

Professional Experience and Classroom Discourse: Exploring Speech Act Patterns in Experienced and Novice Malay Language Teachers' Interactions

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Abstract

Teacher talk plays a crucial role in shaping classroom discourse as language is not merely a medium for knowledge transmission but also a pragmatic tool that influences interaction, participation, and learning experiences. This study explores how professional experience shapes speech act patterns in Malay language teachers' classroom interactions by comparing experienced and novice teachers in a primary school context. Guided by Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974), this study aims to identify the types of speech acts employed by teachers, examine the role of classroom interaction in shaping speech act realisations, and explore differences in speech act patterns between experienced and novice teachers. A qualitative case study design was employed involving four Malay language teachers from a national primary school in Selangor, comprising two experienced teachers and two novice teachers. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of teachers' lesson plans. The findings reveal that directive speech acts were the most dominant category used by both groups, reflecting the importance of instructional control and classroom management in Malay language teaching. However, differences emerged in the pragmatic orientations of the two groups. Experienced teachers demonstrated a stronger tendency towards assertive speech acts and maintained formal language norms to emphasise linguistic accuracy and instructional authority. In contrast, novice teachers showed greater reliance on commissive speech acts and communicative accommodation strategies to foster pupil engagement and establish interpersonal rapport. The findings suggest that professional experience influences teachers' pragmatic choices and classroom discourse practices, where experienced teachers tend to prioritise linguistic precision and structured interaction, while novice teachers emphasise relational communication and active participation. This study contributes to the understanding of teacher discourse by highlighting how professional experience shapes the sociopragmatic realisation of speech acts in Malay language classrooms. The findings provide implications for teacher education and professional development, particularly in enhancing teachers' pragmatic competence and classroom communication strategies.

Keywords: Professional experience; classroom discourse; speech acts; Malay language teaching; teacher talk; sociopragmatics

1. Introduction

Classroom discourse represents a fundamental dimension of teaching and learning, as language functions not only as a medium for knowledge transmission but also as a social practice that shapes interaction, classroom relationships, and learning experiences. In educational contexts, teachers' language use reflects the complex relationship between communication, pedagogy, and social interaction, whereby teachers strategically employ linguistic resources to achieve instructional objectives, manage classroom activities, and construct meaningful engagement with learners (Walsh, 2011; Mercer, 2019). Therefore, teacher talk should not be perceived merely as verbal exchanges between teachers and pupils, but rather as a form of purposeful social action that reflects teachers' pedagogical intentions and interactional competence.

From a pragmatic perspective, classroom utterances represent meaningful actions performed through language. Austin (1962) introduced the concept of speech acts by emphasising that language does not merely describe reality but also performs actions through communication. This perspective was further developed by Searle (1969), who categorised speech acts into five major types, namely directives, assertives, expressives, commissives, and declarations. Within classroom discourse, these speech acts serve various pedagogical purposes, including providing instructions, explaining concepts, motivating learners, managing classroom behaviour, and maintaining teacher-pupil relationships. Recent studies on classroom communication have demonstrated that teachers' speech acts play an important role in regulating classroom interaction and influencing learners' participation during teaching and learning processes (Nur Aisyah et al., 2023; Nila Sari Dewi et al., 2025).

In language education, the analysis of teacher speech acts is particularly significant because language functions simultaneously as the medium of instruction and the object of learning. In the context of Malay language

education, teachers are not only responsible for facilitating pupils' acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also serve as models of appropriate language use, communicative behaviour, and sociolinguistic awareness. Consequently, teachers' classroom discourse represents more than instructional strategies; it reflects their ability to select and adapt linguistic forms according to pedagogical goals, learner characteristics, and social contexts. Hymes' (1972, 1974) concept of communicative competence highlights that effective communication involves not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately within particular social situations.

The importance of contextual factors in shaping classroom discourse has been further emphasised through sociolinguistic perspectives. Hymes' SPEAKING Model explains that language choices are influenced by multiple contextual elements, including setting, participants, purposes, sequences of interaction, communication styles, norms, and genres. Therefore, the same linguistic expression may perform different functions depending on the social relationship between speakers, classroom expectations, and instructional purposes. In this regard, examining teacher speech acts requires attention not only to what teachers say, but also how, why, and under what circumstances particular linguistic choices are produced (Gumperz, 1982; Walsh, 2011).

