

Speech Act Strategies of Prospective Indonesian Language Teacher Students in Academic Presentations: a Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract

Public speaking is a crucial skill for students, especially prospective teachers, who serve as primary communicators in the learning process. However, numerous studies have shown that prospective teachers still face a variety of challenges in public communication, particularly in digital-based academic presentations, including linguistic, psychological, technical, material mastery, body language, environmental, and visual aid use. Therefore, this study aims to describe students' speaking strategies in academic presentations from a pragmatic perspective. This study uses a qualitative approach with observation and interviews with students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram. Data in the form of students' oral utterances during academic presentations were analyzed using speech act theory to identify the types and pragmatic functions of the speaking strategies used. The results of the study indicate that students utilize various speaking strategies through assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive speech acts. Assertive speech acts are used to convey academic material, directive speech acts function to direct the audience's attention, while expressive and commissive speech acts are used to maintain politeness, manage awkwardness, and respond to academic pressure during presentations. These findings indicate that students' speaking strategies serve as pragmatic mechanisms in managing obstacles to public communication, while also being an important provision in developing the professional competence of prospective teacher students in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public communication is a form of communication that occurs between an individual and a general audience (Dyatmika, 2021). When communication is viewed as a system, its elements form a unified whole that has relevant consequences for achieving communication goals (Mucharam, 2022). Public communication skills are an essential competency for students, especially those choosing education or teaching. An educator's role is not only to convey knowledge but also to be a communicator capable of conveying ideas effectively, engagingly, and easily understood by students and audiences in academic settings. Therefore, mastering public speaking skills is an essential part of prospective teachers' professional readiness to carry out their future duties.

In the context of higher education, students' public communication is often manifested through academic presentations, class discussions, and the delivery of scientific ideas. These activities require students not only to master the material but also to manage language, attitude, and speech strategies to ensure their messages are well received by the audience. For prospective Indonesian language teachers, these skills are increasingly important

because they are directly related to the linguistic and pedagogical competencies they will apply in their teaching profession.

However, in reality, many students, especially prospective teachers, still struggle to speak effectively in public. They often exhibit nervousness, lack confidence, and struggle to organize the material they wish to present. This situation indicates that public communication skills have not been fully developed among prospective teachers. Suryani (2020) stated that communication barriers among students have become a relevant topic, especially in academic contexts. Previous research has highlighted communication anxiety, such as "*public speaking anxiety*," that students often experience when giving academic presentations. These include internal factors, such as a lack of self-confidence, and external factors, such as a less-than-supportive environment or audience. In line with this, research by Wahyuni et al. (2025) entitled *Public Speaking in Academic Context: A Study of Student Communication Obstacles and Strategies* revealed seven main obstacles in students' public communication, namely linguistic, psychological, technical, environmental, body language, mastery of material, and use of language *visual aids*. These obstacles stem from internal and external factors that influence the effectiveness of message delivery in academic presentations.

In the digital era, the use of technology in public communication has become increasingly dominant. Previous research has shown that digital platforms, such as video-based presentations or virtual meetings, can provide convenience, but also present new challenges, such as technical barriers and decreased non-verbal interaction (Rahman, 2021). The use of technology in academic presentations, such as the use of digital media and online platforms, provides convenience, but also presents new obstacles in the form of technical glitches, limited media proficiency, and reduced non-verbal interaction. This situation indicates that the effectiveness of public communication is determined not only by mastery of the material but also by students' ability to manage language and speaking strategies appropriately to the communication context.

Previous studies have generally highlighted the psychological, technical, and pedagogical barriers to public communication for students. However, these studies tend not to delve deeply into how students linguistically and pragmatically manage these barriers in their speaking practices. In fact, in academic presentations, students not only convey information but also engage in purposeful language actions, such as explaining, asserting, apologizing, or managing interactions with the audience.

From a pragmatic perspective, language is understood as the actions speakers use to achieve specific goals in specific social contexts. One of the key concepts in pragmatics is speech acts (Searle, 1979), namely, actions carried out through utterances. In academic presentations, the use of speech acts can be a speaking strategy for students to manage anxiety, maintain politeness, attract the audience's attention, and maintain fluency in communication. Thus, obstacles to public communication can be understood as a pragmatic phenomenon reflected in the choice of speech acts and language strategies used by students.

Theoretically, speaking skills in Indonesian language education are understood as the ability to express ideas verbally while paying attention to clarity, fluency, and contextual appropriateness (Nurdiyantoro, 2012). In the educational realm, this ability is closely related to pedagogical competence, which requires teachers to be able to communicate educationally and effectively (Law No. 14 of 2005; Mulyasa, 2013). Furthermore, in communication studies, the Shannon and Weaver model explains that communication effectiveness is greatly influenced by the presence of interference (*noise*), which can hinder the delivery of messages (Cangara, 2017). The linguistic, psychological, and technical obstacles experienced by students can be understood as a form of *noise* which influences the success of public communication.

