



USING INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS AND THEIR IMPACTS ON CREATING A CONDUCIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Communication at the workplace requires meaningful understanding because it affects the work relationship as well as the work atmosphere. Hence, expressions used to generate such conditions are supposed to embody a conducive environment. This research aimed to determine the types of indirect speech acts and their language functions. This study used a qualitative research with a descriptive design to depict the phenomenon. The subjects were three employees at PT. Bosowa Berlian Motor Makassar, who were chosen purposively considering their availability and their readiness during the data collection. The data were collected by using observation with audio recordings and the researchers themselves as the non-participant observers. The results of this study showed that there were five types of indirect speech acts and there were certain language functions practiced by the employees, they are: emphasizing and instructing (assertive type), telling a condition and commanding what to do (directive type), directing and checking for the appropriate work (commissive type), complaining and giving subtle offense (expressive type), and responding, telling information and encouraging (declarative type). All types and their functions revealed and occurred to meet the need of creating a conducive environment in the workplace. The five types represent the traits of being assertive, directive, trusted, expressive, and declarative along with their use of language functions. These traits bear positive and good atmosphere in the workplace. Thus, with the conducive working environment, the employees can undertake their tasks well and focus on reaching the target in the workplace.

Keywords: indirect speech acts; language functions; a conducive working environment

Abstrak

Komunikasi di tempat kerja memerlukan pemahaman yang bermakna karena mempengaruhi hubungan kerja dan juga suasana kerja. Oleh karena itu, ungkapan yang digunakan untuk menghasilkan kondisi demikian seharusnya mencerminkan lingkungan yang kondusif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan jenis tindak tutur tidak langsung dan fungsi bahasanya. Penelitian ini menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif untuk menggambarkan fenomena yang ada. Subyek penelitian ini adalah tiga karyawan PT. Bosowa Berlian Motor, Makassar, yang dipilih khusus dengan mempertimbangkan keberadaan dan kesediaan mereka dalam pengumpulan data. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan observasi dengan rekaman audio dan peneliti sendiri sebagai pengamat non partisipan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat lima jenis tindak tutur tidak langsung dan terdapat fungsi bahasa tertentu yang digunakan oleh para pegawai, yaitu: menegaskan dan memberi petunjuk (tipe asertif), memberitahukan suatu kondisi dan memerintahkan apa yang harus dilakukan (tipe direktif), mengarahkan dan memeriksa pekerjaan yang sesuai (tipe komisif), mengeluh



dan memberikan sindiran halus (*tipe ekspresif*), dan menanggapi, memberitahukan informasi dan memberikan dorongan (*tipe deklaratif*). Segala jenis dan fungsinya diungkapkan dan dihasilkan untuk memenuhi kebutuhan terciptanya lingkungan yang kondusif di tempat kerja. Kelima tipe tersebut mewakili sifat asertif, direktif, terpercaya, ekspresif, dan deklaratif beserta penggunaan fungsi kebahasaannya. Ciri-ciri karakter tersebut menghasilkan suasana positif dan baik di tempat kerja. Dengan demikian, dengan lingkungan kerja yang kondusif maka para karyawan dapat menjalankan tugasnya dengan baik dan fokus dalam mencapai target di tempat kerja.

Kata Kunci: tindak tutur tidak langsung; fungsi bahasa; lingkungan kerja yang kondusif

1. Introduction

Communication is a vital activity in human's daily life. It affects the relationship and interaction in any situations. Since it comes in different forms, it has to be meaningful, accurate, and comprehensive so it can benefit the communication goal. One of the forms is verbal. Verbal messages play a crucial role in human communication. They are produced and received constantly in daily activities and appear in various forms such as conversations, news, stories, seminars, meetings, and on digital platforms. These messages are particularly accessible in any speech situation.

People, as speakers, interact and communicate their thoughts and feelings daily. Similarly, employees exchange ideas at work, often discussing specific matters. These discussions are supported by their behaviors, which trigger various speech acts.

