

SPEECH ACTS FOR NEGOTIATION BY AN IRANIAN AND A MALAYSIAN COMPANY IN PROJECT MEETINGS

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Abstract. This present study investigates the negotiation dynamics by professionals from an Iranian company (IC) and a Malaysian company (MC) via negotiations of problem-solving interactions in project meetings. This study examines the negotiations between both companies through the exercise of speech acts that function as negotiation strategies. A collection of five problem-solving negotiation interactions in project meetings were analyzed to identify the speech acts exercised by the two negotiating parties. This study involves two main theories Speech Acts Theory (assertives, commissives, directives, expressives and declaratives), and Types of Negotiation Strategy (integrative and distributive strategies). The findings revealed that speech acts for negotiation exercised the most by MC were assertives (e.g., reporting, asserting, and claiming), while for IC were directives (e.g., warning, threatening and ordering). The significant function of assertives by MC was to maintain relationship with IC. Meanwhile, IC directive acts were perceived as dominant where power was demonstrated to secure his negotiations. Nevertheless, it can be observed that there are dual functions of some classifications of speech acts by both parties. The findings denote that the negotiators could recognize actions in certain negotiation utterances and perform appropriate responses during the negotiations. For negotiation strategies, MCs speech acts were directed to integrative while ICs were prone to distributive strategy. Nonetheless, as the meeting progressed, both negotiating parties employed both integrative and distributive strategies in their negotiations where dual negotiation strategies occurred in certain negotiation interactions. This denotes that both parties had better understanding on the exercise of speech acts as negotiation strategies as they appropriately adjusted their usage and functions of the speech acts based on relevant situations. In conclusion, speech acts are proven to function as negotiation strategies.

Keywords: *speech acts, negotiation, negotiation strategies, cross-cultural negotiation*

Introduction

Interaction and communication are vital in business dynamic. The communication and interaction in business are crucial to creating and sustaining quality working relationships (Wahid et al., 2024) and enhance performance and commitment (Curado et al., 2022) in organizations, especially when it involves projects in organizations. The communicative events in business realms, namely, meetings, group discussions, presentations, oral reports and others are basically the platform of interaction and negotiation for professionals. Meeting is a communicative event that becomes one main medium of interaction for workplace and business interactions (Meinecke and Handke, 2023) and is a communicative event that carries significant context for studying socially shared discourse experiences (Meinecke and Handke, 2023; Lei and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2015). In professional workplace interaction and communication, negotiation holds multifaceted perspectives in any profession. In an investigation by

Clement and Murugavel (2018) on the professional environment, it revealed that those who were in the line of professional normally spend around 86.8% of their time on communicating and negotiating in meetings where most of issues were solved and decisions were made (Wu et al., 2023). Consequently, there are limited studies on business realms regarding speech acts for negotiation. Most studies focus on the output of business negotiations (Firth, 1995; Wagner, 1995) and there is lack of info about what essentially occurs during business negotiations (Fells et al., 2015). Thus, the knowledge and comprehension on how negotiators negotiate interests and goals (Wertheim, 2002) via speech acts are still deficient. Additionally, most negotiation and speech acts studies were in price negotiation and bargaining (Satavetin, 2018; Parsons-Hann et al., 2006). Thus, the need to investigate what is going on during negotiations and how speech acts function as negotiation strategies is vital in which this study examines problem-solving negotiations in project meetings.

Speech acts for negotiation

The studies of negotiation interaction, especially from language perspective, increases our understanding of the nature, processes and outcomes of negotiations. One of the linguistics devices often involved in utterances in interactions is speech acts. This study thus involved speech acts by Searle (1969) assertives, expressives, directives, declaratives and commissives for negotiation interactions. Conscious or unconsciously, negotiators exercised speech acts during negotiation (Schoop, 2021). Functionally, every type of linguistics devices produced during a negotiation is an action that can influence both the negotiation process and the results of the negotiation. Therefore, it is crucial for negotiators to grasp the performative strength of language (in this case, speech acts) as a tool for negotiation (Rifah et al, 2021; Gardani, 2017). Félix-Brasdefer (2019) suggests that speech act usage and functions can be observed through speakers use of these interactional resources in a variety of contexts, including negotiation settings. Hence, assumptions on speakers intention will be recognized and understood (Taguchi and Yamaguchi, 2019). Misinterpretations of the use of speech acts in negotiations can significantly affect the processes and outcomes of negotiations, as they involve communication strategies that influence how messages are understood and acted upon. In the context of negotiations, speech acts refer to the communicative actions that individuals perform when they make promises, requests, offers, complaints, or commands. The success of negotiations relies not only on the content of these speech acts but also on how they are perceived and interpreted by the parties involved and misinterpretation can lead to confusion or frustration, derailing the negotiation process (Mazzotta, 2024). In negotiations involving power imbalances (e.g., between a superior and subordinate, or between parties with differing levels of authority), the interpretation of speech acts can be skewed by the perceived power dynamics. For example, a request made by someone in a higher position might be seen as a command, even if it is not intended as such. Conversely, a subordinate may understate their requests out of fear of seeming too demanding, leading to a misinterpretation of their needs (Fisher and Ury, 2022).

