify the dynamic nature of human interaction⁵.

Therefore, while foundational theories by Austin⁴, Searle⁵, and others provide essential tools for analyzing speech acts, ongoing research continues to explore more flexible and context-sensitive models that better reflect the complexity of everyday communication.

- To examine the patterns of occurrence and realization of selected speech acts types through the lens of Searle's⁵ framework;

- To assess how far the observed speech acts substantiate the theoretical foundation employed.

frequency of the speech act types in the conversations under investigation, whereas the qualitative analysis enables the researchers to bring a better insight into the manifestation of those speech acts.

2.3. Sample of the study

After a thorough review, it was found that the first 10 units of the student's book contain a total of 34 conversations, distributed across various lesson components. These conversations vary in length, number of speakers, and communicative purpose, offering a rich source for speech act analysis. Among the 34 conversations identified, 10 were randomly picked to form the study sample, ensuring that each came from a different unit to maintain thematic diversity and avoid clustering. The selected conversations cover a wide range of topic areas, including *the world of work, friends*

Table 1: Sample of the study

Conversation	Number of speakers	Number of turns	Number of words	Topic area
1	2	9	70	<i>Friends and family</i>
2	2	10	75	<i>My time</i>
3	2	8	68	<i>At school</i>
4	3	11	82	<i>Special occasions</i>
5	2	9	72	<i>Healthy living</i>
6	2	7	63	<i>Going places</i>
7	2	8	73	<i>Fame</i>
8	2	9	66	<i>In the wild</i>
9	2	8	72	<i>The world of work</i>
10	2	7	69	<i>Time to travel</i>
Total		87	712	10

2.4. Theoretical framework

The present study adopts a theoretical framework primarily grounded in Searle's⁵ classification of speech acts, supplemented by the typology proposed by Bach & Harnish⁶. In this approach, Searle's⁵ model functions as the principal foundation, while the categories introduced by Bach & Harnish⁶ offer a more refined lens through which subtle distinctions between different speech

and family, my time, nature, famous people, travel, school and special occasions. Each conversation is treated as a unit of analysis, with a speaking turn defined as a single uninterrupted contribution by a speaker. The 10 sampled conversations comprise a total of 87 speaking turns, with an average word count of 71.2 words per conversation. The shortest conversation contains 63 words, while the longest reaches 82 words, indicating a relatively consistent length suitable for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The details of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Speech act types (Adapted from Searle⁵ and Bach and Harnish⁶)

Single speech acts					Combined speech acts
Declarations	Representatives	Expressives	Directives	Commissives	

	<i>Assertives</i> <i>Retrodictives</i> <i>Descriptives</i> <i>Ascriptive</i> <i>Informative</i> <i>Confirmative</i> <i>Concessives</i> <i>Retractive</i> <i>Assentives</i> <i>Dissentives</i> <i>Disputative</i> <i>Responsive</i> <i>Supportive</i>	<i>Apologize</i> <i>Condole</i> <i>Congratulate</i> <i>Greet</i> <i>Thank</i> <i>Bid</i> <i>Accept</i> <i>Reject</i>	<i>Requestives</i> <i>Questions</i> <i>Commands</i> <i>Requirements</i> <i>Prohibitive</i> <i>Permissive</i> <i>Advisories</i> <i>Suggestives</i>	<i>Promises</i> <i>Offers</i> <i>Predictives</i>	
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2.5. Data analysis

The analysis of the collected data is conducted through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Each unit of analysis is defined as an utterance occurring within a single speaking turn. These utterances may range in form from a single word to a phrase, a clause, a complete sentence, and a combination of sentences. To

classify the speech acts present in the data, the study relies on the concept of illocutionary force - the intended communicative function behind each utterance. This theoretical basis allows for a systematic categorization of speech acts, ensuring that both the linguistic structure and the speaker's intention are taken into account during the analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated in Table 3, the distribution of speech acts across the 86 speaking turns analyzed reveals a clear imbalance between single and combined realizations. Of the total number, 54 instances, equivalent to 62.8%, were classified as single speech acts. This finding suggests that in most cases speakers tended to employ one clear pragmatic function at a time, whether to convey information, to issue a request, or to express an attitude. In contrast, 34 turns, accounting for 37.2%, involved a combination of two or more speech act types. Although numerically smaller, this proportion remains noteworthy, since more than one third of the data demonstrates complex pragmatic structures rather than straightforward, isolated acts.

