



## AN ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS UTILIZED BY LECTURERS IN LISTENING CLASSES

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how lecturers use illocutionary acts in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kediri, analyzing them through Searle's framework. A qualitative approach was used to identify the most frequent illocutionary acts, their roles in classroom interactions, and the impact of cultural and institutional contexts. Data were collected via classroom observations, audio-video recordings, and semi-structured interviews with lecturers from two classes (Class A and Class B). The findings indicate that directives were the most common illocutionary acts, accounting for 69.45% of utterances in Class A and 53.57% in Class B, followed by assertives (15.85% in Class A and 30.56% in Class B) and expressives (13.25% in Class A and 15.08% in Class B), which fostered a positive learning atmosphere. Commissives were rare, appearing only in Class A (1.44%), while declaratives were minimal, present only in Class B (0.79%). This research highlights the lecturers' strategies in guiding students and creating a supportive learning environment. It emphasizes the need for tailored communication strategies to improve student engagement and comprehension in listening classes. Future research could explore similar analyses in diverse educational settings to broaden these insights, especially in the context of Islamic universities in Indonesia.

*Keywords: classroom interaction, illocutionary acts, listening classes, Searle's framework*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is essential in language education, especially in listening classes, where students must engage with spoken language and grasp the speaker's intent. As Hargie (2011) notes, effective communication in educational settings promotes both cognitive and emotional development, enabling students to better process and interact with the learning material. In listening tasks, students must decode auditory input, interpret its meaning, and apply it in real-world contexts, which requires active mental involvement (Tran et al., 2024; Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Listening is not a passive skill, as Field

(2009) explains, but involves actively processing and interpreting information in real-time, making it a complex cognitive activity. Thus, effective listening in the classroom goes beyond just hearing words; it involves understanding the deeper meaning, including emotional tone, context, and intention (Arslan, 2006; Zulkifli et al., 2022; Rost, 2011).

Central to effective communication is pragmatics, the study of how language is used in social contexts. Mey (2001) defines pragmatics as the study of language use in context, focusing on not just what is said, but how, by whom, and in what context. Pragmatics examines the social roles of

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language and how speakers use it to perform actions in specific situations (Fragoulis, I & Tsiplakides, 2009). In educational settings, understanding pragmatics is key to effective teaching and learning, as it shapes how teachers and students interact to convey meaning and achieve learning objectives.

A key aspect of pragmatics is the concept of illocutionary acts, which refer to the actions speakers perform through their utterances. Introduced by Austin (1962), speech acts are essential to communication, serving functions like making statements, asking questions, issuing commands, or making promises. Searle (1969) built on this, categorizing illocutionary acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. These categories help identify the social functions of language and show how teachers use language to facilitate learning (Lesiana et al., 2023; Fadilah et al., 2023).

Assertives are statements made by the speaker about the world, such as declaring, describing, or claiming something. Assertives aim to convey information that the speaker believes to be true. Directives are speech acts in which the speaker tries to get the listener to do something, such as requests, commands, or suggestions. Commissives are when the speaker commits to a certain course of action. These include promises, offers, and vows. Expressives are speech acts that express the speaker's emotions, feelings, or attitudes. Declarations are illocutionary acts where the speaker brings about a change in the world simply by making the utterance.

In listening classrooms, the use of illocutionary acts plays a significant role in facilitating communication and ensuring that students not only understand the literal meaning of what is being said but also the intent behind those words. Tannen (1993) emphasizes the role of interactional patterns

in shaping meaning within classroom discourse. The way teachers and students interact through questions, feedback, and encouragement directly impacts student comprehension and retention. Walsh (2006) highlights that classroom interaction is the process through which meaning is co-constructed by both educators and students. This co-construction is essential in listening classes, where students need to comprehend auditory material while understanding the speaker's emotional tone, context, and intent (Lesiana et al., 2023; Ismalinda et al., 2023).

