The Study of Speech Acts in Press Releases of International Technology Trade Fairs

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ABSTRACT
The research aimed to study speech acts in press releases of international technology trade fairs. The conceptual framework of the study was Searle’s speech act theory (1969), and the hypothesis was that five speech act classes – 1) representatives 2) commissives 3) directives 4) declarations and 5) expressives would be found in the press releases. For samples and data collection, 30 press releases of the international technology trade fairs during 2013-2017 from their websites, the channel provided for press and media to access news and information widely and easily, were collected because of being highly supported during this four years. For data analysis, speech act classes, paradigm cases – the sub-group of speech act classes, and directness of speech act were analyzed and discussed. The results showed that all five speech act classes were found in the contents, and this followed the researcher’s hypothesis. Representatives were chosen most for the press releases in the highest level at 54.83% while directives and expressives were expressed least at the same level of 6.45%. However, although there are many paradigms in each speech act class, only a few ones were used in the contents. This might be due to the need in concise and relevant purposes and information in business field, and also time and page limitation for the news in press releases. The result reflected that information showing fact and true about the trade fairs were highly needed, and the irrelevant information were mostly discarded. Furthermore, direct speech act was needed for press releases to show the purposes and information of the fair, and it was showed in every speech act class. The findings also reflected the correlation between the business characters in conciseness and relevance and the speech acts in press releases that were clear and direct.

Keywords: speech act, press release, trade fair, international, technology

I. INTRODUCTION
Technology becomes a very significant sector for today’s business world and an important factor to lead to the growth of world economy (The Global Information Technology Report, 2012). Over the past decade, technology is considered as a major business sector for most countries because it can be applied to other kinds of business sector such as agriculture, food and beverage, automobile and energy. Thus, technology is continuously developed for the highest efficiency, and there are a lot of technology and innovative products developed by many companies each year.

As there are plenty of technology products created and offered for consumers every year, the manufacturers and sellers in this sector will compete each other unavoidably, and then, they may count on business strategies, tactics and tools such as marketing, advertising and public relation to reach consumers and find the new customers for bigger market share (Ramon and Joan, 2010). These companies will find some ways or channels to show the efficiency of the products to consumers for their future product choices, and also seek for new markets for their future growth. Although there are many ways for product promotion, only some ways are chosen, and trade fair is a selected one due to its useful characters of massive undertaking and enabling for showcase.

Trade fair, an exhibition for enterprises to showcase and demonstrate their latest products and services in specific industry to meet partners and customers, is an alternative for the companies to seek for business opportunities, especially international trade fairs where they can find their target customers from around the world (Seringhaus and Rosson, 2000). Trade fair has played an important role for a long time because it is counted as a place or channel for consumers to search for new products and for enterprises to find their target customers. Moreover, international trade fair is also a new coming business choice since it is a bridge for international trade between countries, and support import and export sector. Thus, international trade fair becomes a significant section for business opportunities of technology sector. For this reason, the publication of the fair is certainly important as it can help attract a large number of visitors. The suitable ways to publicize the information of the fair are certainly needed, and a way frequently chosen for this task is press release, the written materials provided for journalists, that helps boost and
promote the trade fair effectively because of real information shown for readers. Consequently, press release is considered as a major channel to convey significant information of the trade fair to publicity.

As mentioned above, the role of press releases toward international technology trade fairs seem obviously important, and most of them are published in English for international communication. Since both of non-native and native English speaking countries read the information of the fairs from English press releases, some misunderstandings in the purposes and information of the fairs from the language, which may not be their mother tongue, can occur. This issue, then, will lead to not many exhibitors and visitors to join the fairs due to lacking of clear understanding in the purposes and information. This can cause missing business opportunities and low returns of the exhibitors. For this reason, speech act, the study of the intentions of speakers through their utterances (Searle, 1969), is useful and helpful for this field. Since speech act focuses on the intentions shown directly or indirectly through utterances, it can help interpret the purposes and information of the fairs published on press releases. The clear understanding in their purposes or intentions can surely boost business opportunities of companies and perhaps business success in the future. Thus, the study of speech acts in press releases of international technology trade fairs is an interesting and challenge issue.

According to Searle’s speech act theory (1976), speech act classes – 1) representatives 2) commissives 3) directives 4) declarations and 5) expressives were presented in this study. The researcher hypothesized that all of five classes would be found in the contents of the press releases after observing some of them for a while. Thus, the research aimed to analyze the speech acts used in the press releases by Searle’s speech act theory, and the discussion in the speech act classes and directness to show their correlation was also provided. For the directness of speech act, both direct and indirect speech act were analyzed. Direct speech act would be indicated for the utterances that were directly in accordance with the intention of speaker, and when it followed the correlation between direct speech act and sentence types – statement with declarative sentence, question with interrogative sentence, and request and order with imperative sentence. Moreover, performative verbs, a sub-type of direct speech act which focuses on verbs that allow the direct convey of intent of speaker to utterance (Searle, 1979), were also analyzed to show the direness found in the content.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Population and Sample

The population of this research were the press releases of international technology trade fairs, and the samples were the ones published during 2013-2017 because technology products have been highly supported and promoted during this four years. The selected press releases had to be published on the websites of the fairs because they were provided for press and media to access the information widely and easily. Thus, 30 press releases were chosen for this research.

B. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data were collected from 30 press releases. Each sentence was separated from the text and analyzed with Searle’s speech act theory. The followings were steps for data analysis.

1. Each sentence from the press releases was separated from the text, and divided into each of five speech act classes according to Searle’s theory, mentioned earlier, to show the intentions appearing in the contents. Their paradigm case, the sub-group of the types of speech act, was also discussed, and the sentences were sub-grouped to each paradigm to clarify more specific purposes.

2. After categorized into five groups, direct and indirect speech acts of the utterances were analyzed to show language use.

3. Since there are two aspects to analyze direct speech act – 1) sentence types and 2) performative verbs, both of them were applied to search for the results. The use of these two aspects was shown in sample sentences, and performative verbs were indicated and explained, by using Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition.

4. The frequency of the use in five speech act classes was calculated in percentage to show the overview of the intentions and the use of speech act in the whole contents.

III. RESULTS

The results showed that all of five types of speech act were found, and direct speech act were shown in all utterances. The followings were the analysis of data, and some samples were provided for clear picture.

A. Representatives

According to Searle (1969), representatives are to commit a speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition or something being the case. Paradigm cases including in representatives are asserting, stating, boasting, describing, and suggesting. For representatives, there was only stating found in the press releases, and only direct
speech act appeared in the contents. The followings were some examples of direct speech act in stating to show representatives.

Example:

(1) Forums, guided tours and lectures complement the presentations by the around 900 exhibitors expected to attend.

(2) The exhibits focus on the various steps for pulverizing, screening and processing sensitive materials and take account of associated processes like measurement and control technology and particle analysis.

(3) The high number of registrations underscores the importance of the event as the No. 1 platform for mechanical processing technology, “emphasizes Beate Fischer, Exhibition Director POWTECH at NürnbergMesse.

(4) The sector plays a decisive role in shaping current industry trends and in September will once again showcase its latest developments.

The examples above showed that the sentence type went along with the speech act class. Stating will be direct speech act when it is declaration sentence, and this was proved in these examples.

B. Commissives

According to Searle (1969), commissives are defined as intentions that commit a speaker to some future action, or doing something in the future. Paradigm cases including in commissives are promising, pledging, Threatening, offering, planning, vowing, betting, opposing.

For commissives, there were two paradigms found in the press releases – promising and offering, and only direct speech act appeared in the contents. The followings were some example of direct speech act in promising and offering to show commissives.

A) Promising

Promising, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to tell someone that you will definitely do something.

Example:

(5) During the duration of the ReTEC, accompanying and parallel events will also bring other technical topics to Augsburg.

Meaning of ‘will’: used for saying that you are willing to do something or that you intend to do it

(6) The registrations also promise a strong international presence and a large number of often impressive exhibits.

 Meaning of ‘promise’: to tell someone that you will definitely do something

The analysis in performative verbs was used in these examples since it could explain clearly on direct speech act. Verb ‘will’ and ‘promise’ acted as performative verbs to show doing something in the future. This indicated that the actions would cause some future actions. The use of ‘will’ was an interesting issue for discussion. ‘Will’, a kind of verb, to show promising happened in many press releases because the meaning of this word is to intend to do something. For directness, only direct speech act was found in the content, so there were not any implications occurring.

B) Offering

Offering, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to let someone know that you will give them something if they want it.

Example:

(7) Two forums will offer ongoing presentations and workshops on issues affecting the industry.

(8) More than half of all exhibitors at POWTECH offer solutions for use in pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Meaning of ‘offer’: to let someone know that you will give them something if they want it

The analysis in performative verbs was also used in these examples because it could explain clearly on direct speech act. Verb ‘offer’ acted as a performative verb to let someone know that something will be given if wanted. The examples above directly showed that there were some offers waiting for people who joined the fair. So, they were direct speech act.

As analyzed above, it could be concluded that only promising and offering were found in the commissive, and all of them were direct speech act.

C. Directives

Directives, according to Searle (1969), are defined as intentions that are used by a speaker attempting to get the addressee to carry out or perform an action. Paradigm cases including in directives are requesting, advising, commanding, challenging, daring, entreating, asking, ordering, inviting, and begging.

For directives, there was only inviting found in the press releases, and only direct speech act appeared in the
contents. Here was an example of direct speech act to show directives.

Example:

(9) Another highlight within the field of printing technology awaits visitors at the Pulse Electronics stand: The Finnish manufacturer will be demonstrating a device which can print antennas, sensors and much more onto three-dimensional objects.

- Meaning of ‘await’: to wait for something that you expect to happen

The examples above showed that the sentence type matched with the speech act class. Inviting will be direct speech act when it is declaration sentence, and this pattern occurred in the examples. Moreover, regarding to the meaning of ