The Use of Assertive and Directive Speech Acts among Preschool Students in Samarahan, Sarawak

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Abstract
This study was conducted to identify the types of speech acts used by school students when they interact with teachers and peers at Sekolah Kebangsaan Saint Michael Entingan Kota Samarahan Sarawak. Language acquisition and language development of children still occurs at their age between 5 and 6 years (Piaget, 1964; Saxton, 2017). The data collected involves video recordings, observations and interviews while students are learning and carrying out activities, playing and interacting with teachers and peers. This study was also conducted to identify speech acts which are the concept of interaction to form effective communication among school students. Of the total number of speech acts, the directive speech act that is assertive is the most dominant and most frequently used act, which is 69.9% while the combination of the frequency patterns of preschool children have used Assertive + Directive speech act 79% while communicating. Pragmatic studies with the use of speech acts in pre-school level need to be carried out to strengthen and complement existing studies, because it brings benefits to educators to help them plan teaching methods and activities according to the level of children's language development more effectively.
Keyword: Speech Act, Preschool Chidren, Ethnicity, Positif Thingking

Introduction
Language acquisition and development occur through the influence of the environment. The language development process is one's level of ability to learn and use words to communicate with other people. Language development is a language function and a tool to connect people together- it is possessed by humans including children who have undergone the language development process. Children's language development is a linguistic function they use to learn and speak, also to understand the language as a tool for them to connect. This second language, Malay Language, is the language used by the various races- it is in fact, common for one to meet and use more than one language in their everyday communication (Choi, Chang, (2017). Thus, there are several different mother tongues that can be identified in this country. Malay Language takes the centre stage as the official

language in Malaysia, where it is the mother tongue of the majority of the Malay ethnic group, and it is also the second language which is also the language used by various races in the country. Children are able to learn new things, consciously or not, from their family members, teachers and peers. Communication between adults and children can aid the latter's language development. Children's efficiency depends on how frequent the communication occurs. Thus, the frequency of the use of a certain speech act by pre-school children can be influenced by the people around them such as family members, teachers, peers and others (Piaget, 1964; Jalongo, 1992; Saxton, 2017).

This research examines the use of speech act according to Searle's classification in the interactions among pre-school children. School-level early education can influence changes in the children's behaviour when using their respective speech acts. In the educational aspect, teachers play a substantial role in education as the focus of this study rests on identifying the types of speech acts adopted by students and teachers in the class interactions. Speech acts are embodied in a framework that demonstrates the use of the language presented by the acts through the characterising scenarios. This speech act aspect serves as a narration of incidents due to the influence of the language they speak.

Speech acts have a framework that displays the use of the language presented by the act, through characterising incidents. The speech uttered is a narrated incident, due to the influence of the language uttered. The speech acts being under the scrutiny are introduced by Austin (1962). The concept of speech acts was introduced by Austin (1962) in his lecture at Harvard University in 1955. The lecture was documented and published entitled "*How to Do Thing with Words*"in 1962. The work was later expanded by Searle who later published the book "*Speech Acts*" (1969). Every utterance produced will give a correct proposition about the speech acts as they play an important role in producing words and they enable the entire formation of of speaker's speech acts related to the action they do. Based on the Speech Act Theory, (Austin (1962) and through Searle (1969), speech acts are divided into five categories. Searle (1969:34 Mey 2002:120): they are *(a) represgetive, (b) directive, (c) commissive, (d) expressive, and (e) declarations.* The representive speech act is the assertion about certain situations in the world. Searle (1969) sees the language uttered as having its own speech act - this means taking note of the speeches of individuals. When an individual is involved, they will be bound by some regulations where a speech act classification will ensue, ready for some communicative action

Problem Statement
Pre-school children's language acquisition and language development can influence the use of their language in the speech act they use. Their efficiency in acquiring language depends on the frequenc of the communication occurring. Thus, the frequency of use of certain speech acts by pre-school children can be influenced by the people around them such as family members, teachers, friends and other people (Piaget, 1964; Jalongo, 1992; Saxton, 2017). This study examines the use of speech acts according to Searle's classification in the interactions among pre-school children. Early education at the pre-school level can influence children's change of behaviour in using the speech acts. In the educational aspect, pre-school teachers carry a significant role in children's early education as the focus of this study is to identify types of speech act used by pre-school children and teachers in the class interactions that take place. This will further raise the awareness to teachers to plan the method and activities that

cater to a more effective pre-school children's language development, in order to motivate and guide their development and efficiency at such a young age.

