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# The Realization of Direct and Indirect Representative Act by the Panelists of 2019 Atlantic Education Summit

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| | This study aims to analyze the realization of direct and indirect representative act by the panelists of 2019 Atlantic Education Summit. This study is designed as spoken discourse study with qualitative approach. The speech act analysis to discourse by Schiffrin (1994) was employed to analyze how utterances are understood and interpreted based on a certain context. The findings are as follows. In terms of frequency, there were 996 direct representative acts and eight indirect representative acts. The high number of direct representative act is related to the effectiveness and efficiency of communication between the panelists and the audiences. In terms of realization, direct representative act is versatile. It means that direct representative act was realized by the panelists to serve so many different purposes of communication, for example assertion, statement, claim, etc. On the contrary, there are several strategies that were employed to realize representative act indirectly. They are associating the certain word with similar object, using words which have non-literal meaning, and using an indirect strategy. In addition, lack of familiarity and the formality of the context are the sources that affect the realization of indirect representative act. |

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## INTRODUCTION

Speech act is one of the scopes in pragmatics that focuses on the relationship between language and act. According to Austin (1962), while using the language people do not produce only an isolated series of sentences,but also perform an action. People perform a wide range of functions through the language such as stating, thanking, commanding, requesting, promising and so on. In other words,by using the language they either do somethingor make others do something.

Among the types of speech act, representative act is a speech act that states what the speaker believes to be the case, for examples describing, claiming, concluding, insisting, predicting, and hypothesizing (Cutting, 2002). By employing this act, the speaker expresses belief that the propositional content is true (Searle, 1979).

The realization of representative act can be directly or indirectly. According toYule (2010) direct speech act is when the utterance is said accordingly with the function of the sentence. Accordingly, direct representative act is a representative act which is realized by the speaker and has a direct relationship between forms and functions of the utterances. In contrast, indirect representative act is a representative act that the type and the function is not directly related, e.g. when a speaker says "What time is it?" with intention of complaining instead of asking the actual time. By using indirect representative act, the speaker wants to communicate a different meaning from the apparent surface meaning.

There have been a number of researchesconcerning with the phenomena of direct and indirect speech act. Firstly, a study on direct and indirect speech act on daily communication was conducted by Shams and Afghari (2011). The results revealed that culture had significant effect on theinterpretation of indirect request of speech act in Iranian context. The more polite the culture resulted in the more indirect the act of request.

The effect of culture is also shown in a study by Darweesh and Mehdi (2016) which analyzed Iraqi students in the act of giving correction. In terms of strategy, Iraqi students prefer being direct and thismight reveal part of their personal characteristics. They were aware that direct corrections were generallyacceptable in their culture, otherwise they would not have performed any such act whether directly or indirectly. Similarly, a study by Vaezi, et al. (2014) found that indirect speech act was mostly used in students' textbook in Persia. Persian culture values indirectness. Although speech acts may be direct, the majority in everyday conversation are indirect. Imperatives and directives are normally avoided because they tend to be awkward and abrupt.

Related to direct and indirect speech act realized by the teachers and students, several previous studies portrayed that expressive speech acts were realized directly, i.e. acts of thanking, praising and apologizing. In contrast, commissives speech acts are mostly realized indirectly, i.e. the act of refusing and complaining (Bayat, 2013; Zulianti, 2018; Haryanto& Mubarok, 2018).

On the other hand, Shi (2018) analyzed the types of direct and indirect types in teacher's directive speech act in an EFL classroom in China. There were two types of directives, namely direct directives and indirectdirectives. Direct directives were very clear, the teachersmade the students understand the commandimmediately. In contrast, in indirect directives, the teachers' commands were in the form of request.

This study is different from the previous studies because it analyzes the realization of representative act in terms of directness and indirectness in an education summit. Specifically, it aims to analyze the realization of direct and indirect representative act by the panelists of 2019 Atlantic Education Summit. It was held on May, 14th 2019 in Washington D.C., United States. This summit is chosen because it provides insights of educational challenges occurred in America. The topic of

2019 education summit is elusive ideal for every student. It means giving every child an equal chance to succeed. The summit was divided into several panel sessions. The panelists come from various backgrounds such as journalists, chancellor, state representative, teachers, students, higher education officials and principals. Specifically, this study aims to answer two research questions. The first is related to the frequency of direct and indirect representative act, while the second question is related to the realization of direct and indirect representative act by the panelists in the summit.

