

Pedagogical Directive Speech Acts in Dissertation Supervision at the Doctoral Program of Language and Literature Education, State University of Surabaya, Indonesia: A Pragmasyntactic Study

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ABSTRACT: This article examines pedagogical directive speech acts employed by dissertation supervisors in doctoral-level supervision forums. Grounded in a qualitative-descriptive approach, data were collected through participant observation, audio recordings of supervision sessions, and in-depth interviews. A pragmasyntactic analysis was applied to link syntactic forms with illocutionary functions and the social context of speech acts. The findings reveal eight dominant categories of directive utterances—direct commands, polite requests, suggestions, prohibitions, recommendations, collaborative invitations, academic warnings, and corrective evaluations—realized through a combination of imperative, declarative, and interrogative sentences. Supervisors consistently demonstrate a charismatic pedagogical style characterized by firm yet friendly authority, academic politeness, respect for student autonomy, and encouragement of critical reflection. These linguistic strategies mitigate power, avoid dominance, and foster cooperative and constructive academic dialogue. The main conclusion asserts that effective dissertation supervision is not determined solely by the exercise of authority, but by the supervisor's ability to manage syntactic form and communicate ethically and pragmatically.

KEYWORDS: directive speech acts; pragmasyntax; charismatic pedagogy; dissertation supervision; academic interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Verbal interaction in higher education, particularly within the process of dissertation supervision at the doctoral level, serves as a strategic domain for simultaneously examining pragmatic and syntactic dimensions. In this supervisory process, academic advisors play a crucial role as academic facilitators, intellectual guides, and authoritative figures who provide direction and evaluation of students' dissertations. These directions are commonly realized through directive speech acts—utterances intended to influence the actions of the interlocutor (Searle, 1971; Fitria, 2019).

Directive speech acts in supervision are determined not only by their linguistic structure but also by their pragmatic force and the delivery style of the supervisor. In practice, many supervisors adopt a charismatic pedagogical style, a manner of issuing directives that is not merely authoritative but also dignified, emotionally engaging, and motivational. Such a style not only fosters students' compliance with academic guidance but also cultivates a dialogical and productive atmosphere in dissertation supervision (Freire, 2014; Lambey et al., 2017; Saputra, 2022).

In this context, supervisors who act as promoters or co-promoters of doctoral candidates should avoid authoritarian, dominant, militaristic, non-cooperative, and non-constructive behavior. Instead, they are expected to be pedagogical, cooperative, and charismatic—capable of delivering academic direction persuasively, fostering student trust, and creating a mutually supportive communication space. Such an attitude not only has a positive impact on students' academic development but also reflects an ethical and humanistic practice of higher education (Rahardi, 2000; Djamarah, 2016; Sardiman, 2017).

The study of pragmasyntax—the relationship between syntactic form and pragmatic meaning and function within speech contexts—offers an appropriate analytical framework to explore this phenomenon. This approach allows researchers to articulate how sentence forms, such as direct imperatives, rhetorical questions, or declaratives with imperative modality, construct particular social meanings in supervisory interactions (Leech, 1983; Rahardi, 2000; Nadar, 2009).

Although research on directive speech acts has been widely conducted in educational settings (see Meirisa et al., 2017; Saputri & Nugraheni, 2020), specific attention to directive utterances in doctoral dissertation supervision—especially those with pedagogical and charismatic traits—remains relatively scarce. Yet, this context is rich with power dynamics, academic hegemony, and the negotiation of meaning between supervisors and students (Bocock, 2007; Alhaidari, 2018).

Based on this rationale, this article aims to describe and analyze the forms and functions of charismatic pedagogical directive speech acts within dissertation supervision practices at the Doctoral Program in Language and Literature Education (PBS),

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State University of Surabaya. This study is expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of pragmasyntactic inquiry and practical implications for enhancing the quality of academic communication between lecturers and students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section describes the literature review that is the basis of this research.