For the directive speech act done by the pre-school children during learning, it has forms of speech act that are often used in teaching and learning. Ibrahim Ahmad (2012) explained that the Ibanese students' behaviour primarily encompasses learning a foreign language both formally and informally. Thus, the use of speech acts that fulfils the context of utterances to the teacher when teacher is giving instructions in class and in the process of developing learning works very well, due to the fact that the speech act can help teachers become the best guides. It is noted that there are many courteous and polite speech acts, which raises the awareness of how important it is to practise good moral values among pre-school children in their daily lives.

According to Magdeline dan Zamri (2016), the Ibanese language has been regarded as one of the Malay Language dialects, but the reality remains that it is a difficult language to be mastered by the Ibanese speakers if they do not have the basic knowledge and they lack the exposure from Malay Language as evident in many rural areas. With this in mind, this study is able to identify the pattern of speech acts used between the pre-school children and their teachers when they communicate in Malay Language.

Past Literature
There are several past studies that have established the discussion about the use of children's speech acts namely the works of (Wang & Chen, 2014; Özge Gül, 2014; Takada & Endo, 2015; Safont- Jordà, 2013; Ogiermann, 2015; Georgalidou, 2008; Kanngiesser, Köymen & Tomasello, 2017).Most of these studies only examined directive speech act (Özge Gül, 2014 ; Safont-Jordà, 2013; Ogiermann, 2015; Takada & Endo, 2015).

Amir Juhari (2015) explained that pragmatics is the field that studies human acts which relate to non-linguistic studies and language symbols. There are also direct acts explaining that what is stated is not as accurate as what is implied. Acts like this are harder to be implemented as there is another added phase that must be undergone, which is the phase of transferring the literal meaning to the indirect meaning. Even so, the type of speech act is influenced by the power of the spoken language, owing to the fact that understanding language development is thought to be very important as it signals the occurrence of language acquisition in humans. From birth, humans have experienced a form of language akin to the multi-form of curriculum.

Methodology
This study is a form of exposure to the teachers, with regard to the level of speech acts in the language used among race-based preschool children at 5 and 6 years old. Through this study, teachers are able to be informed about the level of speech act used by the preschool students in their daily communication. It can also raise the awareness among teachers to plan the teaching method and activities based on the level of language development that is more effective to motivate and guide preschool students' language development and efficiency.
The directive speech act of the preschool students when learning, have forms of speech act that are often uttered in teaching and learning. Ibrahim Ahmad (2012) explained that Ibanese students largely learn foreign language formally and informally. Thus, the use of speech acts

that fulfills the context of utterance to the teacher when they give instructions in class, can work successfully because the speech acts function as a facilitator. It has been mentioned earlier that there are a lot of polite speech acts, which brings us to the awareness of how important it is to instil and practice good moral values in daily life, especially among the preschool children.

According to Magdeline and Zamri (2016), the Ibanese language has been regarded as one of the dialects in the Malay Language, but it is difficult for Ibanese speakers to master it, if they do not have the basic knowledge and lack the exposure towards the Malay Language, which is common in rural areas.With that, this study is able to identify the pattern of speech act use between preschool students and teachers when they speak in Malay Language.

Haslinda Saad (2012) made a justification that speech act is a framework that showcases the use of language that represents the speech act. The language stated has at least one speech act as there is naturally no boundaries between language and communication. The two-way interaction will cause the speech act to occur similar to the situation in school, where a lot of speech acts are formed through the language characteristics done by preschool students. These are formal and informal speech acts. The formal speech act refers to the process of learning in class, or the planned learning the children undergo with their teacher. Meanwhile, the informal speech acts find their basis from students' discussions with their friends or family members, or anyone involved in the free or planned interaction among them. Such relationships are the grounds on which speech acts are formulated, with the ratio around 7:10 being among adults. Speech acts have provided some implications to the form and meaning of words used in the context of diverse types and characteristics of human behaviour.