## METHOD

This study is designed as spoken discourse study with qualitative approach.The speech act analysis to discourse by Schiffrin (1994) was employed to analyze the relationshipsbetween utterances and actions.It analyzes how utterances are understood and interpreted based on a certain context. The object ofthis study is the utterances of the panelists of 2019 Atlantic Education Summit.

There are three steps in collecting the data. Firstly, the videos of the 2019 Atlantic Education Summit were downloaded from YouTube channel of Atlantic Live as the organizer of the summit. There are twenty videos in total. However, not all of the videos contain panel discussions. Thus, the second step in collecting the data was separating the videos that contained the panel sessions from those which did not. Finally, the panel sessions in the 2019 Atlantic Education Summit were observed and analyzed.

The collected data have undergone several stages of analysis. They were (1) transcribing the videos, (2)identifying representative speech actwhich was realized by the panelists, (3) classifyingthe representative speech acts that had beenidentified based on directness and indirectness, (4) calculating the frequency of direct and indirect representative act, and finally (5) creating interpretation to answer the formulated research problems and drawing conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Realization of Direct Representative Act by the Panelists in the Summit

This study found that there were 1004 representative acts that were realized by the panelists of the 2019 Atlantic Education Summit. In terms of occurrence, 996 of them belong to the direct representative act, while the other eight belong to indirect representative act. The findings show that there is a domination of direct representative act realized by the panelists in the 2019 Atlantic Education Summit. This phenomenon can be explained from two perspectives, i.e. effectiveness and efficiency.

In terms of effectiveness, direct representative act will be more effective to be performed by the panelists in the summit because the audience will get the meaning immediately. It has no additional level of meaning. The hearer does not have to look for what the speakermight have meant by uttering the words. Everything in their utterances isexpressed explicitly. Therefore, in the context of a summit, in which the main goal is transferring information from the panelists to the audience, direct speech act can avoid misunderstandings.

If the panelists in the summit mostly realized representative act indirectly, it would take more time to understand the utterances. To get the whole meaning of what was uttered by the panelists, the audience must discover the intended meaning from the indirect representative act by connecting the utterances to the context of the situation. It would not be as effective as straightly listening to the panelist and immediately grasp the meaning.

Then, efficiency is related to the duration of the panel session. Each panel session lasted for about ten to twenty minutes. In addition, the panelists allocated some time for answering audience's questions. They had a very limited time to discuss the topic and they must manage the time well. Imagine if the panelists spent the time on thinking about how to express idea and deliver information indirectly, it would waste a lot of time. They had to think about idioms or

other ways to disguise the actual meaning of what they wanted to say. Consequently, the panel session would not discuss the topic in depth. Therefore, it makes sense that direct representative act occurs very frequently in the summit.

An interesting finding in this study related to direct representative act is its versatility. It means that direct representative act was realized by the panelists to serve so many different purposes of communication. This study found that direct representative act can be used as assertion, statement, claim, and many more. In other words, they take different types in its realization. In detail, the various types of direct representative act can be seen in the table one below.