The strategic use of illocutionary acts is vital in listening classrooms, where teachers use these speech acts to guide students, clarify tasks, and maintain focus. Gumperz (2009), Underwood (1989), Vandergrift & Goh (2012) and Arslan (2006) extends this view by arguing that classroom interaction is not just a means of transmitting knowledge but also serves as a social tool to manage relationships and classroom dynamics. Goh (2000) stresses that classroom interaction is crucial for listening comprehension, as it provides students with the opportunity to practice their cognitive skills in a social context. Listening, as Field (2009) explains, involves not just decoding words but also interpreting their meaning in real-time, which requires active engagement and the ability to infer the speaker's intent.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize that effective classroom interaction depends on mutual participation between teachers and students, with the teacher facilitating dialogue and student engagement. This interaction becomes even more crucial in listening classes, where understanding the speaker's intent and context is as important as understanding the words themselves. Searle's (1969) framework for illocutionary acts offers a

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comprehensive method for analyzing how language functions in communication, especially in educational contexts. It helps illuminate the social roles that teachers perform in the classroom, such as guiding students through tasks, motivating them, providing feedback, and reinforcing learning objectives.

Although previous studies have examined illocutionary acts in educational contexts, research specifically addressing their use in listening classes is limited. Lotu et al. (2023) and Sari et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of directives and expressives in maintaining student engagement, particularly in virtual classrooms. Yulian and Mandarani (2023) focused on directives, assertives, and expressives in ESL classrooms, finding that directives, such as requests and commands, were prevalent as a reflection of the teacher's authority in managing classroom dynamics. Their findings showed that directives dominate classroom communication, with teachers using them frequently to guide student actions and maintain control. Expressives were also found to play a role in motivating and engaging students in learning activities. Rewai and Junaid (2021) analyzed teacher-student interactions in a local high school and found that directives were the most common illocutionary acts, followed by representatives and expressives. The study also highlighted the frequent use of questioning, which served both to manage interactions and activate students' prior knowledge, stimulating critical thinking. The study concluded that directives were central to classroom communication, reinforcing the teacher's role in guiding the conversation.

However, research specifically focusing on illocutionary acts in listening classes, particularly in Indonesian Islamic universities, remains limited. This study aims

to address this gap by exploring the use of illocutionary acts in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri, applying Searle's (1969) framework. The research will identify the most frequently used illocutionary acts, their functions in classroom interactions, and the influence of cultural and institutional contexts on their use. It will specifically examine how the cultural and institutional environment of an Islamic university affects the interpretation and application of illocutionary acts. Cultural factors such as respect, authority, and community values, along with institutional factors like teaching methodologies, are expected to influence classroom interactions. As Hymes (1972) highlighted, cultural norms play a crucial role in shaping communication, particularly in how authority, respect, and community expectations are communicated in educational settings. By providing insights into how these strategies enhance student engagement and understanding, this study contributes to the growing literature on pragmatics in education.

The research highlights the importance of cultural and institutional contexts in shaping communication strategies in the classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize that successful classroom interaction depends on mutual participation between teachers and students, with the teacher guiding dialogue and fostering student engagement. Yulian and Mandarani (2023) further emphasize that directives are key in managing classroom interactions, with teachers using them to assert their authority and maintain control. This is particularly significant in Islamic institutions, where respect for authority and hierarchical relationships often influence communication patterns. In this context, directives embody the teacher's role as an authoritative figure, aligning with the cultural values of respect

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and control. By investigating these factors in the setting of an Indonesian Islamic university, this study adds a new dimension to understanding the role of illocutionary acts in language education, shedding light on how cultural nuances shape effective communication in the classroom.

**2. METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the use of illocutionary acts in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri. A qualitative method, as Creswell (2013) and Fraenkel et al. (2014) suggests, is ideal for understanding the complex nature of classroom communication, influenced by cultural, institutional, and pedagogical factors. Using a case study design, as outlined by Stake (1995), allows for an in-depth examination of illocutionary acts in real classroom settings, providing insights into their role in student engagement and learning outcomes.

Data will be collected through classroom observations, audio-video recordings, semi-structured interviews with lecturers, and member checking. Flanders (1970) and Walsh (2006) emphasize the importance of observation to capture real-time classroom interactions. These will be complemented by audio and video recordings to ensure accuracy, followed by transcription for detailed analysis. Semi-structured interviews will explore the lecturers'

cognitive processes behind language choices and strategies for guiding students, as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005). Member checking, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1980), will validate the data's accuracy, allowing lecturers to review and confirm their responses.

The study's population consists of one lecturer and students from Class A and B of the Listening course in the English Education Study Program. Purposive sampling will be used, selecting lecturers with experience in teaching Listening and students who consent to participate.