The relative prevalence of single acts underscores their importance as a foundational element of interaction in this context, while the considerable presence of combined forms points to the inherently flexible and context-driven nature of spoken communication. The alternation between single and combined realizations further highlights how participants adjust their language to meet specific communicative demands, shifting from simple statements to more elaborate utterances that simultaneously fulfill multiple functions. This distribution therefore reflects not only frequency patterns but also the dynamic strategies speakers adopt to negotiate meaning within the dataset.

Table 3: Major groups of speech acts

Single speech acts	Combined speech acts
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N/86	%	N/86	%
54/86	62,8%	34/86	37,2%

With respect to the single speech act types outlined in Table 4, none of the examined speaking turns feature isolated cases of *declarations* or *commissives*. The absence of declarations is unsurprising, as such acts require particular institutional or conventional circumstances to be considered felicitous – conditions unlikely to arise in the present dataset. What stands out, however, is the total absence of commissive acts. A plausible reason for this may be the inherent constraints of the data source, which perhaps did not allow sufficient occasions for participants to articulate commitments or intentions typically linked to *commissives*.

Representatives constitute the most dominant category, accounting for 36% of the analyzed speech acts. The next most frequent type is *directives*, with 19.8%, followed by *expressives* at 10.5%. Within the group of *representatives*, a wide range of sub-speech acts can be observed, including *descriptives* (Ex. 1), *informatives* (Ex. 2), *responsives* (Ex. 3), *assentives* (Ex. 4), among others. This diversity demonstrates the multifaceted ways in which representatives are employed to convey information, confirm understanding, or provide responses in interaction.

- Ex. 1: *It is getting better.* (Conversation 2)
- Ex. 2: *I'm from Scotland.* (Conversation 1)
- Ex. 3: *No, I don't.* (Conversation 10)
- Ex. 4: *Oh, right.* (Conversation 10)

Directives emerge as the second most common type of single speech acts in the dataset. The majority of

these instances are realized through interrogatives, as illustrated in ex. 5, 6, and 7, while only a small proportion take the form of *commands*, represented by ex. 8. This distribution suggests that within the conversational context under investigation, *directives* are predominantly employed to elicit information or clarification rather than to issue explicit instructions.

- Ex. 5: *Where's the science lab?* (Conversation 1)
- Ex. 6: *Are you looking for me?* (Conversation 3)
- Ex. 7: *Are you free in the afternoon?* (Conversation 6)
- Ex. 8: *Tell me about your trip to Scotland, Jack.* (Conversation 5)

Expressives constitute 10.5% of the total speech acts identified in the dataset. They are manifested in various conversational functions, including greeting others (Ex. 9), acknowledging or responding to gratitude (Ex. 10), offering thanks (Ex. 11), as well as expressing personal preferences or positive attitudes (Ex. 12). These realizations indicate that *expressives* primarily serve to establish and maintain interpersonal rapport, reflecting the affective dimension of communication within the examined dialogues.

- Ex. 9: *Hello, everyone.* (Conversation 10)
- Ex. 10: *You're welcome.* (Conversation 2)
- Ex. 11: *Thank you.* (Conversation 8)
- Ex. 12: *I really like the concert.* (Conversation 2)

Table 4: Single speech act types

Declarations		Representatives		Expressives		Directives		Commissives	
N /86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%
0	0%	28	34.6%	9	10.5%	17	19.8%	0	0%

Returning to the analysis of combined speech acts, the data collected reveals a total of five distinct combinations of speech acts that were identified and categorized. These combinations are clearly presented in Table 5 and are abbreviated as follows: *Rep + Exp + Dir*, *Dir + Rep*, *Exp + Dir*, *Exp + Rep*, and *Rep + Com*. Each of these combinations represents a unique interplay between different types of speech acts, reflecting the multifaceted nature of communication in context-specific interactions.