Negotiation strategies

The effectiveness of negotiation primarily relies on the tactic negotiators utilize throughout the negotiation process (Pérez-Yus et al., 2020). According to Walton and

McKersie (1965), there are two types of negotiation strategies in business negotiations which this study adopts- integrative and distributive. Basically, indicating negotiation strategies depends on the negotiators' goals, situation, problems, authority, and power, language used, and various other situational factors (Pérez-Yus et al., 2020). Additionally, integrative and distributive influence on what negotiation encounters (e.g. relationship between parties, information shared during negotiation, negotiation topics, language used-linguistics devices exercised) and play a distinctive role in concluding those encounters (Barthelmess et al., 2018). This clearly clarifies that linguistics devices are part of negotiation strategies. For this study, determining the usage of speech acts is significant to identify the negotiation strategies. Based on Donohue and Roberto (1996), the dominant speech acts could determine the negotiation strategies used in a negotiation. Thus, this study demonstrates how speech acts could function as negotiation strategies which is valuable for the practitioners as a linguistics reference during business negotiations, especially in problem-solving negotiations. Thus far, moderately, little has been done to speech acts for negotiation in project meetings and to their functions as negotiation strategies. This study aims at sealing this gap. It examines how speech acts function as negotiation strategies by the two negotiating parties in project meetings. Without recognizing the negotiation strategies, it is rather challenging for the negotiators to discover means to create value and extend the resources to negotiate efficiently (Abigail et al., 2018). Not only do speech acts appropriately help to achieve the communicative goals but failing to exercise negotiation strategies where it is expected, as well as failing to understand the meaning of the negotiation, has great potential for miscommunication.

Background of the study

In negotiations, a significant portion of the meaning is shaped by the context, thus more meanings are provided indirectly by the utterances (Rosanti and Jaelani, 2016). Negotiation in this study was scoped to project meeting interactions between professionals. Thus, the negotiation involved in this study is business negotiation. According to Constantin (2023), business negotiations denotes a process in which two or more parties communicate to reach an agreement regarding common or divergent interests. Sargu et al. (2020) views business negotiations as a process of conflict resolution or decision-making in which the parties try to reach an agreement that satisfies their own interests. For this study, the negotiations happened between two negotiating parties were to solve issues and conflicts. This problem-solving process is fundamental in various business contexts, including contract terms, pricing, partnerships, and conflict resolution. Additionally, negotiation is a form of oral discourse that represents phenomena as interactional processes in which the success of the processes could be determined by certain linguistics devices which in this study are speech acts. By examining the types, classifications and functions of speech acts in project meeting negotiations, pragmatic skills can be enhanced and the underlying meanings in various forms of discourse can be interpreted. This study demonstrates that speech acts play a significant role in conveying meaning and achieving specific goals in communication (Shaharuddin and Harun, 2022). Understanding speech acts in project meeting negotiations helps practitioners in overcoming communication barriers and expressing intentions effectively. Speech acts are essential for negotiators to influence the listeners and achieve their goals. The study of speech acts also helps in analyzing and interpreting negotiation discourse for effective communication, influencing

behaviour, and understanding various aspects of language and social interactions. The importance of speech acts in negotiation is that it allows individuals to express their thoughts and communicate with each other effectively (Perdani, 2023).

This study examines the types, classifications of speech acts and their functions as negotiation strategies exercised by two negotiating parties. A collection of five problem-solving negotiation interactions was analyzed to first identify and compare the types, classifications and functions of speech acts exercised by both negotiating parties. The findings then were further analyzed to determine the types of negotiation strategies applied by both parties. The questions measured include (a) What speech acts for negotiation are used by the two negotiating parties (an Iranian company and a Malaysian company) in project meetings? and (b) How do speech acts used by the two negotiating parties function as negotiation strategies in project meetings?

Literature review

Concepts of negotiation

Negotiation is a process through which two or more parties with differing interests, needs, or goals engage in discussions to reach an agreement (Constantin, 2023). He added that its often characterized by the exchange of offers and counter offers, with the ultimate aim of resolving conflicts, making decisions, or dividing resources. In its simplest form, negotiation is about finding a way to meet the needs of all parties involved, whether through compromise, collaboration, or competition. Since there is no generic concurrence on what encompasses as problem-solving negotiation, this study proposes this significance of the term. Some concepts of negotiation meant for this study are: (1) Negotiation talk is what linguists would frequently hold in mind when it comes to negotiation interaction (Lee et al., 2021; Ladegaard, 2011; Firth, 1995), for instance business negotiations where in this study signified as negotiation interaction. This study denoted the problem-solving negotiation interactions between the two negotiating parties as negotiation interaction; (2) Most researcher (Sousa and Rocha, 2021; Hernandez, 2014; Tsay and Bazerman, 2009; Firth, 1995) signify negotiation as negotiation as a decision-making process, while this study motioned as negotiation as a process of finding solutions. Firth (1995) as well as Wagner (1995), additionally, highlighted that negotiation does not certainly embrace conflict or disagreement. This is aligned to the current study which the focus was on problem-solving negotiation where mutually tolerable solutions were sought for; (3) Negotiation as an aspect of interaction would be one of the concepts of negotiation of this study. In any form of verbal communication, negotiation is present in interactional aspects such as contextual assumptions, topic selection, floor access and or interpretation of even misinterpretation messages. This profile of negotiation is intrinsic to communication and owns compact (or nothing) clashing viewpoints or conflicting interests and goals. This studys notion of negotiation is strongly aligned with several researchers (Jäckel et al., 2024; Boothby et al., 2023; Adinda et al., 2022; Al-Hindawi and Abu-Krooz, 2018; Mejía-Arauz et al., 2018; Firth, 1995) notion of negotiation as an interactional phenomenon. This study mainly deals with these negotiation concepts where it was observed as an interactional phenomenon, which appeared oftentimes in the project meetings. It appeared that these profiles of negotiation possessed a high feasibility of co-occurrence in the problem-solving negotiation interactions. This signifies that when problem-solving interactions are present, the negotiation processes would also be presence.