2.1 Speech Act Theory and Directive Utterances

Speech act theory forms a foundational pillar in modern pragmatic studies. Austin (1962) introduced three dimensions of linguistic acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Within this framework, directive utterances are classified as illocutionary acts aimed at influencing the interlocutor's actions, such as commanding, requesting, advising, or suggesting (Searle, 1971). Fitria (2019) asserts that directive speech acts can be expressed through various syntactic forms—not only imperative sentences but also rhetorical questions and declarative forms that function instructively.

Directive utterances cannot be separated from their social context. As noted by Culpeper and Haugh (2021), the form and meaning of a speech act are strongly shaped by power relations, social positioning, and politeness orientation in communication. In academic supervision, directive utterances are not merely technical instructions but also instruments of scholarly leadership.

2.2 Pedagogical Utterances and Ethical Academic Communication

Pedagogical and charismatic communication styles reflect the character of a supervisor who is not only academically competent but also skilled in fostering ethical communication and building dialogical relationships. Freire (2014) rejected oppressive and unilateral pedagogical styles (the “banking concept”) and advocated for a dialogical and transformative approach. In supervisory practice, this translates into guiding students with empathy, patience, and respect for their intellectual autonomy—rather than through authoritarian dominance.

Djamarah (2016) and Sardiman (2017) emphasize the importance of communication that fosters learning motivation. A charismatic lecturer is respected not merely due to institutional authority but because of their ability to touch students' affective dimensions. This style fosters a supervisory atmosphere that is cooperative, constructive, and oriented toward students' academic growth (Lambey et al., 2017; Saputra, 2022).

2.3 The Pragmasyntactic Approach in Language Studies

Pragmasyntax is an approach that explores the relationship between syntactic structure and the pragmatic function of utterances in language use. Leech (1983) and Rahardi (2000) emphasize that pragmatic meaning cannot be separated from the grammatical forms used in specific contexts. Sentence types—whether declarative, interrogative, or imperative—can express various illocutionary functions depending on the situation, speaker intention, and social relationship involved.

The pragmasyntactic framework is particularly relevant for illustrating how language structures are strategically employed to convey social intentions such as directing, warning, or motivating (Nadar, 2009; Rahardi, 2019). In the context of dissertation supervision, pragmasyntax enables analysis of how supervisors select specific syntactic forms to frame academic messages in ways that are both effective and humanistic.

2.4 Academic Communication and Power Dynamics

The relationship between doctoral supervisors and students entails symbolic hegemony and epistemic authority (Bocock, 2007). In such a relationship, supervisors hold a dominant position within the academic hierarchy. However, this dominance need not manifest in repressive communication. Alhaidari (2018) demonstrates that power in discourse can be negotiated through utterances that reflect agency, trust, and mutual respect.

Studies by Raymonda et al. (2016) and Rahmayanti & Fajar (2020) reveal that the sociopragmatic characteristics of speech acts are significantly shaped by sociocultural contexts, including politeness norms and institutional expectations. Therefore, it is crucial for supervisors to understand that each speech act choice carries pragmatic consequences that influence the effectiveness of academic communication and the overall supervisory climate.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach with an orientation toward the ethnography of communication (Hymes in Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010; Anshori, 2017; Kuswarno, 2011). The qualitative paradigm was chosen because the primary focus of this research was on the meaning, context, and speech strategies used by supervisors during dissertation supervision interactions. The ethnography of communication was applied to explore the speech situation, social roles, and interactional norms within the formal academic domain.

The research was conducted within the Doctoral Program in Language and Literature Education (PBS), State University of Surabaya, focusing on the interaction between dissertation supervisors (promoters/co-promoters) and doctoral students in supervision forums.