Data analysis will involve identifying patterns in illocutionary acts such as directives, assertives, and commissives, and understanding their contribution to task management and student comprehension.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study analyzed the illocutionary acts used by English lecturers in listening classes (Class A and Class B) at the Islamic University of Kadiri. The data were categorized into five types of illocutionary acts based on Searle's framework: directives, assertive, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. The findings reveal the frequency and specific types of utterances in each class, along with their distribution and examples, as detailed in the following tables and explanations.

**Table 1.** Class A (347 Utterances)

Category	Percentage	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Directives	69.45%	Commands	62	25.73%	"Before we start our class, let's pray together, pray begin."

Category	Percentage	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Assertive	15.85%	Asks	159	65.97%	"Lets say hamdalah together." "Complete the sentences with 'did,' 'was,' or 'were'." "What do you think about this?" "Any suggestion or maybe you have another answer?." "If you're ready to answer, raise your hand."
		Recommends	20	8.30%	"But you can still keep the soud system here yeah."
		Inform	28	50.91%	"Simple past is a verb tense used to show completed actions at a specific time in the past."
Expressives	13.25%	Affirms	8	14.55%	"Your grandparents were born in Kediri."
		Concludes	9	16.36%	"Everyone needs time to practice speaking."
		Greeting	3	6.52%	"Assalamu'alaikum wr wb."
		Thank	10	21.74%	"Thank you for your participation."
Commissives	1.44%	Appreciate	31	67.39%	"Very good."
		Kidding	1	2.17%	"Oh, your imaginary great-grandparents?"
		Promise	5	100%	"I will call your name to deliver the information you got."
Declaratives	0%		0	0%	None

In Class A, directives dominated the classroom interactions, accounting for 69.45% of all utterances. The majority of directives were asks (65.97%), used to elicit responses from students, such as "What do you think about this?" Commands (25.73%) focused on instructing students, for example, "Complete the sentences with 'did,' 'was,' or 'were.'" Assertive were used in 15.85% of the utterances to explain concepts,

with statements like, "Simple past is a verb tense used to show completed actions at a specific time in the past." Expressives made up 13.25% of the utterances, emphasizing appreciation ("Very good") and positive reinforcement. Commissives were rare (1.44%), consisting of promises like "I will call your name next week." No declaratives were observed in this class.

**Table 2.** Class B (252 Utterances)

Category	Percentage	Type	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
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Directives	53.57%	Commands	22	16.30%	"Listen to Christina and take the things she has in her handbag." "Okay, lets check this!"
		Asks	110	81.48%	"How do you say this number in English?" "Do you get some information about this?"
		Recommends	3	2.22%	"You can take a picture if you can't read this clearly." "Make sure you have money inside, not empty like your bag."
Assertive	30.56%	Inform	34	44.16%	"Today's topic is about adjectives and numbers."
		Affirms	20	25.97%	"Andre is a smart student."
		Concludes	18	23.38%	"You will need time to practice speaking activities."
Expressives	15.08%	Greeting	1	2.63%	"Assalamu'alaikum wr wb."
		Thank	12	31.58%	"Thank you for sharing your answers."
		Appreciate	22	57.89%	"I'm happy to see your progress."
		Kidding	2	5.26%	"Oh, you look so serious!"
Commissives	0%		0	0%	None
Declaratives	0.79%	Declare	2	100%	"Today we have two topics: adjectives and numbers."

In Class B, directives were once again the most commonly used illocutionary acts, accounting for 53.57% of the utterances. The majority of directives were questions (81.48%), such as "How do you say this number in English?" Commands (16.30%) included instructions like "Listen to Christina and take the things she has in her handbag." Assertives were more prominent in Class B (30.56%), used to provide information and clarify concepts, such as "Today's topic is about adjectives and numbers." Expressives (15.08%) helped create a

positive atmosphere in the classroom, with phrases like "I'm happy to see your progress." Unlike Class A, declaratives were used in Class B (0.79%) to announce topics, such as "Today we have two topics: adjectives and numbers." Commissives were not observed in this class.

The study's findings reveal how illocutionary acts, as described by Searle (1969), were employed by lecturers in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri. The analysis shows that directives were the most dominant

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illocutionary act across both classes, followed by assertives and expressives, while commissives and declaratives were either rare or not used at all. These results reflect the pragmatic strategies that lecturers use to engage students, enhance comprehension, and encourage participation in listening lessons.

Directives were the most commonly used illocutionary acts, comprising 69.45% in Class A and 53.57% in Class B. The high frequency of questions (e.g., "What do you think about this?" in Class A and "How do you say this number in English?" in Class B) highlights the lecturers' efforts to actively involve students in the learning process. This supports Yule's (1996) claim that directives are vital in educational settings, as they guide student actions and help maintain focus on tasks. The use of commands (e.g., "Listen to Christina and take the things she has in her handbag.") reflects the lecturers' role in providing clear instructions, crucial in listening classes where students need to process audio input while completing tasks. The differences in directive usage between the two classes could be due to variations in teaching styles and classroom dynamics. Class A's higher proportion of commands (25.73%) suggests a more instruction-focused approach, while Class B's emphasis on questions (81.48%) points to a more interactive strategy that prioritizes student responses. This shows how lecturers adjust their communication strategies based on the needs of different student groups.

Assertives, which made up 15.85% in Class A and 30.56% in Class B, were primarily used to provide information

and clarify lesson objectives. Examples such as "Today's topic is about adjectives and numbers" show the lecturers' efforts to ensure students understand the lesson's purpose and context. The higher percentage of assertives in Class B suggests a greater focus on explanation and elaboration, potentially reflecting the students' need for more support in understanding the material. This finding aligns with Mey's (2001) view that assertives are crucial for enhancing comprehension and fostering a shared learning environment. The use of affirmations and summaries, such as "Everyone needs time to practice speaking," further shows the lecturers' intent to validate students' efforts and reinforce key ideas.

Expressives, which comprised 13.25% in Class A and 15.08% in Class B, were used to build rapport and create a supportive learning environment. The frequent use of expressions of appreciation (e.g., "Very good," "I'm happy to see your progress") underscores the lecturers' focus on encouraging and motivating students, in line with Gumperz's (1982) view that expressives are essential for fostering collaboration and engagement. The slightly higher percentage of expressives in Class B suggests a stronger emphasis on emotional support to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, especially in response to challenges faced by students in listening tasks. This aligns with previous research that suggests expressives can boost student confidence and participation, particularly in language learning. Furthermore, the inclusion of Islamic expressions, such as "Before we start our class, let's pray together," "Let's say hamdalah

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together," and "Assalamu'alaikum wr wb," reflects the cultural context of Islamic values, promoting respect, unity, and motivation within the classroom.

Commissives were rare in Class A (1.44%) and absent in Class B, while declaratives were completely absent in Class A and minimal in Class B (0.79%). Commissive acts, such as promises to address future activities, were primarily used to set expectations, reflecting a forward-looking approach to classroom management. Declarative acts, limited to announcing lesson topics, played a formal role in structuring Class B's sessions. The minimal use of these categories suggests that the primary focus of lecturers was on interaction and engagement rather than enacting changes or commitments through speech. This finding is consistent with the nature of listening classes, where the primary goal is to facilitate comprehension and participation through dynamic communication strategies.

The analysis of illocutionary acts used by English lecturers in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri revealed significant insights into how communication strategies facilitate classroom interaction and enhance student engagement. The findings indicate that directives, assertives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives were used in various frequencies, with directives being the most dominant illocutionary act, followed by assertives and expressives. These findings underline the pivotal role of illocutionary acts in managing classroom activities, directing students' attention, fostering emotional engagement, and ensuring clarity in instructional content.

The predominant use of directives aligns with the work of Chen & Zhang

(2022), who argued that directives are fundamental in managing classroom behavior and maintaining student focus. In listening classes, where students must engage with complex auditory material, directives guide students' attention and ensure they remain engaged with the task. These findings are consistent with Yule (1996), who emphasized the role of directives in language classrooms, where explicit instructions are necessary for students to navigate complex tasks. The frequent use of directives in this study highlights the critical role of clear, task-oriented communication in maintaining focus and structure in language classrooms, especially in listening activities that demand sustained cognitive effort.

Assertives, the second most frequent illocutionary act, were used to convey factual information and reinforce understanding of the listening content. This supports Searle's (1969) framework, where assertives are designed to convey information or describe the world, making them essential in educational settings. Lecturers used assertive speech acts to explain key concepts, clarify difficult points, and ensure that students fully understood the listening material. This approach aligns with Bachman (1990), who argued that assertives are vital for reinforcing information and ensuring students grasp the content being taught. In listening classes, where students are required to decode and comprehend spoken language, these assertives help students link their auditory experiences to conceptual knowledge, aiding comprehension and retention.