Classifications and functions of speech acts

According to previous study, speech act theory inspects how words are uttered not merely to offer information but also to execute actions. It intends, what can we do with words? which means language does not merely depict reality but that it can be exercised to perform acts. Speech acts are functional linguistic units that express meaning not via literal words but through actions (Sultan, 2023). Speech acts for this study are considered as a form of pragmatic meaning. Sultan (2023) added that speech act theory focuses on the function of language rather than its structure, with the structure serving only as a means of expressing the function (meaning). According to speech act theory, the principles guiding the usage of linguistic phrases in the performance of different speech acts can be used to explain the meaning of those expressions. Searle's distinction between 'literal meaning' and 'utterance meaning' suggests that when one listens, one interprets the meaning of some set of words constituting an utterance through some other set of 'words'. Or from the speaker's perspective, as Searle (1969) puts it, 'the speaker utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more' or 'means something else'. This is clearly significant in negotiation interactions. Overall, Searle's Speech Act Theory offers a framework to understand how language performs actions, focusing on the relationship between the speaker's intent, the structure of the utterance, and its impact on the listener. These concepts are foundational in fields like linguistics and communication. The fundamental functions of speech acts of this study are based on to build/ maintain relationship maintaining or to demonstrate directiveness/dominance which are referred to the utterances made by the negotiators (Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of speech acts.

Classification of speech/acts elements	Assertives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declaratives
Functions	To represent a state of affairs or convey information.	To get the listener to do something.	To commit the speaker to a future action.	To express the speaker's feelings or attitudes.	To bring about a change in the external situation.
Key Feature	The speaker commits to the truth of the proposition	The speaker attempts to influence the listener's actions.	The speaker assumes an obligation.	The speaker expresses an internal state.	The speaker's utterance alters reality through their authority.
S=Speaker X=Situation	S believes X	S wants X	S intends X	S feels X	S causes X
Speech Acts	Asserting, Affirming, Claiming, Notifying, Describing, Objecting, Criticizing, Complaining, excusing, Reporting, Admitting, Confessing, Accusing, Blaming (adapted and adopted from Kholid et al., 2024; Aziz and Othman, 2020; Satavetin, 2018; Lin et al., 2004)	Advising, Ordering, Permitting, Requesting, Demanding, Forbidding, Warning, Suggesting, Questioning (adapted and adopted from Aziz and Othman, 2020; Azizah and Bilbow, 2002)	Promise, Guarantee, Refusal, Volunteer, Offer, Threat (adapted and adopted from Aziz and Othman, 2020; Azizah and Satavetin, 2018; Bilbow, 2002)	Thanking, Attitude, Agreement, Apologize, Wishing, Congratulation, Greeting, Praising (adapted and adopted from Ogiermann and Bella, 2021; Aziz and Othman, 2020; Satavetin, 2018; Ronan, 2015)	Confirming, Sentencing, Accepting, Changing, Dismissing, declaring, resigning, dissolving, sanctioning (adapted and adopted from Mohammed, 2021)

Negotiation strategies

Negotiation strategies are decisive for the success or failure of a negotiation. This is aligned with Abigail et al. (2018) which asserted that the success of negotiation depends on the type of strategies used in the negotiation process. Therefore, it is essential that negotiators decide on their approach while considering the outcomes they hope to attain. Several studies have been conducted in recent years analyzing negotiation strategies in the business realms (Benetti et al., 2021; Abigail et al., 2018). The use of different negotiation strategies can be considered practical in diverse relational settings. Each party to the negotiation has a purpose, interests, opinions, and attitudes that affect the way such party behaves. The manners in which parties act during the negotiation affect the nature of the negotiation and its results, since the parties, by means of their thoughts, their speech, their acts and their activities maneuver and shape the negotiation. The technique we conduct negotiations is referred to as strategy. Additionally, the manner could be regarded as playing dominancy and politeness are imperative for achieving negotiation goals (Paramasivam, 2024) (*Figure 1*).

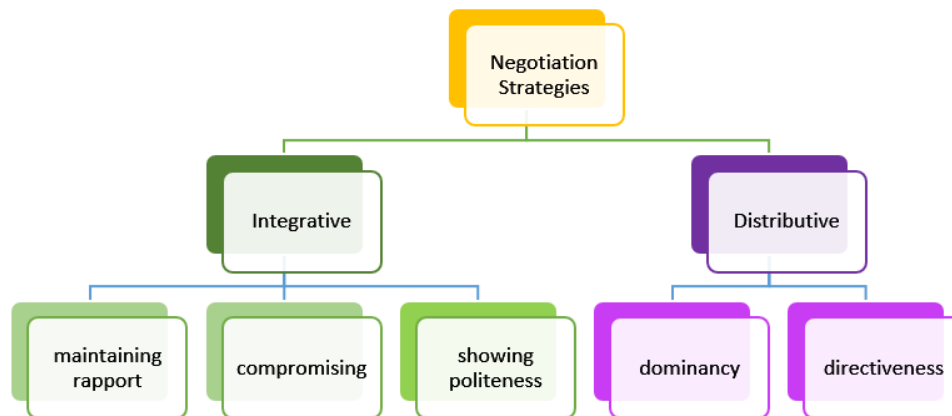


Figure 1. Concepts of negotiation strategies for the study.