**Table 1**. The Realization of Direct Representative Act

| Datum No. | Panelists' Utterances | Type of Direct Representative Act |
|---|---|---|
| 454 | To be able to critically think. To be able to problem solve. To be able to manage their time and task and virtual projects. To be public speakers in a virtual forum as well as you know written and other types of communication work. | Asserting |
| 108 | And so I think controlling for fairness and consistency is important on a on a principal side. I leaned toward longer contract principals, especially those principals have been with us for a while and have proven to be effective in their work. | Stating |
| 264 | They seemed to have no idea what the New York city public school system is really like for most of its underserved students. | Claiming |
| 69 | So, we all know that students perform best when there's greater diversity by race and socio economics. | Affirming |
| 681 | And to ensure that higher education can really fulfill the mission of doing that the way it should, we have to have institutions that are high quality. | Assuring |
| 1008 | I don't think in California they're totally ignorant of every applicant race at all times. I seriously doubt that that's true. | Arguing |
| 32 | Well, for DC is interesting how you define low income and wealth is evolving. So, I think where you point to as a community is not a wealth. | Denying |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 66 | In their latest data 73% of African American and 66% of Latino students in DC attend high poverty schools. Defined as schools where at least there quarters of their classmates qualify for reduced or free federal lunch. | Informing | | caring for our educators. Acknowledging that it is high stakes. There's a lot of pressure stress and giving them the appropriate outlets to relieve that stress would be effective. | |
| 791 | By the way, if you guys want to type in your questions we're going to get to them in a couple minutes. | Notifying | 793 | By 2020 a majority of the under eighteen population will be kids of color and by 2023 I think it is at a majority the high school graduates will be kids of color. | Hypothesizing |
| 229 | So, you've mentioned kind of in our past conversation that you lived in a community. The community was pretty segregated but you lived next to a white family. | Reminding | 174 | I would say a good five minute walk for most. For me it would have been probably ten minute walk. | Guessing |
| 482 | They are all tied to racism. They're three B's, a big black boy. If you are any of those or all three of those you are far more likely to be expelled. | Predicting | 1139 | Yeah you know I have to admit I wouldn't. I'm not usually of the proclivity to suggest that you need the federal and state support. Especially for non private institution. | Admitting |
| | | | 841 | But shoot, it gets pretty bad. | Complaining |
| 160 | But all the kids in my school looked like me. There were no kids of any other color. No other ethnicity other than blacks in my school. | Reporting | 70 | However, as a principal of a school where over 90% of the students were students of color through poverty and we outperform | Boasting |
| 115 | And so I think | Suggesting | | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | the district average. | |
| 588 | Actually the day we walked in it was disheartening. It's very disheartening. | Lamenting |
| 387 | You both speak more eloquently about the problems and solutions than many adults I already know in education. | Praising |

The versatility of direct representative act can be explained by looking at the context. The data was collected from the 2019 Atlantic Education Summit. It was a situation in which people gather to discuss the topics related to education. Specifically, the audiences came to the summit with the intention to hear the panelists' believes and opinions related to educational issues and challenges of in America. Therefore, direct representative act is suitable and appropriate to be used by the panelists in the summit.

A direct speech act is one where there is no attempt to save the face of the addressee. It is a bland, plain, ordinary way of saying things. An indirect speech act is a kind of circumlocution, an attempt to save the face of the addressee. Speakers expect hearers to recognize the functions of the speech act they uttered and to act accordingly.

**The Realization of Indirect Representative Act by the Panelists in the Summit**

There are eight representative acts that were realized indirectly by the panelists of the summit. Unlike direct representative act which can be found in many types of representative act, the realization of indirect representative act can only be found in six different types. They were reporting, assuring, criticizing, complaining, notifying and stating. The realization of indirect representative act can be seen in table two below.

**Table 2.** The Realization of Indirect Representative Act

| Datum no. | Panelists' Utterances | Type of Indirect Representative Act |
|---|---|---|
| 87 | Well obviously there's more than we need to do. And we've decided that we need to dance longer and earlier with our students that are furthest away from opportunity. | Reporting |
| 91 | And those are the types of experience that we are creating in those communities to ensure again that we're dancing with our students furthest from opportunity earlier and longer. | Assuring |
| 109 | Yeah, let's see we got our first question. Anonymous. Good to following instructions. | Criticizing |
| 182 | The first photo saying…Should have the photos coming shortly. | Complaining |
| 711 | Not just aggregating, but moving beyond just saying we | Stating |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | have this aggregated data and actually doing something with it. And that's where the rubber meets the road. | |
| 1153 | So I want to switch gear a little bit and talk about kind of this relationship. | Notifying |
| 1170 | And we unfortunately leave that elephant in the room and talk around it by putting the word gentrification around that elephant. | Stating |
| 1172 | Often times what we're doing is we drop the elephant in and displace everything out. | Stating |

Indirect speech act is when the illocutionary act is different from the locutionary act. Indirect speech acts used to show politeness and respectful. Searle (1969) defines indirect speech act to be an utterance in which one speech act is performed indirectly by performing another, e.g. criticizing the audience is realized indirectly by performing another communicative act, which is praising (datum no. 109). In addition, the message conveyed is not coded directly on actual meanings. Those are identified as parable or imagery. Parable itself is thought as two blades which could have made a word more polite, but it could also be a sharp satire to the listener.

People are well aware of the fact that some information should not be expressed explicitly and that indirect strategies should be applied. Thus, several strategies were employed by the panelists to perform representative act indirectly.