In line with the focus of the research object, namely prospective Indonesian language teachers, this study also focuses on the importance of mastering communication skills in accordance with Indonesian language rules. This is considered crucial because it turns out that quite a number of Indonesian language study program students do not yet possess optimal competence in mastering language rules (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Based on the above description, this study offers a novelty by combining public communication studies and pragmatics, particularly speech acts, in analyzing the speaking strategies of prospective Indonesian language teacher students. This study aims to describe the students' speaking strategies in managing public communication obstacles in academic presentations from a pragmatic perspective. By focusing on students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in developing the professional communication competencies of prospective teachers in the digital era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretive design. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to understand and describe the speaking strategies of prospective Indonesian language teacher students in managing public communication barriers in academic presentations from a pragmatic perspective, specifically speech acts. The research data consisted of students' spoken utterances that emerged during academic presentations, as well as participants' explanations of their experiences and the communication barriers they encountered.

This research was conducted in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram. The subjects were prospective teacher students enrolled in the Public Communication course in the seventh semester, which consists of four classes. Subject selection was based on the consideration that students in that semester already have experience in academic presentations and are prepared to enter the professional world of teaching or PLP (Introduction to School Field) activities.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation and interviews. Observations were conducted directly during students' academic presentations in class. The researcher observed the ongoing public communication process, particularly students' speech when delivering material, responding to audiences, and managing emerging communication barriers. Communication barriers and student speaking strategies were recorded using a pre-prepared observation instrument. In this study, the researcher acted as a lecturer in the Public Communication course, allowing observations to be conducted naturally without disrupting the learning process. To minimize subjectivity, observations focused on naturally occurring spoken language and were analyzed systematically based on speech act categories.

In addition to observations, interviews were conducted to obtain more in-depth data on students' experiences and communication strategies. The interviews were semi-structured, providing researchers with a guideline for questions, but still allowing informants to develop their answers based on their experiences. Informants were selected purposively, specifically students who indicated they encountered barriers to public communication in academic presentations, to ensure the data obtained was more relevant and in-depth.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis with a pragmatic approach. Data in the form of student speech was transcribed and then classified based on the types of speech acts proposed by Searle (1979): assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and

declarative. This classification was used to identify students' speaking strategies in managing public communication constraints during academic presentations.

The data analysis stages include providing data, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The analysis process was iterative and circular, with data collection and analysis interrelated and inseparable (Mahsun, 2019). Through these stages, researchers interpreted the pragmatic function of students' speech in the context of academic presentations.

The data analysis results were presented using an informal method, using descriptive descriptions in the form of words as they are. The analysis results are presented in narrative form, accompanied by examples of student speech to clarify the types of speech acts and speaking strategies used to manage public communication obstacles.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations and data analysis, according to the results of previous research (Wahyuni et al., 2025), it was found that the most dominant obstacle to public communication experienced by students in academic presentations was the obstacle of body movement 23.50% and linguistic or language barriers 22.65%. Psychological barriers, such as nervousness and lack of self-confidence, also showed a significant percentage, at 20.73%. Meanwhile, obstacles related to mastery of material, technical, environmental, and the use of *visual aids* also influence the effectiveness of students' public communication, albeit at a lower percentage. This finding indicates that the obstacles to students' public communication are complex and interconnected between internal and external aspects.

From a pragmatic perspective, these obstacles can be understood not only as technical or psychological barriers but also as speech act phenomena, namely, how students use language to carry out communicative actions in the context of academic presentations. The following is a discussion of each category of obstacles from the perspective of speech act theory and the strategies that can be implemented to overcome these obstacles.

3.1 The Relationship between Public Communication Obstacles and Speech Acts in Students' Academic Presentations

a. Language Barriers and Assertive Speech Act Strategies

The linguistic obstacles experienced by students are evident in the use of language that is less standard and less academic, difficulty choosing appropriate diction, repetition of words, and the use of filler words such as *um*, *um*, or *so*, etc. In Searle's speech act theory, utterances that aim to convey information, explain, or state facts fall into the category of assertive speech acts. In academic presentations, assertive speech acts are the most dominant type of speech because students act as transmitters of scientific information.