For this study, the key concepts in negotiation strategies revolve around relationship maintaining and dominancy (Peleckis, 2014). This is very much aligned with the types of negotiation strategies by Walton and McKersie (1965) which are integrative and distributive negotiation strategies. Walton and McKersie (1965) introduced a foundational framework for understanding negotiation in their 1965 book, *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations*. Their work identifies core negotiation strategies and emphasizes the behavioral, strategic, and contextual elements of negotiation processes. Walton and McKersie (1965) concepts remain widely applicable in labor relations, business negotiations, and conflict resolution. They described two different negotiation strategies negotiations in the workplace, analyzing the components of the process, as well as attitudes and perceptions of negotiators. The strategies are: (1) Distributive strategy: the parties are interested in maximizing the personal outcome (Stoshikj, 2014); (2) Integrative strategy: the parties seek attainment of goals for a party that are not in conflict with the goals of the other party (Abigail et al., 2018).

Materials and Methods

Sample and data collection

Purposive sampling was applied in selecting the participants of the study. The sampling was chosen as they could provide valuable contributions to the current study. The participants for the study were an Iranian client (Iranian Company) 2 engineers and a technician from a food engineering and technology company (Malaysian Company). A project chosen by the participants was the current project that ran at that particular time. The details of participants involved in this study are as in *Figure 2*. For this study, qualitative observations and recordings were the main method of data collection. This data collection was acquired based on the need to observe the negotiation interaction dynamic naturally between a Malaysian Company and Iranian Company. A collection of five problem-solving negotiation interactions was observed, recorded and transcribed.



Figure 2. Sample of the study.

Conceptual framework

Speech acts for negotiation

After the data collected were transcribed, the problem-solving negotiation interactions were first determined by the researcher and meeting participants. The researcher then identified the speech acts in problem-solving negotiation interactions by using Searle (1969). The transcribed data were analyzed utterance by utterance. The use of speech acts by Malaysian Company and Iranian Company were compared to observe the dynamics of the negotiation interactions. Afterwards, the usage and functions of the speech acts applied by both parties were identified. This was for further analysis of negotiation strategies purposes (*Figure 3*).

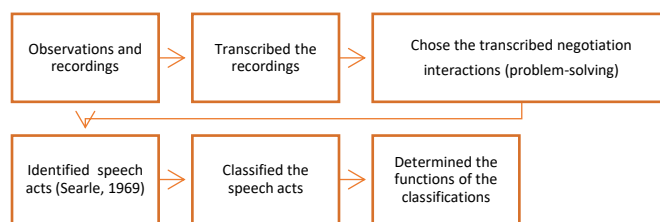


Figure 3. Conceptual framework.

Negotiation strategies

To discover the negotiation strategies employed by the meeting participants, only the prominent speech acts exercised by both parties were designated for the data analysis. This, according to Donohue and Roberto (1996), the significant speech acts will determine the type of negotiation utilized by the negotiators. The types, classifications and functions of speech acts discovered from the findings were mapped to functions of speech acts as negotiation strategies (speech acts coding scheme) by Donohue and Roberto (1996). The negotiation strategies (distributive or integrative) were distinguished by the traits from the literature. The researcher only applied the dominant speech acts used by both parties to determine the types of negotiation strategies since according to Donohue and Roberto (1996), the authoritative speech acts could determine and highlight the negotiation strategies used in a negotiation. The procedures applied to each company.

Framework for data analysis

Speech acts

The functions of speech acts found in findings will be mapped to Donohue and Roberto (1996) speech acts coding scheme to determine the negotiation strategies used by the meeting participants. From the findings of Twitchell et al. (2013) based on Donohue and Roberto (1996) scheme, the speech acts and negotiation strategies are mapped as in Figure 4 and Figure 5 (Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2. Classifications and functions of speech acts.

Classification	Speech arts	Functions
Assertives	Asserting, Affirming, Claiming, Notifying, Describing, Objecting, Criticizing, Complaining, excusing, Reporting, Admitting, Confessing, Accusing, Blaming	To inform, to verify, to draw attention, to persuade, to present data/ issues, to gain trust, to present details, to gain support, to please someone, to avoid responsibilities
Commissives	Promise, Guarantee, Refusal, Volunteer, Offer, Threat	To build rapport, to elevate displeasure, to relieve anxiety, to build trust, to influence, to maintain rapport, to show commitment, to acknowledge effort
Directives	Advising, Ordering, Permitting, Requesting, Demanding, Forbidding, Warning, Suggesting, Questioning	To confront the unpleasant, to seek solution, to solve problem, to present solution, to persuade
Expressives	Thanking, Attitude, Agreement, Apologize, Wishing, Congratulation, Greeting, Praising	To accept solutions, to comfort listeners, to maintain rapport, to show appreciation, to persuade, to reject, to demonstrate politeness, to avoid responsibilities
Declaratives	Confirming, Sentencing, Accepting, Changing, Dismissing, declaring, resigning, dissolving, sanctioning	To build rapport, to demonstrate power

Table 3. Orientation of negotiation strategies.