For instance, the combination *Rep + Exp + Dir* involves the integration of representative, expressive, and directive acts. This type of combination typically occurs when a speaker simultaneously conveys factual information, expresses personal feelings or attitudes, and issues a request or instruction to the listener. Such a multi-functional utterance demonstrates the speaker's ability to manage several communicative goals

Table 5: Combined speech act types

<i>Rep + Exp + Dir</i>		<i>Dir + Rep</i>		<i>Exp + Dir</i>		<i>Exp + Rep</i>		<i>Rep + Com</i>	
N/86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%	N/86	%
3	3.5%	12	14%	10	11.6	6	7%	1	1.2%

As is shown in Table 5, the highest percentage of the combined group, 14%, goes to *Dir + Rep*, followed by *Exp + Dir* at 11.6%, *Exp + Rep* at 7%, and *Rep + Exp + Dir* 3.5%. *Rep + Dir* just accounts for a small percentage of 1.2%, with only one *representative*.

To be more specific, the 14% of *Dir + Rep* (also used to mean *Rep + Dir*), representing the combination of *directives* and *representatives*, are illustrated with different sub-speech acts of each type, as can be seen in Ex. 13, Ex. 14, and Ex. 15.

- Ex. 13: *It's £3.50. Would you like to take it?* ([Rep + Dir], Conversation 2)
- Ex. 14: *Look! These jackets are nice. Which one do you like better?* ([Dir + Rep + Dir], Conversation 2)
- Ex. 15: *I'm having a barbecue at home on Friday. Would you like to come?* ([Rep + Dir], Conversation 4)

within a single speech event.

Similarly, the other combinations - such as *Dir + Rep*, where a directive is paired with a representative act, or *Exp + Dir*, which merges emotional expression with a directive—highlight the dynamic ways in which speakers adapt their language to suit communicative needs. The *Exp + Rep* combination suggests a blend of emotional expression and factual reporting, while *Rep + Com* indicates a mix of representative and commissive acts, where the speaker not only presents information but also commits to a future action.

Identifying and analyzing these combinations provides deeper insight into the strategic use of language in interaction. It allows researchers to better understand how speakers construct meaning, negotiate intentions, and achieve communicative effectiveness through the simultaneous use of multiple speech act types.

Ex. 16 and 17 serve to illustrate the second category of combined speech acts, namely *Exp + Dir* (combinations of *expressives* and *directives*), which represent 11.6% of the total. In particular, the utterance “*Really?*” in Ex. 17, although grammatically structured as a question, is not categorized as a *directive*. Instead, it is classified as an *expressive*, since its illocutionary force in that conversational context conveys a sense of surprise rather than a genuine request for information.

- Ex. 16: *Thanks. I'd love to. What time does it start?* ([Exp + Dir], Conversation 4)
- Ex. 17: *Really? Why?* ([Exp + Dir], Conversation 2)

To further illustrate the diversity of combined speech acts found in the data, several examples are provided that represent different groupings. One such grouping is *Exp + Rep*, which reflects a combination of expressive and representative acts, as demonstrated in Ex. 18 and 19. This pairing

typically occurs when a speaker conveys both emotional attitudes and factual information within the same utterance.

Another notable combination is *Rep + Exp + Dir*, which integrates representative, expressive, and directive elements. This triadic structure, seen in Examples 20 and 21, showcases how speakers can simultaneously report information, express feelings, and issue requests or instructions, thereby fulfilling multiple communicative functions in a single speech act.

Additionally, the *Rep + Com* grouping, illustrated in Ex. 22, involves a blend of representative and commissive acts. In this case, the speaker not only presents a statement or observation but also commits to a future course of action, indicating intention or promise.

These examples highlight the complex and strategic nature of speech act combinations, demonstrating how speakers often merge various communicative intentions to achieve nuanced and effective interaction.

- Ex. 18: *Well, I choose the large one. It looks elegant and modern.* ([Exp + Rep], Conversation 2)
- Ex. 19: *It was fantastic. We all loved it.* ([Rep + Exp], Conversation 7)
- Ex. 20: *Well, it really fits me. And I want it. What about you?* ([Rep + Exp + Dir], Conversation 1)
- Ex. 21: *I saw Jason Mraz. I love his music. How about you? Who did you see?* ([Rep + Exp + Dir], Conversation 3)
- Ex. 22: *It's alright. The meeting won't last for long.* ([Rep + Com], Conversation 6).