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The primary data consisted of supervisors' verbal utterances recorded during both in-person and online dissertation supervision sessions (via Zoom/Google Meet). Supplementary data included non-verbal observation notes, academic profiles of the supervisors, and administrative supervision documents. Data collection was carried out using three main techniques, (1) Passive-participant observation, in which the researcher attended supervision sessions to observe communication practices without direct intervention; (2) Audio recordings, conducted with participants' consent to capture the original forms of the utterances; and (3) In-depth interviews with both supervisors and students to explore their understanding of communicative styles, speech meanings, and supervisory dynamics.

Data were analyzed using a pragmasyntactic model, which integrates the analysis of syntactic forms with the pragmatic meanings of speech acts (Leech, 1983; Rahardi, 2000; Nadar, 2009). The stages of analysis included:

- a) Identifying syntactic forms of directive utterances (imperative, declarative, interrogative);
- b) Classifying illocutionary functions based on the taxonomy of directive speech acts (e.g., commanding, advising, suggesting);
- c) Analyzing socio-pragmatic contexts, such as status relations, speaker intentions, and politeness strategies (Culpeper, 2021);
- d) Interpreting pedagogical and rhetorical dimensions, particularly to assess the charismatic and constructive elements in supervisors' speech.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Variants of Directive Utterances

The analysis revealed that supervisors employed various forms of directive utterances in dissertation supervision forums. These utterances displayed diverse syntactic structures and strategic illocutionary functions, reflecting the supervisor's position as an academic authority who also maintains ethical and humanistic relationships with students. The following data excerpts illustrate these forms and functions in detail:

D-01–Direct Command (Imperative):

Coba revisi bagian pendahuluan, usahakan penjelasannya lebih argumentatif. 'Try revising the introduction section, and make the explanation more argumentative.'

Explanation: The supervisor uses a direct imperative mitigated by the word "*coba*" (try), which softens the command. The tone is firm but non-coercive, conveying empathetic authority.

D-02 – Polite Request (Interrogative):

Mungkin kamu bisa mengecek kembali konsistensi kutipan di Bab 2? 'Perhaps you could recheck the consistency of the citations in Chapter 2?'

Explanation: The directive function is framed as a rhetorical question. Rather than instructing directly, the supervisor opens reflective space.

D-03 – Suggestion (Declarative):

Saya kira, akan lebih kuat kalau kamu menggunakan teori dari Searle juga. 'I think it would be stronger if you also used Searle's theory.'

Explanation: A declarative sentence with a suggestive illocution. This style demonstrates charismatic authority that encourages the student intellectually.

D-04 – Prohibition (Imperative):

Jangan pakai istilah 'analisis kritis biasa', itu terlalu umum. 'Don't use the term 'general critical analysis'; it's too vague.'

Explanation: The supervisor states a prohibition but provides a rational justification. It is critical yet constructive.

D-05 – Recommendation (Declarative):

Pendekatan etnososiopragmatik sepertinya cocok untuk topik Anda, coba dipertimbangkan. 'The ethnosociopragmatic approach seems suitable for your topic—please consider it.'

Explanation: A recommendation that preserves student autonomy. This reflects respect for intellectual independence.

D-06 – Collaborative Invitation (Declarative):

Mari kita coba petakan dulu masalah utamanya, nanti baru kita tentukan metodologinya. 'Let's first try to map out the core problem, then we can determine the methodology.'

Explanation: The supervisor includes themselves in the student's thought process, promoting academic collaboration.

D-07 – Academic Warning (Imperative):

Hati-hati kalau pakai data itu, bisa menimbulkan bias pada interpretasi.

'Be careful using that data—it may cause bias in the interpretation'

Explanation: The supervisor offers guidance without being dismissive. This illustrates a responsible pedagogical stance.

D-08 – Corrective Evaluation (Interrogative):

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Apakah argumen yang ada pada bagian hasil sudah menunjukkan relevansi dengan teori utama? ‘Do the arguments in the findings section demonstrate relevance to the main theory?’