Speech acts	Distributive strategy	Integrative strategy
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Expressives	Statement of fact Reject other's demand	Comply Avoidance Reject other's demand
Assertives	Reject other's demand Statement of demand	Integrate Statement of fact
Directives	Statement of demand Threat to take action Question of fact	Integrate
Commissives	Statement of demand	Comply
Declaratives	Statement of fact Statement of demand	Integrate Comply

Source: Donohue and Roberto (1996)

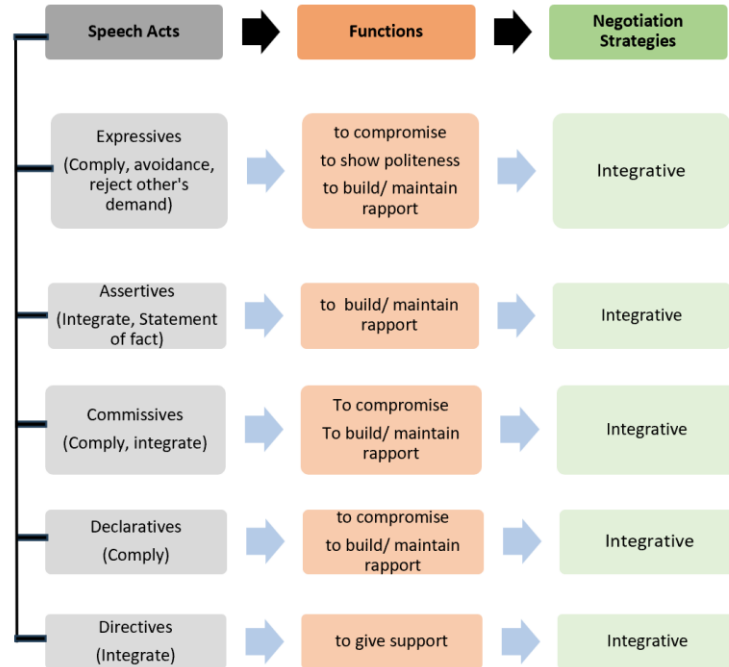


Figure 4. Orientation of speech acts to integrative negotiation strategies.

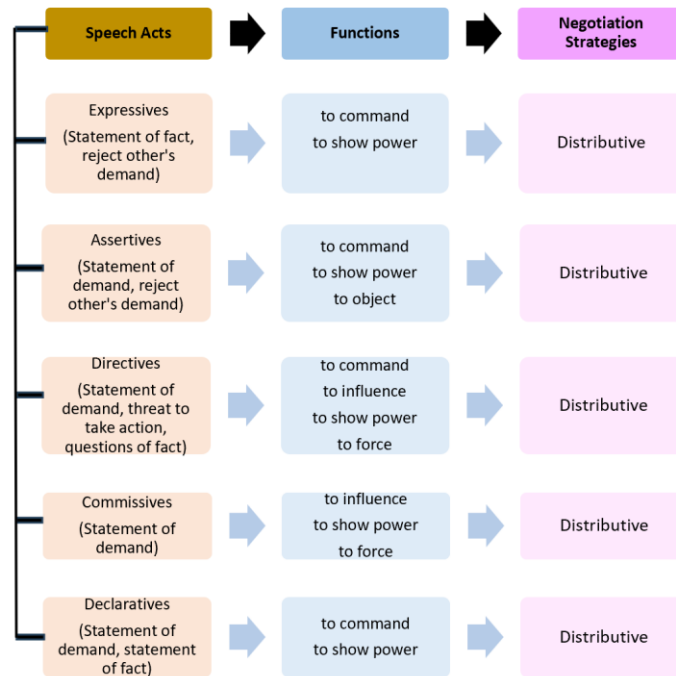


Figure 5. Orientation of speech acts to distributive negotiation strategies.

Results and Discussion

Overall, it could be found that distinct number and functions of speech acts were exercised by both parties in every negotiation interaction of problem-solving. The abstract of speech acts utilized are as in Table 3 (Figure 6 and Figure 7). Table 3, together with Figure 6 and Figure 7, show the frequencies of speech acts in the project meetings by both companies. From the findings, it is found that MC utilized assertives the most (23) while IC exercised directives the utmost (35). Similarly, expressives are the second highest for both MC and IC, 21 and 18, respectively. Next, for MC, the third highest occurrence is commissives while IC depicts identical occurrences of assertives and declaratives (6). Directives are the second least utilized by MC (5). Lastly, the least occurrence for MC is declarative which none was exercised and the least for IC is commissives (4). This study found some new acts for the classifications of speech acts. The bold acts in the table below are the new acts found in the problem-solving negotiations in project meetings. The new acts for the classifications of speech acts were categorized as such based on the functions they carried onto the negotiation tables. Table 4 depicts the speech acts and functions found in the study.

Table 4. Frequencies of speech acts in project meetings.

Classification of speech acts/interaction	MC						IC					
	1	2	3	4	5	T	1	2	3	4	5	T
Assertives	6	3	5	5	4	23	1	2	0	3	0	6
Commissives	6	1	2	5	2	16	0	1	0	1	2	4
Directives	1	1	1	1	1	5	11	7	2	12	3	35
Expressives	4	2	1	10	4	21	4	1	1	10	2	18
Declaratives	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	6

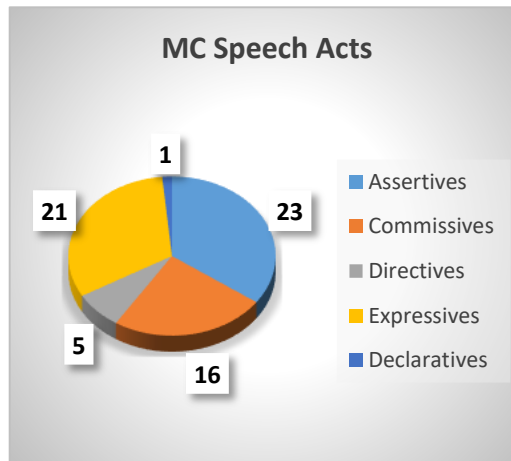


Figure 6. Frequencies of MC speech acts.

