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APPROACHES TO EMBEDDING SPEECH ACT THEORY IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract: *Speech acts have long been considered a fundamental theory of functional and applied linguistics which help us to understand how language is used to perform different functions in social interactions. Hence, they are an important part of effective communication. One of the key benefits of using speech acts in second language teaching is that they help students to recognize and use different types of speech acts in different situations and become more proficient communicators. There are several ways to embed speech act theory in teaching English for nonnative speakers such as introducing the different types of speech acts and their definitions, practicing speech acts in specific situations, and explaining cultural and social norms that influence speech acts. The application of the framework of speech act theory to teaching English Vietnamese universities not only helps to convey the rules of language to create different illocutionary acts according to specific purposes of utterances, but also helps learners use the language in a formal and culturally appropriate manner. This article aimed at exploring the applicability of speech act theory to English instruction for college students in combination with intercultural communication elements, as well as making some suggestions to help learners to use English in a more relevant and effective way and achieve their intended goals.*

Keywords*: speech acts, pragmatics, teaching approach, illocutionary force, methodology, TBT, CBI*

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics in general and speech acts in particular are essential components of language learning. They are one of the most widely examined pragmatic features that second and foreign language (L2/FL) learners need to master in order to communicate appropriately in the target language. Without a proper knowledge of how to use and understand a particular speech act that is appropriate to the contextual and cultural parameters of a specific situation, L2/FL learners may run the risk of being perceived as rude and/or impolite. Consequently, providing them with the opportunities to develop their ability to perform and recognize speech acts in particular communicative situations is nowadays recognized as the ultimate goal of language instruction and learning.

In an EFL classroom, students who are able to produce grammatically well-formed utterances which are not appropriate for the context in which they are used. For example, a student who in reply to "*Could you do me a favor*?" says "*Yes, I could*" instead of "*Sure, I'd be glad to*". Olshtain and Cohen (1990) in this respect narrate an incident which again stresses the importance of mastering

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saying the right thing at the right time. A stewardess on a European airline was walking down the aisle with a coffeepot and some cups, saying "*Coffee, please!*" with a smile. A young American decided to tease her by saying "*You're the one who is serving the coffee, ma'am, not me.*" This comment from the young American made the stewardess embarrassed for a while, but what really happened here was that the stewardess's utterance "Coffee, please!" In English it is interpreted as a request not an offer. The stewardess might have mastered the rules of grammar, but it is obvious that mastering these rules, though necessary, is not sufficient for successful communication.

A further issue specific to speech act instruction and classroom materials is the view of acts such as 'apologizing' or 'inviting' as isolated adjacency pairs, such as in the example below:

Pete: Would you like to come to the party this Friday?

Nancy: Yeah, sounds good.

This interpretation of Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962) presents problems for language teachers. Speech acts are not placed in the context of wider interactions, in which they are realized over a number of turns. Viewing speech acts as single utterances, or as pairs of utterances, can therefore be seen as oversimplifying talk.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech act theory by J. Austin

Speech acts theory is a linguistic theory that describes how people use language to perform actions, rather than just convey information. According to this theory, when people speak, they are not only communicating information but also performing an action, such as making a request, giving an order, asking a question, or making a promise.

The theory was first proposed by the philosophers J.L. Austin and then by John Searle in the mid-20th century. They argued that language is not just a tool for describing the world around us, but also a means of acting upon it. At its core, speech act theory asserts that every utterance has both a literal and an implied meaning. The literal meaning is the surface-level meaning of the words spoken, while the implied meaning is what the speaker intends to convey through the utterance.

The theory identifies three main types of speech acts:

• *Locutionary act*: This refers to the actual words spoken or written by the speaker. For example, "It's raining outside."

• *Illocutionary act*: This refers to the intention behind the words spoken or written by the speaker. For example, "Could you close the window?" The intention here is to make a request.

• *Perlocutionary act*: This refers to the effect that the words spoken or written have on the listener. For example, "I'm sorry for your loss." The effect here might be to comfort the listener.

Speech acts theory has important implications for understanding how communication works and how language can be used effectively in different situations. It helps us to see that language is not just about conveying information, but also about creating social relationships and achieving social goals.