Speech act theory, introduced by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), describes how speaking is not only about presenting information but also performing actions. A speech act occurs when a person performs any action through speaking, which is common in verbal communication. For instance, in office conversations, employees often use both literal and indirect words or phrases to convey their intentions. Levinson (2016) explains that speech acts are verbs that describe the function of spoken words. These actions include reporting, making statements, asking questions, issuing warnings, making promises, agreeing, regretting, and apologizing. In conversations, people perform various actions such as reporting, explaining, warning, promising, suggesting, criticizing, and questioning. Thus, a speech act is the smallest unit of speech activity that has a specific function.

Not all speech purposes are expressed and understood directly. Often, speakers modify their language to convey their intentions indirectly, known as indirect speech acts. These acts go beyond literal statements. Yule (1996) notes that indirect speech acts have an indirect relationship between the structure and function of the speech act. Basri (2018) adds that indirect speech acts are expressed in ways that require the listener to interpret the purpose and implications.

Furthermore, to perform indirect speech acts designates indirect intentions which automatically give certain impacts in communication. To classify the indirect intentions, Searle (1975) classifies five types of illocutionary acts which represent indirect speech acts, they are: 1) *assertive* which means the speaker represents the expressed truth, 2) *directive* is the intention which is to let the listener does what the speaker says), 3) *commissive* where the speaker participates to carry out what he said), 4) *expressive* is the intention of the speaker says about the objects and facts, and 5) *declarative* is the intention where the speaker says what is connected to the facts. To accurately determine the classification, the speaker generates his intention through the use of various language functions, which means the delivery of his intentional and literal meaning.



Several studies have investigated the use of indirect speech acts. Amalia (2017) analyzed the forms and functions of indirect speech acts in the *X-Men* film series, identifying three types: directional, commissive, and expressive. Her findings highlighted how indirect communication varies based on the context and social standing of the characters. Scheyder (2004), in his study *Responses to Indirect Speech Acts in a Chat Room*, explored how participants in a chat room, comprised of recent university graduates, responded to indirect speech acts. His results indicated that most responses were limited to the information requested, with the chat room environment amplifying this tendency. Syahputra et al. (2023), in their research *Direct and Indirect Speech Acts in Literary Works as Language Learning Media*, examined the types and functions of speech acts in Jean Craighead George's novel *On the Far Side of the Mountain*. They found both direct and indirect speech acts in the dialogues, with direct speech acts categorized into declarative, imperative, and interrogative forms. Indirect speech acts primarily manifested as assertions, requests, and questions, with requests being the most common in imperative sentences.

Language exhibits multifaceted functions that have been explored and categorized by various linguists throughout history. Language function is the way the speaker expresses his intention by embracing his ideas and emotions to create, build up, and maintain his social interaction. Pozzi (2004) stated that language functions are tasks or purposes for which language is used to communicate. Wardhaugh (1972) posited that language functions as a tool for human communication, encompassing both written and spoken forms. Language function is a tool used by people to communicate with one another and to convey their emotions and identities, including declaring things, reporting things, explaining things, describing happenings, and sharing information. Amin (2014) has listed several language functions regarding the purposes to speak in the English as a Foreign Language classroom, such as: to direct is to show the steps, to inform is to tell, to give examples and to correct is to mention, to remind is to emphasize and to encourage is to stimulate. Still other functions can be generated and they are based on the speaker's intentional purposes. Any speakers can yield various functions because communication always happens in various contexts.

In relation to the ways the speaker reveals their indirect speech acts, Keraf (2004) listed four language functions, they are self-expression, interpersonal communication, social integration, and social influence. This list has supported how a conducive environment is built especially when communicating in the office and in the working situations. Sedaramayanti (2001) stated that the work environment is a tool and material that a person fully encounters, and the environment in which a person works, how and when they work as individuals and groups. Employees in the working environment do a lot of conversations regarding all the matters that support and anticipate the work completion. Hence, a conducive environment supports their productivity and ultimately affect the improvement of their performance levels.

