

Moral values representation in primary school English textbooks: An analysis of speech acts

Harun Arwanto¹, Djatmika², Nur Arifah Drajati³

^{1,2,3} English Education Department, Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

*) correspondence: harunary17@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Moral values are inextricably connected to society's daily life. Those values should be instilled to the students through school subjects, including English, since the primary level as mandated by the Indonesian Government to build character education. Several researches on moral values representation in textbooks have been increasing in recent years, however, little evidence reports how speech acts are used to represent moral values in speaking activities in English textbooks for primary school students. This qualitative study aims (1) to identify the kinds of speech acts used to show moral values and (2) to investigate the representation of moral values in speaking activities in two English textbooks produced by national publishers. The data were collected through documentary analysis to find the utterances which indicated the speech acts. Then the data were analyzed by applying six steps: unitizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, inferring, and narrating (Krippendorff, 2004). The findings show that Expressive and Directive are the most dominant speech acts in 5th-grade English textbook, while Assertive is the speech act with the highest percentage in 4th-grade book which represent moral values in speaking activities. Moreover, honesty and curiosity are the most dominant values depicted in two elementary school English textbooks.

Keywords: English textbooks; moral value; primary school; speech act

INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of moral values into school lessons in primary education has been a global issue. Researchers believe that moral or character education has to be conducted and infused into school lessons from the early years of students to assist them develop into morally mature individuals who can think and act morally (Ryan, 1986). In addition, one of the the best strategies to do it is through curriculum integration which allows students obtain several exposure to the implementation of cross-curricular guidelines and certain schools subject as history and language (Morris & Morris, 1999). In integrating moral values into school subjects, both teachers and textbooks have a vital role. Teachers act to give direct instruction and real examples of such moral values while textbooks, as silent partners of teachers, help instill moral values through learning contents and tasks.

English as one of the school subjects must integrate moral values into the lessons in primary and secondary education with no exception. In general, it is impossible to divorce the teaching of moral or character values from the teaching of English because English teachers need to infuse several values through stories or examples into teaching English to build students' character. In doing so, teachers can use textbooks that consist of particular values alongside language skills material. In the Indonesian context, the government has instructed the textbooks' author or publication to integrate the 18 values as what has been written in the 2013 Curriculum about grand character education guidelines. The moral values integration in English textbooks can be represented in the form of tasks or directions via visual (image) or textual (written) text.

Speech act is a sub-field of pragmatics that studies not only the meaning of an utterance but also the action carried out by the utterance. Through the analysis of speech act someone's intention and moral can be identified. The theory of Speech Act was first initiated by J. L. Austin in 1956. Austin stated that the theory of speech act refers to the action that is carried out by a speaker when he/she says an utterance (Austin, 1962). For example, someone produces a speech act of request

when he/she says “Can you give me that pen, please?”. However, this theory was then well-known in the linguistics field after Searle wrote and published his book about Speech Act in 1969. In his book, Searle mentioned such classifications of illocutionary acts as assertive, commissive, declarative, directive, and expressive to explain the purpose of an utterance produced by a speaker. Each classification of speech act has several functions (stating, commanding, promising, thanking, and baptizing) to express the speaker’s intention.

Several studies related to the analysis of moral values in textbooks have been undertaken in the last decade. Most of the studies (Feng, 2019; Sulistiyo et al., 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2021) investigated primary school textbooks and some of them focused on the representation of moral values both in visual (image) and written text, while the rest only focused on the written text. They used semiotic theory (Feng, 2019; Sulistiyo et al., 2020) and other theories (language appraisal, visual grammar, and social domain) to reveal what moral values that are taught through the textbooks. On the other hand, this study used the speech act theory proposed by Searle (1969) to identify the kinds of speech acts used to represent moral values and investigate the moral values portrayed in English textbooks for primary school grade 4th and 5th in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study is a qualitative study with a content analysis design. The data were gathered from two English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks for grades 4th and 5th primary school in Indonesia published by one of the national publishers. The data was collected through document analysis to find certain utterances that are indicated as speech acts and represent particular moral values. The data was then analyzed by using such steps as unitizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, inferring, and narrating (Krippendorff, 2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis shows that not all kinds of speech acts are used in the textbooks to represent moral values. As shown in Table 1, only Assertive speech act is dominantly used in grade 4th textbook, while Expressive and Directive speech acts have the same proportion in representing moral values in the textbook for grade 5th.

TABLE 1. Kinds of Speech Act in the English Textbooks

Speech Act	Grade 5 th		Grade 4 th	
	F	%	F	%
Assertive	7	18,9	27	56,2
Commissive	2	5,4	0	0
Declarative	0	0	0	0
Directive	14	37,8	20	41,6
Expressive	14	37,8	1	2,1
	37	100	48	100

Analyzing the speech act of an utterance is important to understand and identify the intention of the speaker. The finding of this study reveals that not all speech act is designed for elementary school textbooks. It is similar to the previous study conducted by Vaezi et al. (2014) that show that assertive, directive, and expressive are the speech act mostly used in EFL textbooks for kids. These three speech acts frequently appear and are employed to portray moral values because it is important to provide examples that are perceived to be easier for students in primary schools to accept and understand in their daily life. For example, when someone uses assertive speech act, he or she tries to state what he or she believes about something. Yule (1996) said that if the speaker utters an assertive speech act, he or she makes the words fit the world (of belief). Moreover, when the speaker uses expressive speech act, it means he or she wants to express his or her feeling about certain situations such as likes, dislikes, pain, joy, and others. While directive speech act is used by

the speaker to get someone to do something through commanding, ordering, requesting, and others. The dialogue below is one of the examples.