Classifications of illocutionary acts

Austin's classification

J.L. Austin, another philosopher who contributed significantly to speech act theory, proposed a taxonomy of illocutionary acts based on his work in linguistic philosophy. According to Austin's taxonomy, there are three types of speech acts: locutionary acts (the actual utterances or sentences that we produce when we speak); Illocutionary acts (actions that we intend to perform with our utterances); Perlocutionary acts (effects that our utterances have on others, in other words changes that occur in the listener as a result of hearing our words)

Specifically, Austin's taxonomy emphasizes the importance of the speaker's intention when using language to perform illocutionary acts. It suggests that meaning is not just about the literal meaning of the words used, but also about the context in which they are spoken, the speaker's intentions, and the effects that they have on the listener. It highlights the fact that language is not just a tool for conveying information, but also a means of performing actions and achieving social goals.

Austin identified several basic types of illocutionary acts, which are acts performed by saying something. Some of the main categories of illocutionary acts proposed by Austin include:

Verdictives: These 'consist in the delivering of a finding, official or unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact so far as these are distinguishable'. Examples of verbs in this class are: acquit, hold, calculate, describe, analyze, estimate, date, rank, assess, and characterize.

Exercitives: One of these 'is the giving of a decision in favor of or against a certain course of action or advocacy of it. . .', 'a decision that something is to be so, as distinct from a judgment that it is so'. Some examples are *order, command, direct, plead, beg, recommend, entreat* and *advise*. Request is also an obvious example, but Austin does not list it. As well as the above, Austin also lists: appoint, dismiss, nominate, veto, declare closed, declare open, as well as announce, warn, proclaim, and give.

Commissives: 'The whole point of a commissive', Austin tells us, 'is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.' Some of the obvious examples are: promise, vow, pledge, covenant, contract, guarantee, embrace, and swear.

Expositives are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and reference'. Austin gives many examples of these, among them are: affirm, deny, emphasize, illustrate, answer, report, accept, object to, concede, describe, class, identify and call.

Behabitives: This class, with which Austin was very dissatisfied ('a shocker', he called it) 'includes the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct'. Among the examples Austin lists are: apologize, thank, deplore, commiserate, congratulate, felicitate, welcome, applaud, criticize, bless, curse, toast and drink. But also, curiously: dare, defy, protest, and challenge.

However, there are (at least) some related difficulties with Austin's taxonomy; in ascending order of importance: there is a persistent confusion between verbs and acts, not all the verbs are

illocutionary verbs, there is too much overlap of the categories, too much heterogeneity within the categories, many of the verbs listed in the categories don't satisfy the definition given for the category and, most important, there is no consistent principle of classification.

It's worth noting that Austin's work has been further developed and expanded upon by other philosophers of language, such as John Searle and H.P. Grice. So, while Austin's taxonomy provides a foundational understanding of illocutionary acts, more recent research has built upon and refined his ideas.

Searle's classification

John Searle proposed a taxonomy of illocutionary acts, based on his analysis of language use in different contexts. According to Searle's taxonomy, there are five types of illocutionary acts:

• *Assertives:* These are utterances that represent the speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition. Examples include statements, claims, and descriptions.

• *Directives:* These are utterances that are intended to get the hearer to do something. Examples include requests, commands, and suggestions.

• *Commissives*: These are utterances that commit the speaker to some future course of action. Examples include promises, threats, and offers.

• *Expressives*: These are utterances that express the speaker's psychological state or attitude toward some object or event. Examples include apologies, congratulations, and objections.

• *Declaratives*: These are utterances that bring about a change in the world simply by being uttered in the appropriate context. Examples include pronouncing someone married, declaring war, and christening a ship.

Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts provides a useful framework for understanding how speakers use language to perform different types of actions in different contexts. It highlights the fact that language is not just a means of conveying information but also a way of influencing others, expressing emotions, making commitments, and changing the world around us. By understanding the different types of illocutionary acts, learners can develop their pragmatic competence and become more effective communicators in a variety of social situations.

In summary, both Searle's and Austin's taxonomies of illocutionary acts provide useful frameworks for understanding how speakers use language to perform different types of actions in different contexts. By understanding these different types of illocutionary acts, learners can develop their pragmatic competence and become more effective communicators in a variety of social situations.

Speech Act in English Language Teaching

Based on what was mentioned in the previous sections, it is now quite clear why speech acts have an important role in our daily use of language: they are important because they allow us to perform a wide range of functions such as compliment, apology, request, complaint, etc. it is important to master speech acts while learning a second language because they not only facilitate the process of communication, but also make it more effective. The important question

to be considered is "Are Speech acts haphazardly picked up in the process of second language acquisition, or should they be taught systematically?" Olshtain and Cohen (1990), Ellis (1992), and King and Silver (1993) have argued that teaching speech acts to foreign students has a marked effect on their performance. For example, Olshtain and Cohen (1990) at first pretested a group of learners on their apologizing behavior. then they provided them with some instruction on how to make apologies in a native-like manner. The result of the posttest revealed that the utterances produced by the learners were more in line with native behavior.