There is no denying that behaviour differs from one to another, and time proves to be an obstacle in the unequal relationships in the social scheme. If this is the case, it is definite that there are various patterns of social behaviour among preschool students that accompany their formation of character when they are at school. This process is one that triggers the combined formation of speech acts which is a combination of mother tongue, mixed language and Standard Malay Language which will then form a mediator language for the preschool students to communicate with their peers at school. Arniati (2019) asserted that human language development is part of the cognitive development such as the language development that is inevitable and will occur throughout their lifetime, governed by various interacting factors like biological, cognitive and socio-emotional effects.

As stated, the interaction is formed due to the social environment at home and then, through the society that has the potential to determine their level of language skills at school. Speech acts is a way for all students to form words that are appropriate with the concept of polite words in all aspects of their lives. A good speech act will generate good interactions and in a larger scale, it can provide a conducive learning environment to the school. That being stressed, the approach to instil the form of the speech acts need to be in line with the efforts promoted in this study, whereby preschool children become the main focus in the issue of first language mastery. They will strive to master their first language to enable them to communicate with the society around them.

As established in the Speech Act Theory, speech acts are characterised by language and not based on any observed situation; it is based on the speech concept that occurs according to Searle's hypothesis (1969 :16) where talking in a language means including oneself in a form of act that is bound with the rules of the language spoken. Based on Searle's Speech Act (1969- to 1976) the five types of speech act and their role are established to prove that the theory raised carries information that is compatible with the study conducted.

Study Questions
There are several questions serving as the focal points of this study:
1. What are the speech acts used in the interactions between teachers and preschool children in preschool classrooms' teaching and learning?
2. What are the types of speech act used by the preschool children?
3. How is speech act analysed?
4. What is the conclusion about the pattern of speech acts adopted by preschool children?

Study Objective
The purpose of this study is to examine the types of speech act found in the interactions between preschool students and teachers and peers in teaching and learning. It is hoped that this study is able to identify the differences in the use of types of speech act among preschool students in communication. The study's objectives are as follows;

1. To identify the speech acts used in school
2. To analyse the speech acts used by preschool students
3. To conclude on the pattern of speech acts among preschool students

Study Design
The study design of this study is case study. It entails the collection of information in detail and in a systematic way with regard to individual behaviour and certain social circumstances to know how the changes take place.

Study Subject
The choice of study sample takes into account the age of the children, their language background and ethnicity. The data collected needs to fulfil the predetermined study objectives so that the study can be conducted smoothly and precisely. There were twenty five preschool students involved in the study conducted.

Instrument
The study instrument comprises of video recording, interview and observation. The video recording was used to record the interactions taking place between the preschool children and a Malay Language teacher.

Discussion
Searle's Speech Act Framework (1969-1976)
Various tools from several resources were used to assess the level of speech act mastery according to the capability of the study subject, to encourage the speech to be done in various ways. In a stipulated amount of time, the preschool children were able to follow the instructions, with considerations obtained through their parents' permission. Throughout the

activity, researchers were able to detect several classifiable weaknesses shown by the Ibanese students in the process of understanding inclusive education, and which can serve as an additional material. Table 1 explains the speech acts introduced by Searle (1969 to 1976).

Table 1
Descriptions of Searle's Speech Acts (1969-1976)

of speech acts	Descriptions of Searle's Speech Acts (1969-1976)
Representive	Speaker states the right proposition following the circumstance that takes place
Declaration	The performance of the speaker who manages to connect the content of the speech with reality
Expressive	Speaker gives an honest psychological statement about a circumstance
Directive	Speaker's attempt to make the listener do something
Commissive	Illocutionary act that binds the speaker to do an action in the future

Based on Table 2 below, from the study outcome, it is found that preschool students have resorted to illocutionary speeches where their various needs and suggestions were based on what they could see in front of them when the test was done. The video recording assisted the teacher to give feedback to the teaching stimulus. Referring to the Table, the score interpretation explains the outcome of the score percentage obtained for the next course of action to formulate an intervention, with focus given to the daily observation of the children's speech act development in preschool class activities. Five levels were used to look for the score level, for determining if the preschool students have mastered the particular speech acts. Based on the observation, it was concluded that the three-week data gathered to obtain the speech act acquisition, have managed to show that all groups had carried out the recommended activities.

