

The Direct Utterance Used By Special Needs Student With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Condition

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Abstract

Communication exists as long as social interaction continues, and humans rely on it as a primary tool for building relationships. However, some individuals experience communication difficulties caused by various factors. One group facing such challenges is children with special needs, including those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a condition characterized by difficulty maintaining attention and regulating impulses (Baihaqi, 2008). This research aims to identify the types of direct speech acts most frequently used by students with ADHD. The data were collected through field notes and interviews, then analyzed using content analysis procedures suggested by Ary (2006). The findings show that the direct utterances produced by students with special needs during classroom interactions mainly consist of directive speech acts expressed through three modes: (1) commanding, (2) asking, and (3) advising. These patterns reflect the students' communicative tendencies and the way ADHD affects their interactional behavior in learning contexts.

Keywords: *direct utterances, directive speech acts, special needs students, ADHD, classroom communication*

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is a major branch of language study encompassing several subfields such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Among these areas, pragmatics plays a crucial role in understanding how language is used in social contexts. Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is constructed not only through linguistic forms but also through situational and contextual factors (Mey, 2006). In other words, the language people use depends on the social conditions in which they live. Pragmatic studies cover a range of topics, including context, deixis, presupposition, implicature, and speech acts, among which speech act theory holds a central position.

The concept of speech acts was first introduced by Austin (1962) and later developed by Searle (1969), as cited in Yule (1996). The theory explains that utterances are not merely statements but also actions performed through language. Speech acts are commonly divided into five categories: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative (Barron, 2017). Representative acts express the speaker's belief about the truth of a proposition; directive acts attempt to get the hearer to do something; expressive acts convey psychological states; commissive acts commit the speaker to a future action; and declarative acts bring about a change in the external situation.

Communication continues as long as social interaction exists, and language serves as the main instrument for this interaction. However, certain individuals face difficulties in communicating due to physical, cognitive, or psychological differences. Children with special needs, for instance, often experience communication challenges that set them apart from typically developing children (Ainnayyah, 2019). These children may struggle to maintain social engagement and may appear preoccupied with their own world, leading others to misunderstand their behavior.

One category of children with special needs is those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). According to Barkley (in Wood, 2007), ADHD is a disorder that involves difficulties in self-regulation, behavioral control, and social adaptation. Similarly, Baihaqi and Sugiarmin (2006) describe ADHD as a condition marked by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, which disrupts the balance of an individual's daily activities. Dayu (2013) further defines ADHD as a neurological disorder in which individuals have trouble controlling impulses, sustaining attention, and regulating behavior.

From these expert views, it can be concluded that children with ADHD experience difficulties focusing attention due to minor dysfunctions in the central nervous system. As a result, they often display hyperactivity and short attention spans, making communication a challenge. Given that ADHD influences the way individuals express themselves, this study aims to identify and analyze the direct speech acts most commonly used by students with ADHD during social and classroom interactions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the types of direct speech acts used by students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of natural communication behavior rather than numerical measurement. The research was conducted at *Sekolah Dasar Inklusi Negeri* (Public Inclusive Elementary School) located in the East Java region.

Participants

The participants were students identified as having ADHD who attended regular classes with inclusive learning settings. The selection was based on teacher recommendations and classroom observations. These students exhibited typical characteristics of ADHD, such as difficulty sustaining attention, impulsive behavior, and challenges in controlling physical activity.

Data Collection

The data were collected through field notes and semi-structured interviews. Field notes were used to document the students' spoken interactions during classroom activities, while interviews were conducted with teachers to gain further insights into

the students' communication patterns. The researcher observed naturally occurring conversations without interfering in the teaching process to ensure authentic data.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis procedures as proposed by Ary (2006). The analysis involved several steps: (1) identifying utterances produced by the ADHD students during classroom interaction; (2) classifying the utterances into categories of speech acts based on Searle's (1976) taxonomy; and (3) interpreting the communicative functions of each direct speech act in context. The results were then described qualitatively to highlight patterns and tendencies in the students' use of language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) tend to use directive speech acts more frequently than other types of speech acts. The data obtained from classroom observations show that their utterances often serve to express requests, commands, or suggestions. Based on Searle's (1976) classification, three main forms of directive acts were identified in the students' speech: commanding, asking, and advising.

1. Commanding

Students with ADHD often use commanding utterances to direct others' actions. For example, one student was observed saying, "*Give me the pencil!*" or "*Don't take my book!*" Such utterances reflect impulsive tendencies and limited control over social politeness norms. The commands were typically expressed directly without mitigating devices such as *please* or indirect phrasing. This pattern aligns with the behavioral characteristics of ADHD, where individuals may struggle with impulse regulation and turn-taking in conversation (Barkley, 1998).

2. Asking

Another dominant form of directive act was asking. Utterances such as "*What are we doing now?*" or "*Can I play with that?*" indicate the students' curiosity and need for immediate clarification. While these questions demonstrate engagement with the learning process, they also reveal a lack of sustained attention, as the same questions were often repeated even after being answered. This finding is consistent with Baihaqi and Sugiartin's (2006) view that attention difficulties are a core characteristic of ADHD.

3. Advising

Although less frequent, advising utterances were also observed, for instance, "*You should sit here,*" or "*Don't talk too much, you'll get in trouble.*" These expressions show an attempt by ADHD students to guide or influence peers' behavior, indicating a developing awareness of social interaction norms. However, their advice

was often delivered abruptly, without considering the listener's perspective, again reflecting limited pragmatic sensitivity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that directive speech acts dominate the communication style of students with ADHD. The prevalence of these acts suggests that ADHD affects not only cognitive and behavioral aspects but also pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. The dominance of direct and literal speech forms also supports Austin's (1962) idea that speech acts are actions, as these students' utterances frequently serve as immediate behavioral responses rather than deliberate social strategies.

In line with Mey's (2006) theory of pragmatics, the speech of ADHD students reflects their contextual adaptation within classroom interactions. Their frequent use of directives indicates a communicative style driven by immediate needs and emotions rather than reflective thought. Therefore, teachers and caregivers should be aware of these patterns and design communication strategies that accommodate the students' impulsivity and attention limitations, while also fostering their pragmatic development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) predominantly use directive speech acts in their daily classroom communication. The directives observed take three main forms, namely commanding, asking, and advising, which collectively reveal the students' impulsive tendencies and challenges in maintaining social appropriateness during interaction. These communication patterns are closely related to the core characteristics of ADHD, namely inattention, impulsivity, and difficulty in behavioral regulation.

The findings highlight that pragmatic competence in children with ADHD differs from that of typically developing peers. Their speech acts tend to be more direct and emotionally driven, indicating that they communicate primarily to fulfill immediate needs rather than to maintain social harmony. Therefore, teachers and educators in inclusive settings should adopt adaptive communication approaches that help these students express themselves appropriately while fostering the development of their social and linguistic awareness.

Future research may explore a wider range of speech act types and include larger participant groups to gain deeper insight into the pragmatic aspects of communication among children with ADHD.

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