To achieve effective and creative performance, creating a supportive work atmosphere is crucial. Rules must be obeyed, but they should be designed to produce high-caliber results, not to limit or stifle creativity and performance. A supportive work atmosphere will help make work more effective and efficient. To promote this, which ultimately results in loyal employees, human capital management, as well as training and practices in good communication, are required. To fulfill corporate goals and the goals of the employees themselves, it is necessary to maintain a positive and conducive working environment. The work environment is crucial both inside and outside the corporate setting.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design. According to Fadli (2021), qualitative research focuses on understanding the quality of diverse interactions, activities, settings, and resources. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding and problem-solving based on observed facts and realities. In qualitative research, evaluations are based on real-world occurrences. Descriptive research aims to describe current symptoms, events, or incidents, capturing



them as they unfold. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to reveal how indirect speech acts contribute to building a conducive environment at PT. Bosowa Berlian Motor. PT. Bosowa Berlian Motor was established since 1973. It is a business corporate which focuses on selling and distributing cars, and services after sales. This study selected three employees purposively considering their availability and readiness. They work every office day and communicate many things about their corporate matters. Hence, data on their communication matters were observed and recorded using audio recordings. Also, the researchers became the non-participant observant during the observation process to create a natural setting in data collection.

The data analysis followed the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The initial step involved identifying and filtering data relevant to the use of indirect speech acts and their language functions. This process focused on selecting data that corresponded to the study's context. The reduced data were then organized and categorized. This involved listing the data and providing descriptions to facilitate understanding. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified by presenting and interpreting the displayed data in the context of the research. This step ensured that the findings were accurate and relevant to the study's objectives

3. Result and Discussion

The employees at PT. Bosowa Berlian Motor convey certain utterances or expressions in various situations when they work and communicate with other employees. Here are the following extracts on how they use the five types of indirect speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative, and their language functions to reveal their intentional meanings.

3.1 Assertive

Assertive, is whether the employees are committed to speaking the truth and what they think to be true.

Extract 1

Pegawai 1: "Nantipi bede bulan depan dianu"

Pegawai 2: "Oh maksud berarti bulan depan lu nambah tuh - berarti bulan depan lu ada tambahan, ndapapa."

Pegawai 1: "Weh, 500 satu orang."

(D4P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: "Look forward to get it done next month"

Employee 2: "Oh I mean that next month you add it, it means that next month you have an addition, it's okay."

Employee 1: "Weh, 500 one person."

In extract 1, the topic is about the amount of money they gain after they will finished the work. The employee 1 uses a word "Weh" to mean exactly the amount of money per person has to add. Indirectly, he is emphasizing his point. To create a conducive environment at workplace, employees will be meaningfully understood if they hear an emphasis of the point.

Extract 2:

Pegawai 1: "Masalahnya belum dibayar itu tadi"

Pegawai 3: "Bayar mi tawwa"

(D2P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: "The problem is it hasn't been paid yet"



Employee 3: "Then pay it"

In extract 2, the topic is payment of personal matter. Employee 3 indirectly is encouraging employee 1 to immediately finish the unsettled payment. In this type, he is instructing employee 1 to finish his payment. Employees is supposed to encourage one another especially about personal matter to help create a conducive communication and interaction.

3.2 Directive

Directives, are employed by the employee as a means of persuasion. Directives such as commands, orders, requests, warnings, or suggestions are given with the intention that the employees receiving them will carry out the suggested action.

Extract 3:

Pegawai 1: "Kerjaan banyak yang belum sempat dikerjakan."

(D1P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: "There are many jobs that have not been done."

Extract 3 is a statement used to provide information. This expression is not just telling information that there is still a lot of work to do. Indirectly, employee 1 is telling his condition. This can lead to a conducive environment to inform the employee's condition so to focus on finishing the work and to avoid any interruptions.

Extract 4:

Pegawai 1 : "Pak Tahir?"

Pegawai 2 : "Ya"

Pegawai 1 : "Matikan lampu"

(D4P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: "Mr. Tahir?"