Table 2
Interpretation of the Score Percentage

Score Percentage	Interpretation
1 to 3	Very Low
3 to 5	Low
4 to 6	Moderate
6 to 8	High
8 to 10	Very High

Also from the observation, it is conclusive that the data have given a clear picture that all the groups had carried out the activities recommended. The study subjects were observed to have been able to demonstrate speech act behaviour in various situations. Details as given below:

Table 3

Daily Observation

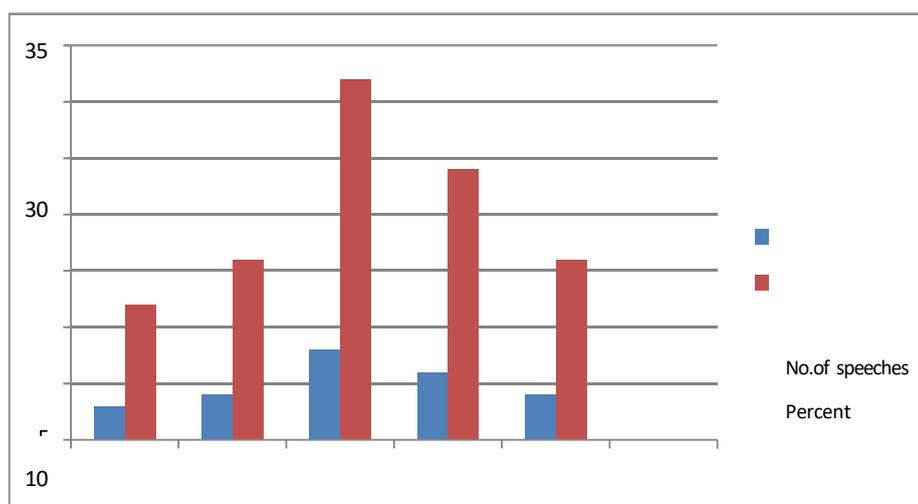| No	Observation Time	Speech Act and Behaviour Shown	Total Interactions
1	7.30-7.50 am	Group 1 (5 people)	6 (high)
2	7.50-8.10 am	Group 2 (5 people)	4 (trial and error)
3	8.00-8.20 am	Group 3 (4 people)	6 (high)
4	8.20-8.50 am	Group 4 (4 people)	7 (high)
5	8.50-9.10 am	Group 5 (3 people)	4 (trial and error)
6	9.10-9.20 am	Group 6 (4 people)	5 (successful)

Diagram 1. Graph of Advisory speech act

The advisory speech act is the one speech act that was mostly used when children were in the activity, which is 8 or 32% from the overall data obtained. Through the scores shown, a systematic method to know the mastery level from 25 preschool students obtained scores similar to the achievement ratio. Meanwhile, the requestive speech act was mostly used which is up to 45% from the total score. Through the scores, the requestive speech act was the choice among preschool students and the score was almost the same as the actual achievement ratio. In conclusion, two speech acts namely requestive speech act and advisory speech act were able to help researchers evaluate the level of mastery, in terms of the speech pattern adopted by the preschool students.
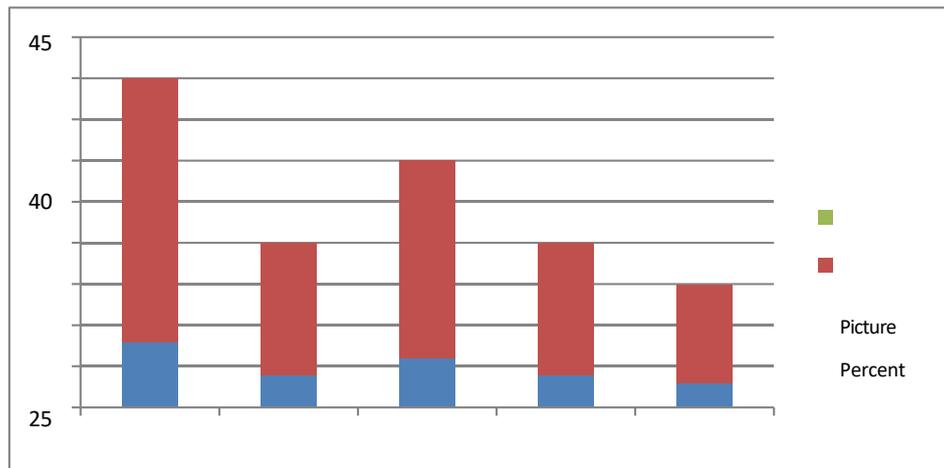
Diagram 2. Graph of Requestive speech act

Diagram 2. Graph of Requestive speech act

Pattern of Speech Acts
In Malay Language, pattern is associated with the event or object. Through language, pattern is associated with subject and predicate. Both are related to build simple sentences as spoken by Ibanese at school. The pattern of frequency of language speech act in the class activities has helped researchers to build an interpretative pattern for the speech act score and descriptive analysis to see the study questions based on the use of speech acts shown in the Table below. The aim is to examine the level of speech act language development occurring among preschool children.