The findings of the above studies together with many similar researches indicate that teaching speech acts should be an important component of any language teaching program that aims to train students who are communicatively competent. By reviewing the literature of language teaching, we still see that in recent years the following techniques have been suggested to develop effective speech act behavior among foreign language learners. Whichever technique we use in teaching speech acts, there is one principle which should not be forgotten at all. this point rightly observed by Tajvidi (2000, p. 226) is as follows:

Activities should be expanded to include practice in performing Speech acts with addresses of different ages, sexes, and social status so as to give the learners the required practice in selecting language strategies [emphasis added] according to these variables.

In the process of English communication both inside and outside the classroom, students in the early stages often encounter difficulties not only in understanding the illocutionary meaning but also perlocutionary meaning. For higher level students, the difficulty in understanding the intended meaning becomes increasingly evident. This is mainly due to a lack of pragmatic knowledge. Students may be able to hear an entire utterance from the speaker but they might not understand the speaker's intention. For example, some novice learners may struggle when faced with the question "How do you do?". They may not know how to respond appropriately or provide an unsuitable answer. Syntactically, this is a direct question, and its proposition content is not challenging. However, from a pragmatic perspective, the question creates an effect that goes beyond the act of asking itself. In English, "How do you do?" is used as a formal greeting for someone that you have not met before. The typical response to this type of question is also "How do you do?"

METHODOLOGY

Research context

In my teaching context in a college in Vietnam, most of my colleagues teach pragmatics on an ad hoc basis (arranged when necessary), including teaching SA, if any. The textbooks in use include some sporadic mentions about how to request and apologize, but they are not well contextualized. For most of my colleagues, it seems that SA is not teachable and can only be picked up when necessary, as a result, they are unwilling to teach them in class. At best, they will simply follow the textbook. The teacher's belief results in communicative failures for L2 learners when communicating with L1 speakers in the real world. Therefore, the teaching of SA, in my opinion, indeed plays an important role in developing learners' 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1972), which is one of the main goals of modern language education for a wide range of English teachers (Hedge 2000: 44).

There are several benefits that come with embedding the speech act theory in English instruction for college students. These include:

Communicative competence: It is competence of language use appropriate to the other participants of the communicative interaction and appropriate to the given social context and situation. Besides, "Communicative competence is the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. The desired outcome of the language learning process is the ability to communicate competently, not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does."

Sociolinguistic competence: Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. It involves understanding and applying the appropriate linguistic forms, styles, registers, and cultural norms when communicating with others. Overall, sociolinguistic competence allows individuals to effectively adapt their language choices and behaviors to fit the social and cultural context in which they are communicating. It involves not only linguistic knowledge but also an understanding of social dynamics and cultural norms to ensure successful communication in diverse settings.

Strategic competence is the ability to recognize and repair communication breakdowns by using strategies such as paraphrasing, clarification, and negotiation.. To be exact, strategic competence is used by the speaker to provide alternative words and repair harmful problems that occur in communication. Also, it involves the ability to compensate for limitations in other competencies and adapt communication strategies to achieve effective understanding.

Teaching approaches and SA

As we have discussed, teaching SA is meant to develop learners 'communicative competence. Also, there is a strong sense that an understanding of SA for teachers should lead to a development of communicative competence in learners. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is now widely considered a robust approach for the development of communicative competence (Cohen 1996; Hedge 2000). However, in the same literature (Cohen 1996; Baleghizadeh 2007), the steps and activities presented to utilize SAT still follow a more traditional language teaching approach, such as presentation-practice-produce (PPP) and an adjusted version of PPP (add pre-assessment before presentation and feedback after production), which at best is a very weak version of CLT. Taking Cohen's (1996: 413-415) five steps that we talked about above for example, the first step is to diagnostically assess students' existing awareness of SA in general. Teachers then present students with model dialogues, followed by the situational evaluation to practice learners' awareness of the factors involving selecting SAS. The fourth step is the role- play activities for learners to produce the use of SA, and finally we have the feedback and discussion. The approach of the whole process is essentially ppp which I would argue does not apply the principles of CLT strongly enough.