Made : *What is Cici doing?* (Directive – Asking)
 Joshua : *She is reading a book.* (Assertive – Stating)
 (My Next Words for Elementary School 4, p. 6)

In addition, there are several moral values that are identified from the two textbooks as shown in Table 2. Each textbook has a different proportion of moral values. However, the values contained in the books are quite similar. Honesty, curiosity, friendliness, social awareness, respect the others, and peace-loving are moral values that are taught to the students in grade 5th. On the other hand, there are four different values such as love to read, self-discipline, independence, and hard work that are depicted in English textbook for primary school students in grade 4th. This finding differs from earlier ones (Sulistiyo et al., 2020) which revealed that the most predominantly moral values emphasized in EFL textbooks for Indonesian primary school students are helping others, being polite, and caring. While the other study (Puspitasari et al., 2021) demonstrated that the most prevalent moral values portrayed in the English language textbooks used in elementary schools for grades 4, 5, and 6 are helping others, being friendly and polite, and tolerance.

TABLE 2. Moral values represented through Speech Act in the English textbooks

Moral values	Grade 5 th		Grade 4 th	
	F	%	F	%
Friendliness	4	10,8	-	-
Peace-loving	2	5,4	1	2,1
Respect for others	3	8,1	1	2,1
Honesty	13	35,1	14	29,1
Curiosity	10	27	20	41,6
Social awareness	5	13,5	-	-
Love to read	-	-	3	6,2
Self-discipline	-	-	6	12,5
Independence	-	-	2	4,2
Hard work	-	-	1	2,1
	37	100	48	100

Curiosity is an eager desire to know or learn about something. When students are curious about something, they will be more critical to know something deeper about what they learn, see, or hear (Pusat Kurikulum [Center for Curriculum Development], 2010). It may lead students to get information about what they want to know by asking someone. The dialogue below is an example of how textbook writers infuse the moral value of curiosity through a simple utterance for kids. In the dialogue, Cici wants to know about the activity Aisyah doing in her classroom. She tries to get information about what she sees by asking Aisyah.

Cici : *What are you doing?*
 Aisyah : *I am cleaning the table.*

(My Next Words for Elementary School 4, p. 1)

Furthermore, honesty is a moral value with the higher percentage found in textbook for grade 5th. This value emphasizes the action of being trustworthy in terms of words, actions, and work (Pusat Kurikulum [Center for Curriculum Development], 2010). It is taught students produce an utterance based on the reality of what they see, hear, or know without a doubt. In the dialogue, Cici is asking Aisyah about the ice cream taste because may she does not know about it. Then, Aisyah is saying that the taste of ice cream is sweet. This utterance gives an example of honesty by saying what Aisyah really knows about the ice cream taste and conveys it to Cici.

Cici : *How does ice cream taste?*
Aisyah : *It tastes sweet.*

(*My Next Words for Elementary School 5*, p. 8)

CONCLUSION

This study aims to find speech acts and moral values represented in English textbooks for primary school students. The finding shows that the representation of both speech acts and moral values is uneven. There is a speech act (Declarative) and 8 moral values of 18 moral values mandated by the National Education Ministry that have not been portrayed in these two books. However, textbook writers may want to emphasize and focus on those speech acts and moral values because such speech acts and values are the foundation for communicating with others in real-life situations. It means that teaching a certain language can be integrated with several moral values to build students' character.

Drawing on our empirical findings, we suggest that in order to portray balanced speech acts and moral values in the language textbooks, curriculum and textbook designers need to have an in-depth awareness of the subject content. The writers of the textbooks may include more examples of moral values and speech acts in various contexts to teach the students about both language competencies and students' characters. Suggestion for future studies to be more focused on the representation of speech acts and moral values in international textbooks or compare the contents of speech acts and moral values in both local and international books.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Feng, W. D. (2019). Infusing moral education into English language teaching: an ontogenetic analysis of social values in EFL textbooks in Hong Kong. *Discourse*, 40(4), 458–473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2017.1356806>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Morris, P., & Morris, E. (1999). Civic education in Hong Kong: From depoliticisation to Chinese values. *International Journal of Social Education*, 14(1), 1–18.
- Pusat Kurikulum [Center for Curriculum Development]. (2010). *Pengembangan Pendidikan budaya dan karakter bangsa [Character education development]*. Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan, Pusat Kurikulum.
- Puspitasari, D., Widodo, H. P., Widyaningrum, L., Allamnakhrah, A., & Lestariyana, R. P. D. (2021). How do primary school English textbooks teach moral values? A critical discourse analysis. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101044>
- Ryan, K. (1986). The new moral education. *Phi-Delta-Kappan*, 68(4), 228–233.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts; an essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sulistiyo, U., Supiani, Kailani, A., & Lestariyana, R. P. D. (2020). Infusing moral content into primary school english textbooks: A critical discourse analysis. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 251–260. <https://doi.org/10.17509/IJAL.V10I1.25067>
- Vaezi, R., Tabatabaei, S., & Bakhtiarvand, M. (2014). A Comparative Study of Speech-acts in the Textbooks by Native and Non-native Speakers: A Pragmatic Analysis of New Interchange Series vs. Locally-made EFL Textbooks. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(1), 167–180.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.