However, teachers' classroom discourse practices are not developed uniformly, as professional experience may influence how teachers construct and negotiate their communicative practices. Professional experience contributes to the development of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, classroom awareness, and decision-making abilities through continuous engagement with teaching contexts (Shulman, 1987). Experienced teachers are generally associated with stronger classroom management skills, greater sensitivity towards learners' needs, and more established instructional routines developed through years of professional practice (Tsui, 2003). These accumulated experiences may influence how experienced teachers select speech acts, manage interaction, and balance instructional authority with interpersonal relationships.

In contrast, novice teachers often encounter challenges in transforming theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practices. The transition from teacher preparation to actual teaching requires novice teachers to develop not only pedagogical knowledge but also interactional competence, including the ability to establish authority, manage classroom behaviour, and respond appropriately to diverse learner needs (Farrell, 2012). During the early stages of their careers, novice teachers may rely on more explicit verbal strategies, such as frequent instructions or motivational expressions, as they negotiate their professional identity and classroom presence. Previous research suggests that novice teachers' classroom discourse is closely related to their ongoing process of developing confidence, pedagogical reasoning, and interactional awareness (Kim & Roth, 2025).

Although previous studies have examined teacher talk and speech acts in various educational contexts, much of the existing research has focused on identifying speech act categories or describing general patterns of classroom interaction. Studies have provided valuable insights into how teachers use directives, assertives, expressives, and other speech acts to support classroom management and learning processes (Ivana Swastiana et al., 2020; Nursakinah Amir, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to understanding how professional experience shapes teachers' pragmatic choices and how experienced and novice teachers construct classroom discourse through different speech act patterns.

This gap is particularly relevant in the context of Malay language education at the primary school level. Teaching Malay language requires teachers to navigate multiple communicative demands, including maintaining linguistic accuracy, encouraging pupil participation, managing classroom interaction, and modelling appropriate language use. The distinction between experienced and novice teachers may reveal different approaches in balancing these demands. Experienced teachers may utilise established professional knowledge to maintain structured and linguistically accurate interaction, whereas novice teachers may employ more adaptive and relational communication strategies to encourage learner involvement. Nevertheless, the ways in which these differences are manifested through speech act patterns remain underexplored.

Furthermore, contemporary classroom environments have become increasingly complex due to changes in learner characteristics and communication practices. Current generations of pupils are exposed to diverse forms of communication through digital media, resulting in changing expectations towards classroom interaction. Therefore, teachers are required not only to deliver content effectively but also to develop communicative approaches that are responsive to learners' social and linguistic backgrounds. In this context, examining teachers' speech act patterns provides important insights into how professional experience influences classroom discourse practices.

To address this research gap, the present study employs Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974) as complementary analytical frameworks to examine speech act patterns among experienced and novice Malay language teachers. Searle's framework enables the identification of the functional categories of teachers' utterances, while Hymes' model provides a broader sociolinguistic perspective by

explaining how contextual factors shape language choices during classroom interaction. The integration of these frameworks allows the study to explore not only the types of speech acts employed by teachers but also the contextual meanings underlying their pragmatic realisations.

Therefore, this study explores speech act patterns in Malay language classroom interactions by examining the relationship between professional experience and classroom discourse practices. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. identify the speech act patterns employed by experienced and novice Malay language teachers during classroom interactions;
2. examine how classroom interaction contexts shape teachers' speech act realisations

By investigating the relationship between professional experience and classroom discourse, this study contributes to the fields of applied linguistics and language education by highlighting the sociopragmatic dimensions of teacher communication. The findings provide implications for teacher education and professional development, particularly in strengthening teachers' pragmatic competence and enhancing effective classroom interaction in Malay language teaching contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Acts and Classroom Discourse

Language in classroom settings functions beyond the transmission of information, as teachers employ various linguistic strategies to construct meaning, regulate interaction, and establish social relationships with learners. Classroom discourse has therefore been widely examined as a form of institutional communication where teachers' language choices reflect pedagogical intentions, interactional goals, and classroom norms (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Walsh, 2011). Within this perspective, teachers' utterances are not merely linguistic expressions but purposeful communicative actions that influence the organisation of teaching and learning processes.