Employee 2: "Yes"

Employee 1: "Turn off the lights"

Extract 4 shows employee 1 is commanding employee 2. This expression does not only mean to tell employee 2 to turn off the lights but has another meaning, namely so that employee 1 can sleep soundly at rest hours in the condition that the lights are not on. To create a comfortable situation, commanding to set more comfortable situation is an undeniable request.

3.3 Commissive

Commissive, is the employee doing what he says to other employees. It also shows what the employee should do.

Extract 5:

Pegawai 2: "Iyo tinggal dianu ini, tinggal dicari didokumen."

Pegawai 1: Download apa dokumen?

(D5P2)

English translation:

Employee 2: "Yes, do this, just search in document."

Employee 1: "Which document to be downloaded?"



Based on extract 5, employee 2 is carrying out what he says at that time by directing what to do, and indirectly emphasizing employee 1 to look for the document. This way, giving direction about what to do can help create a conducive environment at the workplace because the information is prompted and the work can be administered.

Extract 6:

Pegawai 3: *"Ehh cocokmi ini, liat bede pak 300 ini."*

Pegawai 2: *"Ohiya saya hitung dulu."*

(D6P3)

English translation:

Employee 3: *"Is this appropriate, check it out, these are 300 sir"*

Employee 2: *"Oh, let me count them."*

Based on extract 6, employee 2 is indirectly checking the correctness of what employee 3 is asking for. He is telling what he will do. Checking if the work is appropriate is a must to create a conducive environment so all employees are assured and trust one another.

3.4 Expressive

Expressive, includes things like expressing sympathy, gratitude, expressing regret, congratulating employees or employers, and engaging in behaviors that are limited to verbalizing one's innermost thoughts and feelings.

Extract 7:

Pegawai 2: *"Anu bikin pusing- iyo pusinga saya dengan aturanna orang disini"*

Pegawai 1: *"Selalu berubah ubah"*

(D6P2)

English translation:

Employee 2: *"It's so dizzy, I'm dizzy with the rules of people here."*

Employee 1: *"Always changing"*

Based on extract 7, employee 2 is complaining about the rule of a certain situation. This complaint is agreed by employee 1. Certain situations at workplace can stress the employees. Complaining is an expression of dissatisfaction about something or someone that does not fulfill the employee's expectation. By complaining gives an opportunity to release the employee's stress at the workplace.

Extract 8:

Pegawai 1: *"Pak Puji- Pak Puji- ingatki nah kantor kodong ini pak bukan kandang pak"*

Pegawai 2: *"Hahaha"*

Pegawai 1; *"Makkalaki pak Puji"*

(D8P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: *"Mr. Puji Mr. Puji, please remember that this office is not a cage sir"*

Employee 2: *"Hahaha"*

Employee 1; *" Mr. Puji is laughing so loud"*

Based on extract 8, employee 1 would like to remind employee 2 about the office cleanliness. However, employee 2 responds him with laugh. Then, employee 1 emphasizes his point by giving a subtle offensive expression which tells what employee 2 is doing, which is laughing but reminding about the cleanliness. Giving a subtle offense can become an alternative response to stay peaceful and to avoid the conflict.



3.5 Declarative

Declarative, is a phrase that, once spoken, alters the circumstance directly.

Extract 9:

Pegawai 2: *“Yang itu tadi saya mau tanya, apakah sudah ada data di gudang dua?”*

Pegawai 1: *“Gudang kedua belum ada, ini hari baru ... rencana kita pakai sistem nanti sebentar toh, ... nda usah pakai manual nanti susah lagi.”*

(D9P1)

English translation:

Employee 2: *“That one I wanted to ask, is there any data in warehouse two?”*

Employee 1: *“The second warehouse is not there yet, this is a new day we plan to use the system later in a while, anyway, you have to use the manual later it will be difficult again.”*

In extract 9, employee 2 is asking about the data as well as confirmation to employee 1. Although employee 1 has responded briefly that there were no data yet, he continues by telling an alternative to finish their work. By responding and telling an alternative plays as a reinforcement to clarify what to do so the other employee is aware about the situation. This leads to clarity and help build a conducive environment in the workplace.