Table 4
The interpretative pattern of speech acts according to Searle's Theory (1969)

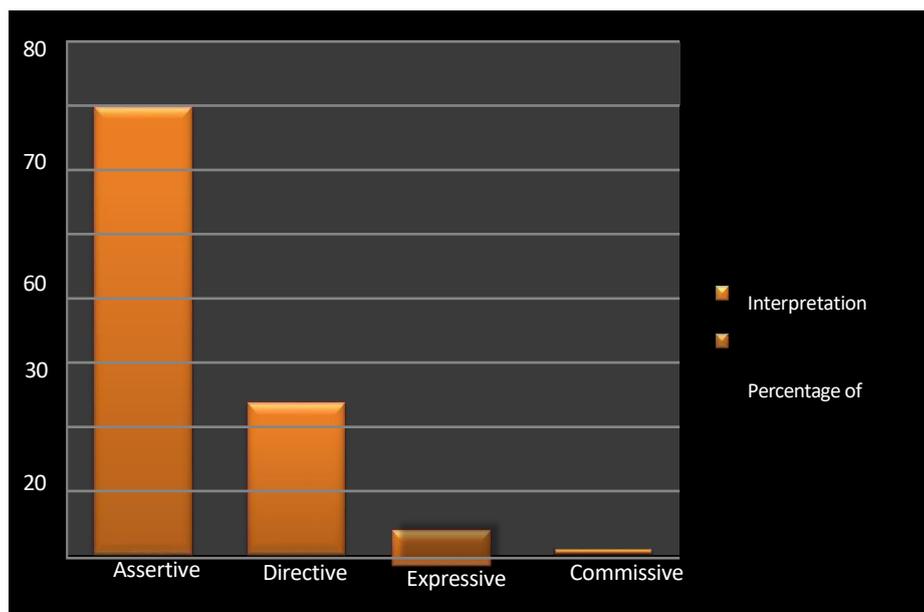| Score of the type of speech act	Interpretation
70 to 80	Very high
50 to 60	High
30 to 40	Moderate
0 to 10	Low

Diagram 3. Graph showing the five speech acts

Leaning on Searle's Theory (1969), the speech acts classified into five types namely Assertive, Directive, Commissive and Declarative have different utterances, respectively. Based on the analysis, the percentage of speech acts is as follows- Assertive 79.9% Directive 23.8%, Expressive 5.60% and Commissive 0.86%. The speech act Assertive is the speech act for children to form their own language and they use it among themselves. Through the data, and referring to the speech acts' frequency, Assertive + Directive displays a very high frequency which is 79%. The data suggests that this study has been able to delve into the speech act used in the school activities. It is discovered that the directive speech act was used when they communicate in the classroom. In other words, a pragmatic approach was used, focusing on forms of directive speech act used by teacher and students in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) is very appropriate to showcase the communicate relationship between the speaker and listener, to understand more about the speaker's intended meaning. Thus, the change in the interactive behaviour between the children and their mother, and the verbal and non-verbal change in different contexts serve as a predictor of children's language development, a set of social regulations that emerges in the family structure. From the speech act analysis, it continues to state that the speech act Assertive has catapulted to a high frequency percentage due to the frequency of the language used by the pre-school children, making the score pattern highly satisfactory and making it able to provide feedback on our study's third objective that pre-school children were able to commit to the patterns of speech acts very well.

Table 5
Speech Act Interpretation Patterns

Types of Speech Act	Percentage of Frequency	Interpretation
Assertive + Directive	79 %	Very high
Directive + Assertive	8.9 %	Moderate
Expressive + Assertive	4.5 %	Moderately Low
Commissive + Commissive	1.20 %	Low

An example of Assertive speech act that functions to state something, or to gain information, for example **"Saya dapat adik baru.*" (I have a new baby brother/sister).* It delivers a reality of children's behaviour which is frank. Meanwhile, for the Directive speech act. **"Saya suka pensil ini." (I like this pencil),** it is considered a compliment that is appropriate for the recipient.