Speech Act Theory provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding the functional nature of classroom language. Austin (1962) argued that utterances perform actions through language, distinguishing between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Building upon this perspective, Searle (1969) classified speech acts into five major categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This classification has been widely applied in educational research to examine how teachers use language to achieve instructional and interpersonal purposes.

In classroom contexts, directive speech acts are frequently identified as one of the dominant categories because teachers regularly provide instructions, ask questions, manage classroom behaviour, and guide students through learning activities (Searle, 1969; Walsh, 2011). However, classroom communication is not limited to instructional control. Assertive speech acts allow teachers to present explanations and construct knowledge, while expressive and commissive speech acts contribute to developing supportive classroom environments by expressing encouragement, appreciation, and commitment towards learners' progress.

Recent studies have continued to highlight the importance of speech acts in understanding teacher-student interaction. These studies suggest that teachers' pragmatic choices influence classroom participation, learner engagement, and the development of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students (Sari & Pranoto, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). The use of particular speech acts reflects teachers' ability to negotiate instructional authority while maintaining meaningful communication with learners.

Nevertheless, speech acts cannot be interpreted independently from their social and cultural contexts. Hymes' (1972, 1974) concept of communicative competence emphasises that effective communication involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately according to contextual expectations. Through the SPEAKING Model, Hymes highlights that language use is shaped by contextual components, including setting, participants, purposes, norms, and interactional sequences. Therefore, analysing teachers' speech acts requires attention to both the linguistic forms employed and the sociocultural circumstances in which communication occurs.

Professional Experience and Teachers' Pragmatic Practices

Teachers' classroom discourse develops through continuous interaction between professional knowledge, classroom experiences, and contextual understanding. Professional experience has been recognised as an important factor influencing teachers' pedagogical decision-making, classroom management, and communication strategies (Shulman, 1987; Tsui, 2003). Through repeated exposure to diverse classroom situations, experienced teachers gradually develop practical knowledge that enables them to interpret learners' needs, anticipate classroom challenges, and select appropriate instructional approaches.

From a discourse perspective, professional experience may influence how teachers construct their classroom identities and communicate with learners. Experienced teachers often possess greater awareness of classroom

dynamics, allowing them to employ language more strategically according to instructional purposes and learner responses (Walsh, 2011). Their accumulated experiences may contribute to greater flexibility in adjusting speech acts, balancing authority and rapport, and managing interaction effectively.

In contrast, novice teachers are often in the process of developing their professional identity and classroom interactional competence. Although novice teachers may possess theoretical knowledge acquired through teacher education programmes, translating this knowledge into practical classroom communication can be challenging (Farrell, 2012). Early teaching experiences require novice teachers to negotiate multiple demands, including establishing classroom authority, maintaining student engagement, and responding appropriately to unexpected interactional situations.

Previous research has shown that novice teachers tend to rely more heavily on explicit instructional strategies as they develop confidence and classroom awareness (König et al., 2021). At the same time, novice teachers may demonstrate adaptive communication approaches as they attempt to establish positive relationships with learners. Therefore, differences between experienced and novice teachers should not necessarily be interpreted as differences in effectiveness, but rather as variations in how professional experience shapes communicative orientations and pragmatic decision-making.

Although teacher experience has been extensively examined in relation to pedagogical knowledge and classroom management, fewer studies have explored how professional experience influences teachers' pragmatic realisations, particularly in terms of speech act patterns. Understanding this relationship is important because classroom communication represents a critical dimension of teaching expertise, where teachers continuously negotiate between instructional objectives, social relationships, and classroom expectations.

Teacher Talk in Malay Language Education and Research Gap

In Malay language education, teacher talk plays a particularly significant role because teachers serve as both facilitators of language learning and models of appropriate language use. Unlike other subject areas where language primarily functions as a medium of instruction, language classrooms require teachers to demonstrate effective communication practices, including appropriate vocabulary selection, politeness strategies, and contextual language use. Therefore, teachers' classroom discourse contributes not only to content learning but also to students' development of communicative competence.