The communicative approach focuses on providing learners with opportunities to practice and develop their ability to use speech acts in real-life contexts. Here's how the communicative approach can be applied to teaching speech acts:

1. Authentic Mmaterials: Use authentic materials such as videos, audio recordings, dialogues, or texts that contain natural instances of speech acts. This exposes learners to real-life language use and helps them understand the context and purpose of different speech acts.

2. Task-Based activities: Design task-based activities that require learners to engage in meaningful communication using speech acts. For example, create role-plays, problem-solving tasks, or discussions where learners have to use speech acts to achieve a specific goal or solve a problem. These activities encourage learners to apply their knowledge of speech acts in a practical and interactive way.

3. Language awareness: By completing tasks guided by teachers, learners will develop language awareness by analyzing and discussing different speech acts. Encourage learners to identify the linguistic features, intonation patterns, and non-verbal cues associated with specific speech acts. This helps learners understand the nuances of speech acts and become more proficient in using them appropriately.

4. Reflection and Self-assessment: Encourage learners to reflect on their use of speech acts and self-assess their performance. Provide opportunities for learners to evaluate their own use of speech acts, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for further development. Self-reflection promotes metacognitive awareness and empowers learners to take ownership of their learning process.

5. Real-life application: Encourage learners to apply their knowledge outside the classroom.

Now let us take a further look at the extracted apology class activity. It first presents four speech strategies of making an apology, then gives students some time to reflect on the ways to apologize in their own culture as well as in their personal preference, the next step is for students to practice the strategies through listening to conversations. Compared to the five steps Cohen (1996) suggests, this approach is better because, before practicing, it gives learners an opportunity to discuss the potential differences between making an apology in their own culture and in the target language culture. With that awareness in mind, the practice followed will be more effective.

However, both the approaches have a paucity of communicativeness. It has been argued that one of the main realizations of CLT, task-based approach, can be implemented in speech acts lessons. For example, instead of presenting learners with the selection of speech strategies for making an apology in the first step, learners could be given a task that contains both appropriate and inappropriate ways to apologize in two different sociocultural contexts. Alternatively, learners can work on a task that is topic-centered (Tatsuki and Houck 2010) such as how to greet each other in English speaking cultures. This way, learners will have a chance to proactively notice the gap between suitable and unsuitable speech strategies in different sociocultural contexts. By completing tasks in groups guided by teachers, students will develop an awareness of using related SAS appropriately. Then through post-tasks, learners will have a chance to notice the gap again. Finally, this can be followed by a short summary and discussions, which will be of benefit for learners.

Another approach performed by Nicholas, A. (2015) is called 'concept-based approach to teaching speech acts in EFL classroom. In this approach, the emphasis is on helping learners develop a deep, conceptual understanding of a skill or knowledge area, so that this knowledge can then be applied in a variety of situations. This approach to instruction advocates the development of learners of a deeper, conceptual understanding of how the target language is used. While CBI

bears some similarities to task-based teaching (TBT) in the sense that both approaches promote engagement with meaningful language tasks, they also differ in important respects. TBT typically requires learners to engage with a task in order to notice the gap in their knowledge. The teacher often then works with the learner in addressing that gap by focusing on form, such as grammar or vocabulary. CBI, on the other hand, takes a rather different approach, with the teacher introducing target concepts to learners *before* they then apply that conceptual knowledge to a language task. CBI then is a highly systematic approach to learning, which Galperin saw as being quite different to more discovery-based approaches such as TBT.

Similarly, CBI distinguishes itself from the 'present, practise, perform' approach to the classroom by avoiding verbal descriptions of general rules of thumb. Instead, the concept-based approach employs models that require a deeper level of understanding. Negueruela (op.cit.) followed this approach, using diagrams to demonstrate the concept of grammatical aspect. The key is to present the target information without resorting to reductionism or usage of simplified rules. The use of visual tools such as diagrams, therefore, can be a useful and effective method of helping learners to grasp this complexity, enabling learners, for example, to visualize the relationships and connections between stages of a conversation. A further distinguishing characteristic of this approach is an emphasis on learners creating or manipulating the models themselves. This manipulation has been found to improve learner performance in some tasks (Gibbs 2005). In addition, concepts are taught with the specific aim of promoting understanding; while abstract, they must be functional and practical, concretely linked to authentic language use.

Strategies for Speech Acts Instruction

Speech Act Instruction (SAI) suggests that in EFL teaching, English speech acts need to be taught and learnt in classroom practice, so that EFL students can be trained to perform speech acts in a motivated way.