Extract 10:

Pegawai 1: *“Tunggu sebentar yaaa, sabar ini sedang ... dibongkar.”*

Pegawai 2: *“Berapa itu pak?”*

(D10P1)

English translation:

Employee 1: *“Wait a minute, please be patient this is being dismantled.”*

Employee 2: *“How much is that sir?”*

In extract 10, employee 1 is encouraging employee 2 to be patient about the completion of the work because then employee 2 is asking a question about the service. Encouraging runs an affection. This way, the employee could create a positive environment in the workplace.

This part illustrates the indirect speech acts used by the employees during the working process. As shown in extracts 1 and 2, employees use assertive indirect speech acts in communicating with another employee to express the fact, which is happening at that time. In those extracts, the employees are emphasizing and instructing other employees about the points of the fact. The respectively assertive functions are simply stressing the point and being sympathetic. Being assertive is important for effective leadership and team building in the workplace and for identifying the relationship between superiors and subordinates. Izar (2020) stated that assertive is a speech act binding the speaker to the truth that they talk. Assertiveness is a mindset, attitude, and style of thinking. It focuses on how to communicate with people to improve as a team player, manager, or coworker. This enables the utilization of others and valued behavior. It can develop persistently honest and transparent communication while upholding others' rights and taking accountability for their actions by engaging in assertive speech acts (Arnold and Boggs, 2015). In addition, being assertive in the workplace may express their opinions and thoughts in a civilized manner yet preserving (Radan, 1992).

As shown in extracts 3 and 4, employees use directive indirect speech acts in communicating with other employees about what to do. Respectively, they tell a condition and command what to do so that other employees are well informed about the working situations. The two respective functions indicate giving accurate and meaningful points and become the orientation about the working situation, which are required to attain a conducive environment. This is in line with the Searle's meaning (1975) about the use of directive, that is an intention to let the partner do what the speaker says. With



orientation, employees can learn the tasks assigned to them well. They can understand the company's culture and organization such as core values, content and mission, and company activities, and avoid problems that may occur when employees get responsibilities or tasks at work. So that they have more realistic expectations about their work. Provided that the way of direction carried out by employees is done in a good and polite manner. The use of directives functions as social integration with employees is in line with Keraf (2004). Adaptations are used by company to provide support in the process of introducing work and setting a good example for employees. In addition, Fatma, et.al (2020) in their study found that contextual socio-cultural factor also supports the structure of the language. Hence, giving a straightforward orientation in this study creates an honest social interaction among the employees.

As shown in extracts 5 and 6, the employees direct and check for the appropriate work respectively. Thus, they provide orientation and build trust with the other employees so the interlocutor employees know what to do and be aware of the working situation. In this study, these two functions induce a promise. A promise is an act of commissive. A commissive means the speaker promises the listener that he will do what he has told to do. In the extracts, the employees guarantee what they are doing because they understand the situation. Searle (1975) also stated commissive is a way for speakers to ensure that the interlocutor will do or not do as being told. However, the interlocutor can be responded to with acceptance or rejection. This is in line with the study conducted by Thao, Purba, and Herman (2021) who found that there were six kinds of commissive expressed in the Pappilon movie, they are promise, offer, threat, guarantee, volunteer, and rejection. The kinds of commissive in this study represent the guarantee as being directed and volunteer as in checking for the appropriate work. Thus, commissive is one way to confirm a job whether what is done is appropriate or not so that the interests of employees are fulfilled together.