Previous studies in Malay language education have examined various aspects of classroom communication, including teacher questioning strategies, interaction patterns, and pedagogical discourse. However, much of the existing research has focused on teaching strategies and instructional effectiveness rather than the pragmatic dimensions of teachers' language choices. Consequently, the role of speech acts in shaping Malay language classroom interaction remains relatively underexplored.

Furthermore, existing studies on speech acts in educational contexts have largely focused on identifying types of speech acts used by teachers or describing classroom interaction patterns. While these studies provide valuable insights into the functional use of language, limited attention has been given to how teachers' professional experiences influence their pragmatic choices. Specifically, comparative investigations involving experienced and novice Malay language teachers remain limited, particularly within primary school contexts.

This gap is important because professional experience may shape not only what teachers communicate but also how they construct meaning, negotiate authority, and establish relationships through language. Experienced teachers may draw upon accumulated professional knowledge to employ more context-sensitive communication strategies, whereas novice teachers may demonstrate different pragmatic orientations as they develop their classroom identities. Examining these differences provides a deeper understanding of teacher discourse as a sociopragmatic practice.

Therefore, this study addresses the existing gap by exploring speech act patterns among experienced and novice Malay language teachers' classroom interactions. By integrating Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) with Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974), this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how professional experience shapes classroom discourse practices in Malay language education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how professional experience shapes speech act patterns in Malay language teachers' classroom interactions. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding the meanings, functions, and contextual factors underlying teachers' language use rather than measuring relationships between variables (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Classroom discourse is a complex social phenomenon that requires an in-depth examination of how language is used within authentic

teaching contexts. Therefore, a qualitative case study approach provides an appropriate framework for investigating teachers' pragmatic practices within their natural classroom environments (Yin, 2018).

The case study design was adopted to enable an in-depth exploration of speech act realisations among experienced and novice Malay language teachers. Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, this approach aims to provide contextualised understanding of how teachers with different levels of professional experience construct classroom interaction through language. Such an approach is consistent with sociopragmatic research, which views language use as closely connected to social roles, contextual expectations, and interactional purposes (Hymes, 1972; Tracy, 2020).

Participants and Research Context

The participants consisted of four Malay language teachers from a national primary school in Selangor, Malaysia. The participants were purposively selected based on their teaching experience and involvement in Malay language instruction. The participants were divided into two groups: two experienced teachers and two novice teachers.

The selection of experienced and novice teachers assumed that professional experience may influence teachers' pedagogical knowledge, classroom interaction patterns, and pragmatic choices. Experienced teachers were those with extensive teaching experience, whereas novice teachers represented teachers who were still developing their classroom practices and professional identities. This comparison allowed the study to examine how different levels of professional experience may shape teachers' speech act patterns during classroom interactions.

Although the number of participants was limited, qualitative case studies emphasise depth of understanding rather than sample size. The purpose of this study was not to generalise findings to all Malay language teachers but to provide an in-depth examination of the relationship between professional experience and classroom discourse practices within a specific educational context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection

Three sources of data were employed in this study: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Classroom observations were conducted to capture teachers' authentic speech acts and interactional practices during Malay language teaching sessions. Observation data focused on teachers' verbal expressions, communicative functions, and interactional contexts in which speech acts occurred. This approach allowed the researchers to examine naturally occurring classroom discourse rather than relying solely on participants' self-reported perceptions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perspectives regarding their communication choices, classroom interaction strategies, and experiences in managing teaching and learning activities. The interviews provided additional insights into the intentions and contextual considerations underlying teachers' speech acts.

In addition, relevant teaching documents, including lesson plans and instructional materials, were analysed to support interpretation of classroom interaction patterns. Document analysis provided contextual information regarding lesson objectives, instructional approaches, and classroom activities associated with teachers' language use.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis process involved identifying, categorising, and interpreting teachers' speech acts based on Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969), which classifies speech acts into assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations.

Initially, classroom interaction data were transcribed and examined to identify meaningful utterances produced by teachers. Each identified utterance was then coded according to its speech act function and interpreted based on its communicative purpose within the classroom context. The analysis subsequently examined similarities and differences in speech act patterns between experienced and novice teachers.