Study Findings
All in all, the study has been able to give complete data about the study objectives that are to be fulfilled. Our observation reveals that pre-school children were able to show varying speech act behaviours in seven different situations;

1. Working together in a group
2. Giving assistance
3. Consoling a friend
4. Making a friend happy
5. Playing with friends
6. Feeling upset (friends fail to show appreciation)
7. Being quiet (thinking about correcting his or her mistakes)

There is also a difference when the study subjects spoke, concerning the Directive speech act that can serve as the initiative in preschool children interactions, which is:

1. *Requestives-* speeches that carry these functions - requesting, praying, inviting, asking, accepting and so on.
2. *Question-* speeches that are query-oriented, such as investigating, examining, exploring and so on.
3. *Requirement-* speeches like ordering, instructing, arranging, handling and so on.
4. *Prohibities-*
   The speech act of prohibiting, where words like 'don't', 'cannot" and so on are used.
5. *Permissives-* speeches that give a lot of happiness like apologising, agreeing, congratulating and so on.
6. *Advisories* - speeches concerning motivating, giving advice, giving guidance and so on.

The Use of Macrostructure, Superstructure and Microstructure
Three speech analysis structures namely the macrostructure, superstructure and microstructure were used in the testing. The macro structure concerns with the speeches at the global level, which is the highest form of words obtained, and as a whole, largely discusses the language being used. The qualitative approach used places an importance to the outcome which is inseparable from the speech acts. In further detail, preschool children are really concerned about the learning process especially in subjects like Mathematics, Science and

Malay Language. They gave great commitment and hardwork in group activities. In the context of the children's speech acts, researchers opined that the behaviour they demonstrated related to the speech act is self-oriented such as being arrogant, and instead they prefered to choose to practise courtesy and politeness in order to produce the speech acts intended. They were able demonstrate positive face and non-positive face when producing the speech acts. Directive speech act was also noted to have occurred among the preschool children. Austin (1962), stated that all the utterances that present the speech acts carry three distinctive movements as follows:

i.   Locutionary acts which is the acts of producing sentences with a given meaning.
ii. Illocutrinary act, which is producing utterances with a certain intention, for instance complimenting, criticising, warning and so on.
iii. Perlocutionary act, which reveals the actual effect of the speech by the speaker on the listener, for instance making the listener feel scared, causing the listener to do something, and so on.

The differences of the three speech acts can be summarised as follows:

1. A speaker producing sentences with a certain meaning
2. (Speech act), with a certain intention (illocutionary act)
3. Leaving a certain impact to the listener/reader (perlocutionary act).

The language development level refers to the level of children's listening and speaking skills. This can motivate educators in increasing the children's language mastery in the context of core education and also second and third language education. In the study by Zaitul Azma Zainon Hamzah (2002) the focus lies in the speech disturbance among Malay children. It discusses their ability to deliver information, have the turn to speak and express sympathy. In the context of influence and interaction, children are influenced by their own mastery and the ability they develop, which is an action that can help them distinguish between right and wrong. As a whole, preschool children have already gained interest during the activity through the language they used in class. In terms of the language usage, the children used Malay Language to learn and this reveals an increase in the language assessment in this study. Based on the diagram of achievement below, the study subjects have showcased their involvement in the activities during the teaching and learning process, as evident in their readiness to do the activities. There are 10 scales that can prove that positive assertive and directive speech acts have been acquired before and after the activity is carried out.