As shown in extracts 7 and 8, complaining and giving subtle offense respectively are functions of expressive in the workplace. Finocchiaro (1974) offers the same perspective by categorizing the function of language in terms of personal functions, which communicate the attitude of the speaker. They often use expressions that show their liking, dislike, annoyance, anger, or pleasure in various forms. In this study, the employees express their emotion towards any situations and conditions. To express their dissatisfied feeling is to release their emotion. This leads to reduce their stress gradually when processing and completing their work. This is in line with Bono et al (2007) who study about employees' emotions, which can have an impact on their stress. Especially if the employees regulate their emotions, they experience decreased job satisfaction and increase stress but employees who have supervisors high on transformational leadership are less likely to experience decreased job satisfaction. In addition, Ashkanasy and Daus (2002) in their study about emotions in workplace settings found that expressing emotion plays a powerful role and a strong potential for practical application, especially working in selection, performance management, training, and implications for customer service. These areas of operation initially deal with interaction and communication with the employers, the employees or customers. Various emotions can be released in those areas but they have to be controlled and maintain a positive climate. Ultimately, the release of emotion will then be produced in their language expressions and behavior. Although the employees often use expressions that show their liking, dislike, annoyance, anger, or pleasure in various forms, their purpose of self-expression is not to restrict the employees' freedom but to support the corporate's image. Roberts (2012) mention that the rules imposed by the employers in the workplace are to protect the business' public image, promote a productive work environment, define a culture, comply with health and safety standards, and even prevent claims of unlawful harassment. The expressive state is an essential component of realizing self-development, which is a framework to understand how employees experience changes and opportunities throughout their careers.



As shown in extracts 9 and 10, the employees respond and tell information and encourage the other employee respectively. The functions are classified into declarative. Declarative is defined as speech that, once spoken, immediately modifies the circumstances. Basri (2018) stated that declarative speech acts consist of deciding, prohibiting, cancelling, allowing, and imposing punishments. In the extracts, the declaratives are generated by responding, telling and encouraging. These functions expand how the declaratives are used in the communicative situations. Expressing declaratives is similar to giving assertion. It explicitly states information. Zimmerman and Luecke (2010) indicate that the one who produces assertion in their communication is being assertive and that means he stands up for his needs and interest in an open and direct way at the same time respects the things that matter to others. This characteristic has been proven in the extracts where the employees respond directly, tell an honest alternative and encourage sympathetically the other employee towards their situation. This nurtures a conducive atmosphere in the workplace.

Based on the results above, the five types of indirect speech acts are all embodied and expressed by the employees in their communication at the workplace. By performing all types of indirect speech acts adopted from Searle's, functions of language are classified into emphasizing and instructing (assertive type), telling a condition and commanding what to do (directive type), directing and checking for the appropriate work (commissive type), complaining and giving subtle offense (expressive type), and responding, telling information and encouraging (declarative type). All types and their functions revealed and occurred to meet the need of creating a conducive environment in the workplace. The five types represent the traits of being assertive, directive, trusted, expressive, and declarative along with their use of language functions. These traits bear positive and good atmosphere in the workplace. Thus, with the conducive working environment, the employees can undertake their tasks well and focus on reaching the target in the workplace.

Creating a conducive environment has been proven by expressing all types of indirect speech acts representing their traits. The use of expressions within the types and the functions indicate how the employees perform their interpersonal communication with other employees. Andriani (2018) mentions that interpersonal communication becomes the basis for forming and managing interpersonal relationships and good interpersonal communication can create good interpersonal relationships, and vice versa. Apart from creating a conducive environment, the employees perform the traits to build a good relationship and to maintain meaningful and smooth communication. They always communicate one another during the operations. Therefore, other situations and conditions in the workplace may vary and change. This implies that the list of the language functions can be found similar or different in terms of creating a conducive and positive working environment. Hence, the language functions from each type of indirect speech acts can still be listed and extended.

4 Conclusion

The present study has shown evidence that five types of indirect speech acts and their language functions can be used by the employees to create a conducive working environment at PT Bosowa Berlian Motor. The five types along with the functions represent positive and good traits which build up a good relationship and a good communication in the workplace. Being assertive, directive, trusted, expressive, and declarative indicate performing honest, detailed, convincing, straightforward, and intelligible attitude. With these traits, the employees create a positive and facilitating atmosphere which leads to conducive environment in the workplace.

Although this study has contributed to the discipline of Pragmatics and has proven the use of indirect speech acts and their language functions for creating a conducive working environment, certain areas of investigation can be recommended to do in the future. The study can be completed with more investigation on which specific situations and conditions that implies a conducive working environment and other language functions to be listed towards such situations and conditions.



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