To further interpret the contextual meanings of teachers' speech acts, Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974) was applied. This framework enabled the analysis of how contextual factors, including classroom setting, participants, instructional purposes, and interactional norms, influenced teachers' pragmatic choices. The integration of speech act analysis and contextual interpretation allowed the study to move beyond identifying linguistic forms by examining how professional experience shaped teachers' communicative practices within classroom interactions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation involving classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple sources allowed the researchers to compare and validate interpretations of teachers' speech act patterns. Dependability was supported through systematic documentation of the research procedures, including data collection and analysis processes. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining transparency in the coding and interpretation processes to ensure that findings were grounded in the collected data rather than researcher assumptions. Transferability was addressed through detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, allowing readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar educational settings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION***Speech Act Patterns Employed by Experienced and Novice Malay Language Teachers during Classroom Interactions***

The first objective of this study was to identify the speech act patterns employed by experienced and novice Malay language teachers during classroom interactions. The analysis was guided by Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969), which conceptualises utterances as forms of social action performed through language. In classroom contexts, teachers' speech acts represent more than verbal expressions; they function as pragmatic resources for delivering instruction, managing classroom activities, constructing knowledge, and establishing interpersonal relationships with pupils (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Walsh, 2011).

Based on the classroom observation data, five categories of speech acts were identified, namely directives, assertives, expressives, commissives, and declarations. The distribution of speech act patterns among experienced and novice Malay language teachers is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Frequency Distribution of Speech Act Patterns among Experienced and Novice Malay Language Teachers*

Speech Act Category	Experienced Teachers	Novice Teachers	Total
Directive	105	120	225
Assertive	80	32	112
Expressive	22	35	57
Commissive	10	32	42
Declarative	-	8	8

As shown in Table 1, directive speech acts emerged as the most frequently occurring category among both experienced and novice teachers. This finding indicates that classroom discourse is strongly influenced by teachers' instructional responsibilities, particularly in providing explanations, giving instructions, managing classroom activities, and guiding pupils' participation. The dominance of directive speech acts is consistent with previous classroom discourse research, which highlights that teachers frequently use directives as a means of organising learning processes and maintaining classroom order (Walsh, 2011; Mercer, 2019).

Although directives were dominant among both groups, the findings reveal differences in the way experienced and novice teachers utilised speech acts. Novice teachers demonstrated a higher frequency of directive speech acts compared with experienced teachers. This pattern suggests that novice teachers may rely more on explicit instructions and verbal regulation as they develop classroom management skills and establish their professional identity. According to Farrell (2012), novice teachers often experience a transition period in which they negotiate between theoretical knowledge acquired during teacher education and the practical demands of classroom interaction.

In contrast, experienced teachers demonstrated a stronger tendency to employ assertive speech acts. Their use of assertives reflected practices related to explaining concepts, providing clarification, and modelling appropriate Malay language use. This finding corresponds with the concept of teacher expertise, where accumulated professional experience contributes to teachers' ability to make informed pedagogical decisions and adapt communication strategies according to classroom needs (Shulman, 1987; Tsui, 2003).

The findings also indicate that expressive and commissive speech acts were more evident among novice teachers. These speech acts functioned as interactional strategies to encourage pupil participation, provide motivation, and develop positive classroom relationships. Rather than indicating a lack of instructional authority, the use of expressive and commissive speech acts reflects novice teachers' attempts to establish rapport and create supportive learning environments. Previous studies have highlighted that teachers' affective language plays an important role in promoting learner engagement and strengthening classroom relationships (Mercer, 2019).

Overall, the findings suggest that both experienced and novice teachers employed similar categories of speech acts; however, their pragmatic orientations differed. Experienced teachers demonstrated greater emphasis on instructional explanation and linguistic modelling, whereas novice teachers displayed greater reliance on relational and motivational communication strategies. These differences illustrate that teachers' language choices are shaped by their professional experiences, pedagogical priorities, and interactional goals.

Contextual Factors Shaping Teachers' Speech Act Realisations

The second objective of this study was to examine how classroom interaction contexts shape teachers' speech act realisations. While speech act analysis identifies the functional categories of teachers' utterances, understanding classroom discourse requires attention to the sociocultural contexts in which these utterances occur. Therefore, Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974) was employed to interpret how contextual elements, including setting, participants, purposes, interactional sequences, communication styles, norms, and genres, influenced teachers' pragmatic choices. Table 2 summarises the contextual factors that shaped the realisation of speech acts among experienced and novice Malay language teachers.