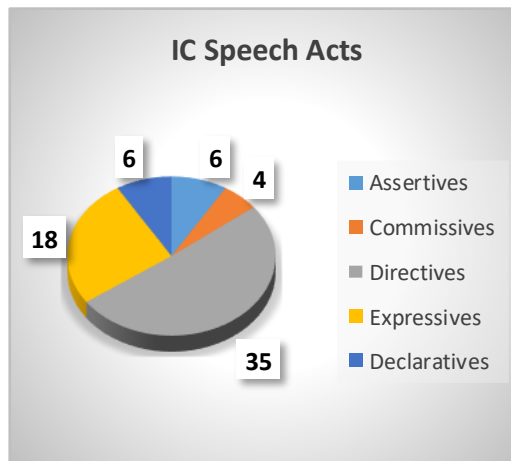


Figure 7. Frequencies of IC speech act.

Overall, though MC usage of speech acts was prone to maintaining relationships while IC directed to dominance and directiveness, it can be observed that there are dual functions of some classifications of speech acts by both parties. For instance, the use of commissives, assertives, directives and expressives by MC served as both rapport maintaining and directiveness/ dominance although the directiveness was exercised extremely nominally. Whilst for IC, albeit the minimal function of rapport maintaining, ICs commissives and expressives did hold it, together with dominance and directiveness. Besides, these findings of this study demonstrate how speech act is perceived versus how it is performed. The negotiators could recognize actions in certain utterances and perform appropriate and necessary responses during the negotiations. It could be observed that both parties had better grasp in understanding the usage functions of speech acts for negotiations as the meetings progressed. It could be evidenced by the functions of speech acts exercised by both IC and MC. For instance, for IC, from dominantly exercised expressives as directiveness, they were exercised as rapport maintaining towards the end of the meetings. It could be perceived that MC played a bit of directiveness as a soft power while maintaining the rapport. When the usage and functions of speech acts are reasonably comprehended by both parties, it is

observed that there were less impacts in the conflicts and misunderstanding amongst them and created a more conducive meeting atmosphere.

Directives for negotiation

The utterances of negotiations in this directive speech act expressed the attempt of the speaker to ask for the act of listener (Satavetin, 2018). In this study, it shows that IC exercised directives the most. This could be observed that dominance was the force of ICs directives. From the viewpoint of the study, some directives by IC, namely threatening, warning, and demanding demonstrated authority, in the sense of negotiation are measured as influential and forceful (Satavetin, 2018). It could be observed that when IC issued a threat in the meetings, it was viewed as not a patently controversial threat, rather to place groundwork for the success of the negotiation processes and outcomes. The utterances in the negotiation were attempts by IC to direct the MC to perform actions (Aziz and Othman, 2020; Azizah and Suhardi, 2020) and to repair and alter noncompliance thus escalated action that should be taken. This study also found that when IC suggested, the tendency of being insistent was rather prominent. Additionally, when IC placed advice on MC, he basically directed IC to perform for the project effectively (Azizah and Suhardi, 2020). Directives were considerably yet seriously laid as negative politeness (Azizah and Suhardi, 2020). For MC, although some directives, such as suggesting (e.g. I think it is better to stick with the current coloring material), proposed silent directiveness. It directed the IC to adhere to his propositions. It could be perceived as a muted directive, yet the directiveness could be decidedly comprehended. This was to play politeness and soften ones utterances (Aini et al., 2023). The conveyance of what the speaker wanted was fairly clear although it was implicitly expressed. Hence, by MC suggesting, directive was courteously laid. This was complemented by a description of directive conditions of normative validity.

Commissives for negotiation

Commissives by MC in the negotiations were very much associated with promises, assurances and guarantees which a common based negotiation aims to attain an agreement through obligation (Aziz and Othman, 2020; Yule, 1996). As negotiation embroils the notion of convincing, the delivery of assurance, guarantee and promises were placed by MC placed onto the negotiation table. MC utilized commissives in the negotiation most in finding and searching for solutions (Bilbow, 2002). In this study, MC put themselves under an obligation to perform tasks to maintain rapport too. This obligation delivered the cooperative principle and possessed the power to convince the IC (Azizah and Suhardi, 2020) while playing rapport. Bilbow (2002) linguistic study of speech acts in business meetings at a Hong Kong airline corporation concluded that Chinese participants used promises to showcase commitment and place assurance in convincing the clients, thus this validates the usage of commissives in this negotiation study. For IC, his commissives were exercised in the sense of self-centeredness. ICs statements committed him to some obligations that could gain benefits for himself (e.g. promise to alter his proposal). Because IC was observed as in dominancy, less commissives were employed in the negotiations by him. In this study, commissives are prospective in nature and express the speaker's intention to undertake specific actions that directed principally to building trust and influencing negotiation processes and outcomes (Aziz and Othman, 2020).

Assertives for negotiation

The findings showed that assertives were practiced the most by MC in the negotiations. This was to increase the opportunities of negotiating successful outcomes when it emphasized explaining, stating, claiming and describing data presented (Kholid et al., 2024). Some assertive speech acts employed by MC to support or disprove certain ideas, where discussing and solving problems in project meetings were the highlight of the study. The assertive acts were regularly exercised in asserting statements to IC. In this typical problem-solving meeting circumstances, MC needed to inform, update, discuss and find solutions, hence, making assertives one of the inflated speech acts exercised by MC in the project meeting. Because all negotiation interactions in the project meeting were problem-solving, MC was being proactive and demonstrating confidence in asserting their claims, statements, propositions and solutions as according to Aziz and Othman (2020), assertives function to entail self-esteem and defend ones interests and belief. The utterances of assertive focused on stating something that is believed by MC and in making IC believed the same entity where negotiation meaning is always persuasion (Kholid et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2017). For IC, as observed on the meeting interactions, assertives facilitated his own benefits and beneficial outcomes. He merely asserted on the things he wanted to be at his side. The capacity of a speaker along with their respective knowledge, their common ground and other sources of contextual information were all significant for representing implication on their negotiation outcomes (Satavetin, 2018). It demonstrated that the influence of ICs dominancy and his respective knowledge were a crucial portion to convince and induce his assertives in negotiations.