The analysis of speech acts in the examined conversations has revealed a clear tendency toward

the predominance of single acts, though combinations also represent a substantial proportion of the data. *Representatives* emerged as the most frequently occurring single type, demonstrating learners' preference for conveying information, descriptions, or responses in classroom interaction. *Directives*, largely realized through questions, ranked second, while *expressives* appeared less frequently but played an essential role in building interpersonal rapport. The absence of *declarations* and *commissives* highlights the contextual limitations of the dataset, where institutional authority and commitments were not typically required or elicited.

In terms of combined forms, the findings underscore the dynamic and interactive nature of learners' speech. The relatively high proportion of combined acts, particularly *Dir + Rep and Exp + Dir*, illustrates a pragmatic strategy that allows speakers to merge *informative, expressive, and directive* functions within a single turn. Less common patterns, such as *Rep + Exp + Dir or Rep + Com*, further suggest that while these combinations are not dominant, they nonetheless enrich the communicative repertoire available to language learners.

Taken together, these results point to both the complexity and flexibility of speech act use in classroom settings. They demonstrate that learners are capable of employing a range of pragmatic resources to achieve communicative goals, from simple statements and questions to more intricate combinations of functions. This highlights the pedagogical value of exposing learners to authentic conversational models, while also indicating the potential for future research to explore how such speech acts develop across different proficiency levels or in more varied communicative contexts.

4. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATION

4.1. Summary

The present investigation into speech acts occurring in conversations from *Solutions 2nd Edition Elementary Student's Book* has provided a detailed analysis of two overarching categories: single speech acts and combined speech acts. Within the first category, the analysis follows a well-established taxonomy, distinguishing five subtypes: *declarations, representatives,*

expressives, directives, and commissives. Each of these categories reflects different communicative intentions and pragmatic functions identified in the learners' interactions. The second category, referred to as combined speech acts, was proposed by the researchers on the basis of recurrent patterns observed in the empirical data. This group highlights instances where two or more speech act

types co-occur within the same turn, thereby forming complex pragmatic units. Five recurrent patterns were recognized in this regard, namely *Rep + Exp + Dir*, *Dir + Rep*, *Exp + Dir*, *Exp + Rep*, and *Rep + Com*. Taken together, these findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how learners employ both straightforward and multifaceted speech acts in classroom conversations. The following section outlines the concluding remarks and broader implications of the study.

4.2. Implications

The findings of this investigation give rise to several pedagogical and research-related implications.

First, in the field of English language teaching, the investigation of different speech act types provides valuable insights into how they are produced and interpreted in interaction. Such awareness can contribute to enhancing instructional practices and classroom communication. Consequently, teachers are encouraged not only to familiarize themselves with the categorization of speech acts but also to engage in similar empirical studies in order to refine their pedagogical approaches.

Second, with regard to research, particular attention must be paid to the illocutionary force of utterances when assigning them to specific categories. Accurate classification is only possible when the intended communicative function, rather than the surface structure, is taken as the basis of analysis.

Finally, the high frequency of combined speech acts observed in this study highlights the necessity of considering such combinations in future

Among the single speech act types, *representatives* appear with the highest frequency, followed by *directives* and *expressives*.

- *Representatives and expressives* manifest through a range of sub-categories, while directives are predominantly expressed in the form of questions.

- A considerable proportion of turns involve combinations of speech acts, accounting for 37.2% of the data.

- Multiple patterns of speech act combinations were observed, with the most recurrent being *Dir + Rep*, *Exp + Dir*, and *Exp + Rep*.

research. Overlooking this dimension would risk an incomplete account of the complexity and fluidity of authentic communicative exchanges.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study can also inform curriculum design and material development, particularly in the area of communicative English teaching. Since speech acts reflect authentic patterns of interaction, incorporating a range of both single and combined types into textbooks and classroom activities would allow learners to practice language use in more realistic contexts. Furthermore, attention to speech act combinations may better prepare students for natural conversational exchanges, where utterances often serve multiple functions simultaneously. Beyond classroom teaching, the insights gained from this research may also be relevant to training in intercultural communication, where sensitivity to illocutionary force and pragmatic appropriateness is crucial for effective interaction across different cultural settings.

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