The model dialog:

Language input is the first step for foreign language learning. To improve students' pragmatic competence, it is urgent to enrich authentic input of speech acts. Thus, in speech acts instruction, it is necessary to provide students with opportunities to observe native English speakers' pragmatic behavior in the performance of speech acts. Besides, as an important input, speech act strategies are necessary for EFL students to enhance their pragmatic competence.

Through this useful technique, we can present students with examples of speech acts in use (Olshtain and Cohen, 1991). At first, students listen to a dialog and then they identify the kind of speech acts used. Next they are presented with more dialogs without any information concerning the particular situation, and they have to do their best to guess the age, social status, and the relationship between the speakers.

Roleplay and simulation:

This is a very useful technique which can follow the model dialog. Context plays a vital part in the field of pragmatics and it determines the occurrence of a conversation. Therefore, pragmatic instruction should arouse students' awareness of the importance of context and increase their

sensitivity to context. In order to develop students' pragmatic competence, teachers should create opportunities for students to use language freely and practice what they have learned in context. Teaching in context features itself as vividness, associativity and restriction. Vividness refers to the combination of classroom instruction with real life communication. Associativity means that students receive and apply language knowledge in communicative situations, which will provide students with clues to remember these language knowledge, such as scenes, interlocutors, emotions, etc. While restriction refers to the fact that context generally limits the content of language activities, the choice of vocabulary and sentence structure. For example, in a context of greeting, words used mainly carry out the phatic function. Words conveying the intention of requesting or complaining are not taken as appropriate expressions under that scenario.

After students have analyzed a number of dialogs in terms of their language functions, it is time to divide them in pairs and have them act out these dialogs. It is important to bear in mind as to give students enough information on the age, sex, and social status of the participants so that they will not blindly exchange a number of utterances.

Discourse completion task (DCT)

This is one of the most popular tools in interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics research in which students are required to do a completion exercise and provide appropriate responses to various scenarios (Cohen, 1996). The following is an example:

Please write in the provided spaces whatever you would say in the following conversational situations.

You forget a meeting with a friend; this is the second time that the same thing has happened to the same person. at the end of the day your friend phones you and says:

'I waited for you for more than twenty minutes! What happened?'

You: …………………………………………………………………………………………..

This type of exercise is a good elicitation device which can be effectively used in second language acquisition research.

Discourse rating task

This type of task requires the learners to rate various responses on a continuum (e.g. unassertive to assertive, indirect to direct, or impolite to polite) based on a given scenario (Lee and McChesney, 2000). The following is an example of a discourse rating task which appears in Lee and McChesney (p. 163).

Bob is a senior manager who has worked at the company for 20 years. Two months ago a college student intern, Barbara, started a three- month project there. There is a "no smoking" policy at the company. However, Bob, who is not Barbara's supervisor, has seen her openly smoking in the office several times, even after he has told her that there is a "no smoking" policy. Bob feels very strongly that the smoke is harmful to the employees. He is trying to persuade Barbara to stop smoking in the office.

Bob: Barbara, can I talk to you for a minute?

Barbara: Sure, what's up?

a) I would appreciate it if you could smoke outside.

nonassertive						assertive
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

b) Look, smoking is not allowed here. Please smoke outside.

nonassertive						assertive
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

c) Don't you think it might be a good idea to smoke outside?

nonassertive						assertive
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

d) I've been smelling smoke in the office, have you?

nonassertive						assertive
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

e) How many times do I have to tell you there is a "no smoking" policy in the office?

nonassertive						assertive
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

These tasks are good devices to promote language awareness; however, like model dialogs they will not have the intended effect unless they are role played with students. The above techniques were some of the current models which in recent years have been employed in teaching speech acts. Furthermore, speech act is an essential component of pragmatic competence. The basic process of second language acquisition (SLA) follows the sequence of input, apperception, comprehension, intake, integration and output. Language learning includes not only language input, but also the intake and output of language knowledge. Therefore, to develop EFL students' pragmatic competence, it is crucial to understand the basic features of speech acts, increase the input of speech acts and especially enhance the practice of speech acts in classroom settings and speech act sets.