1. Likes to study at school
2. Enjoys learning to draw
3. Who sends me to school?
4. Is there any distractions while studying?
5. Have friends who distract me..
6. Likes the teacher
7. Likes the materials..
8. Likes playing in class
9. Like reading storybooks..
10. Enjoys learning with video
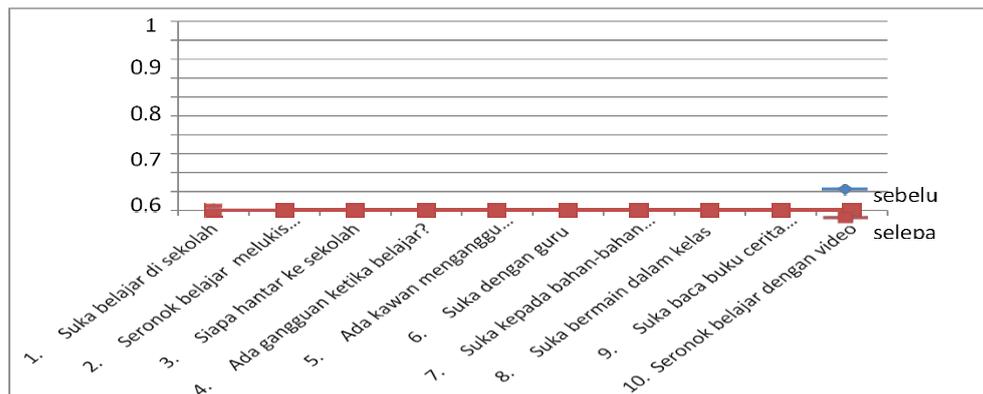
Suggestions for Future Studies

A. At school level, language-oriented activities can also help pre-school children learn and approach the concept of 'Love My School' concept drastically, to enable parental cooperation, especially in showcasing their talent in various planned activities with the Parents Teacher Association, or *Persatuan Ibu bapa dan Murid* (PIBG).

B. For the State Education Department, there needs to be relevant planning to measure the teacher's modeling level as a facilitator.

C. The Ministry of Education Malaysia also needs to be sensitive to the study needs related to schools, so that studies done by the teachers can be accounted for.

D. *Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka* needs to publish more studies in language and expand them to all layers of the society to assist them in creating language education that transcends all genres.

E. At the university level, the speech studies among students of various ethnic backgrounds must be expanded to raise the society's awareness about the importance of nurturing the children's or students' behaviour and character.

F. Malaysia Teacher Education Institute must be active in conducting various studies and activities, from Seto Innovation competitions to the proceedings of publication through symposiums, colloquiums, courses, workshops and others.

G. Non-governmental organisations and other private agencies may need to practise an open attitude to any written information or studies related to pre-school children,students and individuals.

H. Last but not least, it is recommended that studies of paradigm shift on continuing education be conducted, where they can help students today shape themselves to become individuals who respect their parents and teachers, and to further become better individuals.

Conclusion

Schools as educational institutions help society a lot to assess the process of student development in shaping personality and prepare more radically for effective education. Therefore, language development is a very important aspect because mastery of a language can help students socialize and can help them develop in various skills and fields of knowledge that they like. Studies of assertive and directive speech acts in schools provide many findings that are in accordance with the need for understanding for everyone, especially for themselves and their families, as well as current developments because the trust that

students gain can help in the creative and positive thinking process, especially for factors of the social environment and the socioeconomic status of the family.

However, the various levels of language development can also change preschool children to behave negatively, but if there is a politeness inherent in the social system they go through, then a student will become an ethical person and have a high spirit in making decisions and actions. This influence directly occurs in the behavior shown by children at school, especially during teaching and thus the child's behavior pattern is also shown in a inclined and interesting way. Social change in this study is an action shown without orders or being forced to make preschool children develop emotions naturally and honestly. Assertive and expressive language is shown and stated to express behavior and display friendliness to build more positive social relationships.

Thus, in Preschool Education through the 2017 revision of KSPK, this study brings many educational elements that are based on individual personality in accordance with the needs of the latest level of education when Civics subjects are included in all core subjects to improve the quality of national education. Learning that occurs in schools uses a lot of language to communicate and it is very effective for students. Practicing the noble values of Islam and the noble values of Malaysian society also helps shape the personality of students to appreciate and be sensitive to the concept of society with a confident and positive attitude. Through self-development, a student will not be influenced or deceived by various social problems. It is clear that students will experience more stimulating thinking development in many aspects such as what preschool children gain through the National Preschool Standard Curriculum through the aspects of Communication, Spirituality, Attitudes and Values, Humanity, Personal Skills, Physical and Aesthetics and the concepts of Science and Technology that guide them towards the real world especially in global competition and contribute to acquiring 21st century skills.

Finally, it is proposed that a study of the paradigm shift in continuous education with various colors can help students today maintain momentum to form appropriate speech acts and must be taken into account to expand their role as good citizens in accordance with the existence of a world without borders through an abundant information system that unconsciously dominates the thinking of a few people. Through this study, various perfections in the emergence of students will also occur at once if the importance of diverse language use does not stop society from denying the sovereignty of language use among society.

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