Explanation: This question goes beyond clarification; it encourages critical reflection. These utterances can be classified and summarized in the following table:

Table: Categories of Directive Utterances and Syntactic Forms

Code	Utterance Type	Syntactic Form	Illocutionary Function	Pedagogical Trait
D-01	Direct command	Imperative	Instructing revision	Firm, yet friendly
D-02	Polite request	Interrogative	Asking for redrafting	Humble, cooperative
D-03	Suggestion	Declarative	Recommending a source	Builds academic trust
D-04	Prohibition	Imperative	Prohibiting a vague expression	Critical but respectful
D-05	Recommendation	Declarative	Recommending an approach	Allows intellectual freedom
D-06	Collaborative invitation	Declarative	Inviting co-construction	Appreciates contribution
D-07	Academic warning	Imperative	Cautioning methodological risk	Wise, scholarly guidance
D-08	Corrective evaluation	Interrogative	Assessing argumentative logic	Stimulates critical awareness

This table demonstrates that various syntactic forms can serve similar communicative purposes, but their pragmatic effects are strongly shaped by social context and the supervisor's communicative disposition. These findings indicate that directive practices in dissertation supervision cannot be analyzed solely through syntactic structures. A pragmasyntactic approach is necessary to understand how sentence forms function within a socially hierarchical yet collaborative interactional setting.

In the utterances above, imperative sentences were employed judiciously and non-repressively, often mitigated by politeness markers (Leech, 1983). Interrogative sentences were used to deliver indirect directives, conveying respect for student autonomy (Searle, 1971). Declarative forms were frequently chosen as a means of suggestion or academic guidance without coercion (Freire, 2014). From a sociopragmatic perspective, the supervisors' utterances reflected scholarly leadership grounded in ethical communication. The supervisor–student relationship was not coercive but anchored in charismatic pedagogical influence, shaped by academic competence and humanistic values (Alhaidari, 2018; Bocock, 2007). Thus, pedagogical and charismatic directive styles effectively enhance academic communication, increase student motivation, and foster a dialogical and constructive supervision environment.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the pragmasyntactic analysis of supervisors' utterances in dissertation supervision at the Doctoral Program in Language and Literature Education (PBS), State University of Surabaya, the following conclusions can be drawn, (1) The directive speech acts employed by supervisors encompassed various types, including direct commands, polite requests, suggestions, prohibitions, recommendations, collaborative invitations, academic warnings, and corrective evaluations. This diversity indicates that supervisors do not rely on a single approach in delivering guidance but instead adapt their directives to the academic and psychological contexts of the students. (2) The syntactic forms of directive speech acts were not limited to imperatives but also included declaratives and interrogatives, which were strategically used to mitigate power, avoid dominance, and foster equitable academic dialogue. (3) The supervisors' communication style was pedagogical and charismatic rather than authoritarian, dominant, or militaristic. Their utterances reflected traits such as friendly firmness, respect for student autonomy, academic politeness, and the capacity to foster collaboration and critical reflection. (4) The power dynamics within supervision forums were cooperative and dialogical rather than repressively hegemonic. This demonstrates that academic hegemony can be exercised ethically through discursive practices that embody responsible scholarly leadership. (5) The pragmasyntactic approach has proven effective in elucidating the relationship between linguistic form and the social function of utterances, particularly in the context of complex and nuanced formal academic interactions.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on pragmasyntax by presenting empirical data from the domain of doctoral-level academic communication. It also reinforces the importance of integrating pragmatics and syntax to understand the social functions of speech acts in hierarchical relationships. Practically, the findings of this study may serve as a pedagogical reflection for supervisors to refine their communication styles toward being more constructive, effective, and respectful of students' dignity. Furthermore, the Faculty of Language and Arts Postgraduate Program at Unesa can utilize these findings as a foundation for ethical academic communication training in dissertation supervision. Lastly, doctoral students may come to understand that dissertation supervision is a dialogical process—not merely one-way instruction—thus encouraging them to engage actively and reflectively with their supervisors' guidance.

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