The first strategy is associating the certain word with similar object. It can be seen in data 87, 91, 1170, and 1172. The word dancing in data 87 and 91 did not refer to its literal meaning. In this utterance, the speaker said the word dancing to refer to dealing with students' opportunities for taking assessment of readiness for colleges and careers test despite the racial background. Then, the word elephant in data 1170 and 1172 refers to middle-class students in Howard University. The panelist, which was the president of Howard University, wanted to emphasize that it had a high number of middle class students.

The second strategy is using words which have non-literal meaning. In datum 1153, the panelist used the term switch gear to put the notice to the audience. Obviously, he did not talk about the actual gear in machinery. In this utterance, switching the gear meant to quickly change what the speaker was discussing.

The last strategy is by using an indirect strategy, or by relying on the hearers' ability to read between the lines. It is specifically related to act of criticizing and complaining. Both complaining and criticizing are types of negative evaluation. A negative evaluation is a speech act that evaluates some person or situation through an utterance that carries a negative semantic load especially to the hearers. By stating it out directly will made the situation is even more uncomfortable. Therefore, indirect complain and criticism can ease the uncomfortable or even embarrassing situation. Also, it shows that the speakers have language awareness and know how to use the language appropriately.

An interesting finding related to indirect representative act that were found in this study were related to act of complaining. An indirect complaint is defined as the expression of dissatisfaction to an addressee about oneself or someone/something that is not present. It differs from a direct complaint in that the person concerned is neither held responsible for nor capable of remedying the situation (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985).

In datum 182, the panelist was performed act of complaining when there was technical problem during the panel session. Instead of saying the projector did not work, he said the photos should be coming. In fact, his utterances implied his complaint about the projector that did not work. To some extent, the panelist's complaint contained directive act which was asking the staff to fix the technical problem.

The next indirect act that was realized by the panelist can be seen in datum 109. Instead of showing approval of what has been done by the audience, the panelist actually expressed his disapproval. The reason was because the audience input a question in the system anonymously. That specific audience ignored the speaker's notification to put the name when asking a question. The utterance 'good to following the instruction' means differently. The exact meaning was the person who asked the question was bad at following the instruction. Thus, the utterance cannot be understood literally. After connecting it to the context, the utterance means as a criticism instead of compliment.

However, as Searle (1976) proposes that understanding the meaning of indirect speech acts depends on the speaker and hearer's mutually shared knowledge and the hearer's ability to make inference from the speaker's utterances. The follow-up response after the complaint was made by the speakers can determine whether the hearer successfully understand the implied meaning or not.

In datum 182, which was related to the technical problem, it was immediately fixed not long after act of complain was uttered by the speaker. It indicated that the hearer was able to get the meaning beyond the words uttered by the speaker. On the other hand, in datum 109, the panelist left it to the audience whether he/she can get the actual meaning or not. From these cases, it illustrates that the illocutionary in indirect speech act is communicatively successful only if the speaker's illocutionary intention is recognized by the hearer.

Indirect speech act in many languages and cultures are associated with politeness. Cutting (2002) mentions that there are several factors that make a speaker use indirect directives, such as lack of familiarity, the formality of the context, and social distance (difference of status, education, class, occupation and ethnicity). In this study, lack of familiarity and the formality of the context are the sources that affect the realization of indirect representative act. In this summit, the realization of indirect act was affected by the formality of the situation and the unfamiliarity among the panelists and the audience.

## CONCLUSION

The panelists of 2019 Atlantic Education Summit realized the representative act both directly and indirectly. In terms of frequency, there were 994 direct representative acts and eight indirect representative acts. The high number of direct representative act is related to the effectiveness and efficiency of communication between the panelists and the audiences.

In termsof realization, direct representative act is versatile. It means that direct representative act was realized by the panelists to serve so many different purposes of communication, for example assertion, statement, claim, etc.On the contrary, there are several strategies that wereemployed to realize representative act indirectly. The first strategy is associating the certain word with similar object. The second strategy is using words which have non-literal meaning. The last strategy is by using an indirect strategy, or relying on the hearers' ability to read between the lines.

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Directness and indirectness are not black and white terms. Speakers can dothings or get them done either in a direct way or in an indirect

manner. Speech act is a part of pragmatic, so it describes meaning in context,i.e. the relationship between what we say, what we mean, and what we understand according to a particular context or situation (Paltridge, 2000). The realization of one's utterance depends on who says what to whom, when, where andwhy.

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