However, limited language proficiency results in students' assertive speech acts not being conveyed optimally. For example, the use of utterances such as "*So I want to explain...*" or "*we want to convey...*" This indicates a mismatch in academic registers, which can reduce the illocutionary power of the utterance. As a result, messages intended to persuade or explain lose their pragmatic power. These findings suggest that linguistic barriers directly impact students' failure to effectively implement assertive speech acts.

b. Body Movement Constraints and Support for Speech Acts

Body language is a component of nonverbal communication that enhances the illocutionary power of speech acts. Research shows that the most significant barriers to body language are stiff posture, excessive movement, unfocused gaze, and minimal use of supporting gestures. In the context of speech acts, these

nonverbal aspects play a crucial role in supporting the success of assertive and directive speech acts. When students explain material (assertive speech acts) or direct the audience's attention (directive speech acts), inappropriate body language can undermine the intended meaning. For example, a lack of eye contact and hand gestures makes it difficult for the audience to grasp the emphasis of the information conveyed. This suggests that failure to manage nonverbal communication negatively impacts the effectiveness of students' speech acts.

c. Psychological Barriers and Expressive Speech Acts

Psychological challenges, such as nervousness, lack of self-confidence, and fear of audience judgment, significantly impact students' public communication performance. In Searle's speech act theory, a speaker's psychological state is closely related to expressive speech acts, namely speech that reveals the speaker's attitudes, feelings, or psychological state.

Excessive nervousness makes it difficult for students to control their intonation, speaking rate, and speech structure. In some cases, students indirectly display expressive speech acts that reflect hesitation, such as long pauses or the use of filler words. This disrupts the flow of the presentation and weakens the audience's trust in the content. Thus, psychological barriers can be understood as factors influencing the success of both expressive and assertive speech acts in students.

d. Technical Constraints and Disturbances to the Realization of Speech Acts

Technical constraints, such as presentation equipment glitches and limited software proficiency, also hamper students' public communication. These constraints are not directly related to specific speech acts, but they influence the context in which they are performed. Technical glitches can disrupt the flow of speech and reduce audience focus, weakening the illocutionary force of the speech.

In such situations, students often have to adjust their speech, such as by providing additional explanations or apologizing, which are considered expressive speech acts. This suggests that technical constraints force students to spontaneously change their speaking strategies to maintain fluent communication.

e. Environmental Constraints and the Effectiveness of Speech Interaction

Environmental factors, such as noise, inadequate lighting, and less-than-ideal room layouts, also impact the effectiveness of students' public communication. An unfavorable environment can hinder the effectiveness of directive speech acts, for example, when students attempt to attract attention or encourage the audience to focus on a particular topic.

When the audience is unresponsive due to environmental factors, students struggle to establish effective communication interactions. This reduces the effectiveness of interactive and persuasive speech acts in academic presentations.

f. Constraints on Mastery of Material and Consistency of Speech Acts

Inadequate mastery of the material leads students to tend to read directly from slides and have difficulty answering audience questions. This situation indicates weak control over assertive and directive speech acts. When students don't understand the material thoroughly, their speech becomes less structured and lacks clarity of intent.

From a pragmatic perspective, mastery of the material is a crucial prerequisite for successful speech acts because it determines the correspondence between the speaker's intent and the audience's interpretation. Therefore, constraints on material mastery have direct implications for the failure of pragmatic communication in academic presentations.

g. Constraint *Visual aids* and Synchronization of Speech Acts

Usage of *visual aids* less effective slides, such as slides that are too dense with text and minimal illustrations, causes a lack of synchronicity between spoken speech and visual media. In the context of speech acts, *visual aids* should function to strengthen assertive speech acts delivered verbally.

The mismatch between speech and visual media actually confuses the audience and reduces the effectiveness of message delivery. This indicates that students' speaking strategies have not fully integrated the use of visual aids as part of the pragmatic communication context.

h. Implications of Speaking Strategies Based on Speech Acts

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that students' public communication challenges stem from internal and external factors that influence the implementation of speech acts in academic presentations. Therefore, strategies to improve students' public communication need to be directed at strengthening pragmatic skills, particularly in the appropriate use of assertive, directive, and expressive speech acts according to context.

Pragmatics-based public communication training can be a strategic solution, emphasizing academic language use, body language management, psychological control, and the integration of spoken language with visual media. This way, prospective teacher students are expected to be able to manage public communication challenges more effectively and emerge as competent academic communicators.

3.2 Indonesian Language Teacher Student Speaking Strategies in Academic Presentations

This section will discuss the types of speech act strategies students employ to overcome public communication barriers during classroom presentations. Selecting the right speech act strategy during a public presentation can minimize the communication barriers discussed in the previous section. Further details are presented in the following table.