In addition to the cognitive aspect of learning, the role of expressives in

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creating an emotionally supportive classroom atmosphere cannot be overstated. Lecturers employed expressives to encourage students and provide emotional support, particularly when students encountered difficulties. This is consistent with Mercer (2018), who highlighted the importance of emotional engagement in language classrooms. When students encounter difficulties in listening comprehension, emotional support can help reduce frustration and encourage persistence.

The commissives, though used less frequently, served an important role in reinforcing the lecturer's commitment to student learning. For instance, lecturers often made promises to clarify doubts or offer additional resources, signaling their willingness to assist students beyond the classroom. By using commissives, lecturers create an atmosphere of mutual responsibility, where students feel encouraged to engage with the material and seek help when needed.

The relatively low use of declaratives suggests that their role in the listening classroom is primarily to manage transitions and structure the lesson. Declaratives helped organize the classroom flow and provided students with cues on what to expect next. This finding is consistent with Scollon & Scollon (2001), who argued that declaratives help manage classroom interactions by signaling shifts between activities. Although less common, declaratives play an essential role in maintaining the overall structure of the lesson, ensuring students understand the progression of tasks and providing a clear sense of when transitions occur.

One of the more interesting findings of this study is the potential

influence of the cultural context at the Islamic University of Kadiri on the use of illocutionary acts. The frequent use of expressives and commissives may reflect the cultural and institutional emphasis on building personal relationships and fostering a supportive learning environment. (Alfaruq & Hasyim, 2017) suggest, teachers can model behaviors such as patience, respect, and empathy during class, creating a positive learning environment that reflects Islamic teachings, cultural norms deeply influence how illocutionary acts are performed in educational settings. The findings suggest that the lecturers' emphasis on emotional engagement and commitment in their speech acts may be a reflection of the cultural values prioritizing mutual care and respect, which are integral to Islamic educational practices. This could explain why lecturers in this context might employ more expressives and commissives compared to other educational settings where the focus may be more on task-oriented communication.

In addition to the cultural influence, the findings of this study align with Searle's (1969) theory of illocutionary acts, which views speech acts as tools for managing social relationships and achieving communication goals. The predominant use of directives and assertives in this study demonstrates how these speech acts are central to classroom management, providing students with clear guidance and necessary information to successfully complete listening tasks. On the other hand, the use of expressives and commissives demonstrates the lecturers' commitment to creating an emotionally supportive classroom, which

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is crucial in fostering a productive learning environment.

This study provides valuable insights into the strategic use of illocutionary acts in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri. The findings highlight the importance of directives for maintaining focus and clarity, assertives for reinforcing content understanding, and expressives for emotional support. While commissives were less frequent, their role in fostering lecturer-student relationships and building trust is significant. The use of declaratives, although limited, plays a crucial role in structuring the class and managing transitions. This research contributes to our understanding of how illocutionary acts shape classroom interactions and provides recommendations for lecturers to enhance their communication strategies to support student engagement and learning outcomes.

**4. CONCLUSION**

This study examined the use of illocutionary acts by lecturers in listening classes at the Islamic University of Kadiri, focusing on Searle's five categories: directives, assertives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. The results reveal that directives were the most common, followed by assertives and expressives, while commissives and declaratives were either rarely or never used.

Directive acts, especially questions and commands, were frequently used, highlighting the lecturers' focus on guiding student activities, providing instructions, and keeping students engaged. Assertive acts were primarily

used to convey information and clarify concepts, ensuring students grasped the lesson content and objectives. Expressive acts helped create a supportive and motivating learning environment. Commissive and declarative acts were infrequently used, which aligns with the interactive, task-driven nature of listening classes.

The study emphasizes the role of pragmatic strategies in fostering effective communication in listening classrooms. The findings suggest that lecturers adapt their use of illocutionary acts to suit the subject matter and student needs, enhancing comprehension, participation, and the overall learning environment.

A key contribution of this study is its examination of the influence of Islamic cultural values on illocutionary acts in education. Islamic principles such as respect, humility, and knowledge sharing shape how lecturers use expressives and directives. The prominence of these acts, especially in their supportive forms, reflects cultural values of mutual respect and guidance, crucial for creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

This research contributes to the understanding of pragmatics in education, particularly in Indonesian Islamic universities. Future studies could explore illocutionary acts in different subjects or educational contexts to further examine their role in teaching practices.

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