Table 2 Contextual Influence on Speech Act Realisation Based on Hymes' SPEAKING Model

SPEAKING Component	Experienced Teachers	Novice Teachers
Setting	Formal and structured classroom environment	Flexible and interactive classroom environment
Participants	Teacher as authority and language model	Teacher as facilitator and learning partner
Ends	Linguistic accuracy and mastery of language	Confidence and active pupil participation
Act Sequence	Explanation, questioning, structured exercises	Activities, games, simulation and interaction
Key	Formal and controlled tone	Persuasive and encouraging tone
Instrumentalities	Standard Malay language	Flexible language accommodation
Norms	Teacher-led interaction	Open and participatory interaction
Genre	Explanation and structured practice	Interactive activities and language games

The findings demonstrate that teachers' speech act choices were not produced randomly but were closely connected to classroom expectations and pedagogical purposes. This supports Hymes' (1972, 1974) argument that effective communication is influenced by social and cultural contexts rather than linguistic forms alone.

Experienced teachers' classroom discourse reflected a stronger orientation towards formal language practices and instructional authority. Their preference for standard Malay language and structured interaction suggests their awareness of their role as linguistic models. This aligns with the view that experienced teachers develop practical

knowledge through continuous classroom engagement, enabling them to interpret situations and select appropriate communication strategies (Shulman, 1987).

Conversely, novice teachers demonstrated greater flexibility in their communication approaches. Their use of accommodation strategies and encouraging expressions indicates an effort to create closer interpersonal relationships with pupils. Such practices reflect the importance of interactional competence, where teachers must balance instructional goals with the need to maintain meaningful communication with learners (Walsh, 2011).

Therefore, the findings highlight that classroom contexts play a significant role in shaping teachers' speech act realisations. The integration of Searle's Speech Act Theory and Hymes' SPEAKING Model demonstrates that teacher talk should be understood as a sociopragmatic practice influenced by professional experience, classroom expectations, and communicative purposes.

CONCLUSION

This study explored speech act patterns employed by experienced and novice Malay language teachers during classroom interactions and examined how classroom contexts shaped teachers' speech act realisations. Drawing upon Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and Hymes' SPEAKING Model (1972, 1974), the findings demonstrate that teachers' classroom discourse functions not only as a medium for instructional delivery but also as a pragmatic resource for managing interaction, constructing relationships, and achieving pedagogical goals.

The findings revealed that both experienced and novice teachers employed various categories of speech acts, including directives, assertives, expressives, commissives, and declarations. Directive speech acts emerged as the dominant category among both groups, reflecting the instructional nature of classroom discourse where teachers are required to guide activities, provide explanations, and regulate pupil participation. However, differences were observed in the pragmatic orientations of the two groups. Experienced teachers demonstrated a stronger tendency towards assertive speech acts, reflecting their emphasis on linguistic accuracy, knowledge construction, and their role as language models. In contrast, novice teachers showed greater use of expressive and commissive speech acts, highlighting their efforts to establish rapport, encourage participation, and create supportive classroom environments.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that teachers' speech act realisations were influenced by contextual factors, including classroom setting, participant relationships, instructional purposes, and interactional norms. The integration of Speech Act Theory and Hymes' SPEAKING Model highlights that teacher discourse should be understood as a sociopragmatic practice shaped by both professional experience and classroom contexts.

This study contributes to the field of applied linguistics and Malay language education by extending the understanding of teacher talk beyond the identification of speech act categories. It demonstrates how professional experience influences teachers' pragmatic choices and classroom communication strategies. The findings also provide implications for teacher education programmes by emphasising the importance of developing teachers' pragmatic competence, particularly in balancing instructional authority, linguistic modelling, and interpersonal communication. Although this study provides valuable insights into teachers' classroom discourse practices, it is limited by its small number of participants and focus on a specific primary school context. Future studies may consider involving a larger range of participants, different educational levels, and diverse classroom settings to further explore the relationship between teacher experience and pragmatic practices.

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