No	Dominant Constraints	Types of Strategic Speech Acts	Speech Act Strategy	Pragmatic Function	Impact on Communication
1	Linguistic Barriers	Assertive	Using structured declarative-informative speech, for example: <i>"In this section it will be explained..."</i> , <i>"Based on the data it can be concluded..."</i>	Delivering information clearly and academically	The message is more systematic and easier for the audience to understand
2	Body Movement Disorders	Directive	Combining directive speech with gestures, for example: <i>"Pay attention to this point"</i> or <i>"Please pay attention to this picture..."</i> while pointing at the slide	Directing the audience's focus and attention	Interaction increases and audience attention is maintained
3	Psychological Barriers	Expressive + Commissive	Using adaptive expressive speech, for example: <i>"Okay, let's move on to the next part"</i> or <i>"I kind of forgot this part, but that's okay."</i>	Managing anxiety and building communication comfort	Speaker's confidence increases

No	Dominant Constraints	Types of Strategic Speech Acts	Speech Act Strategy	Pragmatic Function	Impact on Communication
			<i>We can move on to the next part...to stabilize emotions</i>		
4	Technical Constraints	Commissive + Directive	Using clarifying speech, for example: <i>“Please wait a moment, I will rearrange the slides”</i> or <i>“Please be patient, friends, our laptop is having a little problem...”</i>	Maintaining smooth interaction even when disruptions occur	Communication remains controlled and professional
5	Environmental Constraints	Directive	Using audience conditioning speech, for example: <i>“Let’s focus on this part for a moment”</i>	Managing communication situations	External interference can be minimized
6	Constraints on Mastering Material	Assertive	Using paraphrasing and restating, for example: <i>“In other words, these findings suggest...”</i> or <i>“Based on our group’s presentation, it can be concluded that...”</i>	Ensuring audience understanding	Clearer message despite complex material
7	Constraint Visual aids	Assertive	Aligning speech with visuals, for example: <i>“This picture shows...”</i>	Synchronization of speech and visual media	Audience understanding increases

Table 1. Students' Speaking Strategies in Managing Academic Presentation Constraints (Based on Searle's Speech Acts)

Based on the table of speaking strategies, it is clear that solutions to students' public communication challenges can be directed at strengthening the use of speech acts in accordance with their communicative function. Assertive speech acts play a key role in overcoming linguistic barriers, material mastery, and asynchronous communication in *visual aids*. Through the use of structured informative speech, reiteration, and paraphrasing, students can convey academic information more clearly and systematically so that the illocutionary power of the speech is maintained.

Furthermore, directive speech acts serve as a solution strategy for managing the constraints of body language and the presentation environment. Speech acts that direct the audience's attention, such as highlighting key points and conditioning the communication situation, help students maintain audience engagement despite external distractions. This strategy demonstrates that the effectiveness of public communication depends not only on the content of the speech but also on the ability to manage interactions pragmatically.

Meanwhile, expressive speech acts are an important strategy for overcoming psychological and technical obstacles. Adaptive expressive speech, such as clarification and adjustment to the situation, serves to stabilize the speaker's emotional state while maintaining smooth communication. Appropriate use of expressive speech acts helps students maintain their self-image as professional and confident academic speakers.

Thus, the public communication solution strategies of prospective teacher students

can be understood as a form of conscious and contextual speech act management. The integration of assertive, directive, and expressive speech acts enables students to effectively overcome various public communication obstacles and improve the quality of academic presentations from a pragmatic perspective.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the obstacles to public communication of prospective Indonesian language teachers in academic presentations are not only technical and psychological, but also closely related to pragmatic abilities in realizing speech acts. The most dominant obstacles include body movement, linguistic, and psychological obstacles, which directly affect students' success in conveying assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive speech acts, while declarative speech acts were not found.

From a pragmatic perspective, these public communication obstacles are reflected in the weak illocutionary power of students' speech, both in conveying information, directing the audience's attention, and expressing their attitudes and readiness as academic speakers. Students who experience linguistic limitations and material mastery tend to fail to effectively implement assertive speech acts. Meanwhile, psychological and gesture constraints affect the success of expressive and directive speech acts that function to maintain smooth interaction and audience engagement.

This study shows that students implicitly use various speech strategies to manage public communication challenges, such as reaffirmation, clarification, audience conditioning, and adjustments to verbal and nonverbal expressions. These strategies can be understood as forms of pragmatic adaptation in the context of academic presentations. Thus, this study confirms that mastery of speech acts is a crucial aspect in enhancing the effectiveness of public communication among student teachers.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of pragmatics studies in educational contexts by positioning academic presentations as speech events rich in speech act strategies. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for developing pragmatics-based public communication training for prospective Indonesian language teacher students.

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