The significance of speech act sets

According to Cohen (1996), there are sets of realization patterns typically used by native speakers of the target language, any one of which would be recognized as representing the speech act in question, when uttered in the appropriate context. Note that a speech act set may actually have several speech acts within it (e.g., a complaint that includes not only a complaint statement, but also a request and a threat)

Many types of speech act set (SAS) can be seen in real life such as: apologize, request, promise, complain and compliment. Because we come across them so often in reality, learners would like to, and should get, a basic understanding of how these SA can be realized in utterances. The set of realization patterns and strategies in utterances used by L1 English speakers is referred to as the speech act set by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1996: 385). Cohen (ibid: 386)

argues that the incorrect use of SA may impede effective communications to different degrees. Giving an example of how L1 speakers usually make an apology according to Cohen's (1996) SAS is:

1. Direct apologetic utterance including performative verbs.

Eg. *I apologise for the error (Cambrigde Dictionary)*

2. Explaining the reason for transgression and is used by the Sp1 as an indirect speech act of apologizing.

Eg. *My car broke down.*

3. Admitting responsibility for transgression.

Eg. *I should've left earlier.*

4. Making amends.

Eg. *How about buying you a coffee?*

6. Making a promise of nonrecurrence/Saying the transgression will not recur.

Eg. *I promise it won't happen again.*

In reality, people apologize in different ways based on their relationships to the hearers. Most people make apologies by selecting the patterns according to specific contexts and personal preferences. As a teacher, it is tempting to be guided only by what is said in textbooks, whereas teachers with a broader knowledge of SAS are in a better position to broaden the scope of learners' communicative competence. This is because learners will have a richer selection to choose to apologize in the way they need to in real life situations. In other words, teachers who are more informed about SAS are better prepared to furnish the learners with a rich range to realize a greater communicative competence.

This concept of speech act sets could have a wide application in developing language teaching materials. Unfortunately, this strategic-based use of speech acts is still not extensively used in ELT textbooks. Most of these textbooks present speech acts in the form of model dialogs and at best require students to role play them. Based on my investigation of a number of recently published ELT textbooks, new interchange by Richards *et al.* (1997) is one of the few which should be given credit for employing the concept of speech act sets. The following extract taken from the second volume of this series (p.37) clearly illustrates how the concept of speech act set of apologizing is used in a well-developed language teaching material which has a strong theoretical base.

APOLOGIES

People apologize in different ways. For example, if someone complains about the noise from your stereo, you can:

Apologize and (a) give an excuse "I'm sorry. I didn't realize."

(b) admit a mistake "I forgot I left it on."

(c) make an offer "I'll turn it down right now."

(d) make a promise "I'll make sure to keep the volume down."

A. Class activity. How do people usually apologize in your country? What do you usually do when you apologize?

B. Listen to three people complaining. What are they complaining about? How does the other person apologize? (More than one answer is possible.)

Type of apology

Complaint	give an excuse	admit a mistake	make an offer	make a promise
1 …				
2 …				
3 …				

As can be viewed in this activity can be viewed in this activity, at first students are acquainted with different strategies used in making apologies. Then they discuss how they make apologies in their native language. This discussion allows the teacher to make the students aware of cross-cultural differences which might sound impolite to native speakers of English. Finally, students practice what they have learned by listening to a number of conversations. This method of working on speech acts, in my opinion, is more effective and informative than the earlier mentioned techniques in that it gives students more language awareness.

CONCLUSION

I started this article with an emphasis on the role of speech acts in language teaching. After reviewing a number of techniques used in teaching speech acts. I introduced the concept of speech act sets and their application in developing language teaching materials. There are two points which I would like to point out here. First, the literature of applied linguistics still suffers from a paucity of studies which, like Cohen, Olshtain, and Rosenstein (1986) systematically present the set of strategies used in performing different speech acts. There are still a lot of things which we need to know about speech act sets of complimenting, complaining, etc. Second, language teaching materials should benefit more from the concept of speech act sets and employ them more frequently so as to give more awareness to the learners about the nature of strategies used in performing speech acts in the target language. As we observed on the previous page, Richards *et al.* (1997) teach the speech act of apologizing through the set of strategies discussed by Cohen and his colleagues. That is, at first they make students aware that if they want to apologize to someone, they can either use an apology word, or use an apology word and extend it by adding something like a promise of non-occurrence to it. This, in my opinion, is something that gives more depth to the teaching of speech acts, and hence ought to be more widely used in ELT textbooks and classes.

The application of the framework of speech act theory to teaching English Vietnamese universities not only helps to convey the rules of language to create different illocutionary acts according to specific purposes of utterances, but also helps learners use the language in a formal and culturally appropriate manner. This article aimed at exploring the applicability of speech act theory to English instruction for college students in combination with intercultural communication

elements, as well as making some suggestions to help learners to use English in a more relevant and effective way and achieve their intended goals. As such, embedding the speech act theory in English instruction for college students can be greatly beneficial, especially in enhancing their communication skills.

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