Expressives for negotiation

The use of expressive acts by MC could be generally found in establishing and maintaining rapport which the meeting participants developed necessary trust to achieve their negotiation goals, either individuals or groups. Additionally, MCs expressive of agreements as well was regarded as to maintain rapport rather than to completely agree with IC. The positive attitude of expressive act was presented by MC such humour. This was patently to maintain rapport (Ronan, 2015). Other than that, expressives by MC additionally found that when MC was motivated to generate an association with IC, he reflexively and automatically adhered to IC by an appropriate turn-taking, attitude expression and apologizing behaviour to preserve existing rapport so that the negotiation flow and process would be ease and smooth. IC demonstrated some negative attitude of expressive acts such as annoyance and sarcasm. Here, the expressives served the force to the acts on MC to perform tasks efficiently. Nevertheless, the exercise of negative attitude did not intend to jeopardize the relationship or rapport between the participants, it was rather to provoke the listeners towards the negotiators goals. Sometimes, it could be observed that expressives expressed by IC (e.g. thanking, praising and attitude (humour)) were not entirely sincere. This could be perceived when the focal aim of these expressives was merely to form a pleasant meeting flow, especially towards his desired outcomes. Overall, it could be observed that towards the end of the project meetings, expressives were abundantly employed by both parties. This demonstrated that the relationship between both parties accelerated. Thus, such expressive rapport-based trust was observed to be

predominantly beneficial during the negotiations (Aziz and Othman, 2020). To the extent that their speech act behaviours were synchronized with the flow and expectation of the meeting interaction, this surged trust and at once, negotiation could be less undemanding process. This could be perceived as expressive acts are necessitated by certain norms and situations, plus very likely anticipated by the participants (e.g. greeting or thanking). Additionally, humour in this negotiation series was a positive expressive that intended to aggrandize relationship between both parties. In this series of negotiation, humour seemed to be contagious along the interaction. The participants ought to humour certain matters in securing their negotiation and as an alternative to relationship sustainability (Ogiermann and Bella, 2021). It could be observed that towards the end of the meetings, the practice of humour was expanding as the level of stress of the project was reducing and the relationship between the participants was escalating.

Declaratives for negotiation

Because most of the negotiation outcomes did not come to a voice of settlement, therefore, the declarative speech acts hardly happened in the negotiations. In this negotiation study, declaratives were focal for endorsing change through utterances. These acts didn't simply convey information; they malformed certainty by aligning utterances with action. Nevertheless, the declarative acts were mostly carried out by IC where according to Mohammed (2021) and Yule (1996), a speaker should have a special institutional role, in specific context and to perform a declaration properly. This could be perceived by IC dominance in the negotiation interactions. This has proven that in these negotiations, the dominant party, which is IC, possessed higher opportunities to declare changes, dismiss topics, accept solutions and announce solutions. Declaratives in this study hence placed their roles in influencing perception and signifying commitment (Ardhi, 2023). Generally, declarative speech acts are powerful tools in business negotiations, enabling individuals to solve issues and manage problems within a project. By understanding and strategically employing these acts, negotiators can influence the negotiation processes and outcomes and eventually, reach a mutual concession (Pulungan and Ambalegin, 2022).

Negotiation strategies

In this study, the adoption of distributive and integrative strategies by the negotiators relies on the types, classifications and functions of speech acts (*Table 5* and *Table 6*). Further descriptions are as in *Table 7*. This *Table 7* depicts the orientation of functions of speech acts to negotiation strategies. It could be observed that MC employed more integrative compared to IC. This demonstrated that MC was prone to politeness and maintain relationship and cooperation in exercising integrative while IC was likely to show power and dominance while practicing distributive strategy. This can be seen via the functions of speech acts exercised by both parties. Although MC's speech acts sometimes functioned as to persuade and influence (command), the gist of distributive was subtly placed onto the negotiation table. Contrasting from IC where the speech acts functioned as distributive were patently demonstrated. MC occasionally introduced distributive strategy when he was surrounded by the hedging strategies that intensified his negotiational motives, but he also introduced integrative strategy when bounded by the dominant speech acts, for instance, expressives, commissives and assertives. Into the

bargain, the findings revealed when those acts mentioned were exercised, integrative negotiation strategies were applied the most where mostly relationship between the meeting participants was the highlight of the strategy. As discovered by the findings, MC did employ distributive strategies in some negotiation interactions. Although distributive negotiation strategy is considered as a competitive strategy, the distributive that happened in MC negotiation interactions were not merely focusing on MCs sole goals rather than the groups, even it was observed to be slightly directives. Meanwhile distributive strategies by IC could patently be seen by his prominent directive acts. IC distributive strategies, as mentioned, primarily to fulfill his own interest rather than the groups. In multiparty situations in the negotiations, it can be observed that IC increased its use of integrative strategy only just enough overtime to get an agreement (Benetti et al., 2021). Exercising aggressive and demanding but realistic speech acts (in his case, directives) could strategically assist the success of his negotiation process and outcomes. ICs behaviour of leveraging power was beneficial to him where it was the key to successful distributive tactics. While his use of integrative strategies was mainly to secure his negotiations by the usage of mostly expressives (attitude-humour) and expressives (praising and thanking). This was clearly to steer and persuade MC towards his negotiations while maintaining the rapport and maintain his dominance status quo.

Table 5. *Speech acts for negotiation found in the study.*

Classification/companies	MC		IC	
	Speech acts	Functions	Speech acts	Functions
Assertives	Reporting, Highlighting , Claiming Supporting, Excusing, Adding , Stating, Manipulating , Asserting, Describing, Justifying	To inform, to verify, to draw attention, to persuade, to present data/ issues, to gain trust, to present details, to gain support, to please someone, to reassure solution, to avoid responsibilities	Asserting, Clarifying, Emphasizing , Mentioning	To show power, to draw attention, to object
Commissives	Guarantee, Assurance, Offering, Promise, Convincing	To elevate displeasure, to relieve anxiety, to build trust, to influence, to maintain rapport, to show commitment, to please someone, to acknowledge effort,	Considering , Guarantee, Assurance	To maintain rapport, to please own self, to demonstrate seriousness,
Directives	Suggesting, Requesting	To confront the unpleasant, to seek solution, to solve problem, to present solution, to persuade	Demanding, Warning, Ordering, Threatening, Requesting, Proposing, Suggesting, Asking, Questioning, Advising, Repeating	To force, to show power, to get further info, to inform on the unpleasant, to disagree, to earn desirable response, to satisfy own self
Expressives	Thanking, Agreement, Apologizing, Attitude (humour), Avoiding, Disagreement, Objecting	To accept solutions, to comfort listeners, to maintain rapport, to show appreciation, to persuade, to reject, to demonstrate politeness, to avoid responsibilities	Attitude (sarcasm) , Praising, Complaining, Disagreement, Attitude (humor), Objecting, Thanking	To express annoyance, to maintain rapport, to vent frustration, to avoid dispute, to highlight concerns,
Declaratives	-	-	Announcing, dismissing, Accepting, Declaring	To maintain superiority, to show power, to satisfy own self, to declare

solution, to concur

Table 6. Frequencies of negotiation strategies in project meeting.

Negotiation/interaction	MC		IC	
	Integrative	Distributive	Integrative	Distributive
Interaction 1	x			x
Interaction 2	x			x
Interaction 3	x	x	x	x
Interaction 4	x	x	x	x
Interaction 5	x	x	x	x

Table 7. Orientation of functions of speech acts to negotiation strategies.

Classification/ companies	Speech acts	MC		Speech acts	IC	
		Integrative	Distributive		Integrative	Distributive
Assertives	Reporting, Highlighting, Claiming, Supporting, Excusing, Adding, Stating, Manipulating, Asserting, Describing, Justifying	To inform, to verify, to draw attention, to present data/issues, to gain trust, to present details, to gain support, to please someone, to reassure solution, to avoid responsibilities	To Persuade (command)	Asserting, Clarifying, Emphasizing, Mentioning	To maintain rapport	To show power, to draw attention, to object
Commissives	Guarantee, Assurance, Offering, Promise, Convincing	To elevate displeasure, to relieve anxiety, to build trust, to maintain rapport, to show commitment, to please someone, to acknowledge effort,	To Influence (command)	Considering, Guarantee, Assurance	To maintain rapport	To please own self, to demonstrate seriousness,
Directives	Suggesting, Requesting	To confront the unpleasant, to seek solution, to solve problem, to present solution	To Persuade (command)	Demanding, Warning, Ordering, Threatening, Requesting, Proposing, Suggesting, Asking, Questioning, Advising, Repeating	To maintain rapport	To force, to show power, to get further info, to inform on the unpleasant, to disagree, to earn desirable response, to satisfy own self
Expressives	Thanking, Agreement, Apologizing, Attitude (humour), Avoiding, Disagreement, Objecting	To accept solutions, to comfort listeners, to maintain rapport, to show appreciation, to reject, to demonstrate politeness, to avoid responsibilities	To Persuade (command)	Attitude (sarcasm), Praising, Complaining, Disagreement, Attitude (humor), Objecting, Thanking	To maintain rapport	To express annoyance, to vent frustration, to avoid dispute, to highlight concerns,
Declaratives	-			Announcing,		To maintain

dismissing, Accepting, Declaring	superiority, to show power, to satisfy own self, to declare solution, to concur
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While both parties negotiation strategies could be illustrated as primary attempts to settle dispute and mutually acceptable solutions, the strategies applied by both did demonstrate distinctions, in term of the functions and negotiation goals. ICs distributive strategies were perceived to achieve self-interest rather than group-interest while MCs distributive was liable to mutual and group interest. The functions of distributive strategies by IC primarily to direct and command, meanwhile MCs were to maintain rapport and please IC, which was to compromise. From MCs point of view, it is important for them to identify the underlying interests and needs of both parties, thus the negotiation process will be satisfactorily faced. Additionally, generating multiple options and alternatives that can satisfy both parties is essential. Furthermore, open and honest communication with the other party, as well as building trust and rapport by showing empathy, respect, and appreciation, is the gist of MCs negotiation strategies.

Conclusion

The study of speech acts as negotiation strategies in project meetings provides valuable insights into how communication shapes decision-making through the process of problem-solving negotiations in professional settings. The use of speech acts (assertives, directives, delcaratives, expressives and commissives) plays a significant role in how negotiators manage uncertainty, maintain relationships, and navigate power dynamics in team discussions eventually function as negotiation strategies. This study discovered that by sufficiently comprehending and acknowledging the usage and functions of speech acts that function as negotiation strategies, the negotiators could avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations by anticipating the negotiators attitudes and preparing appropriate responses.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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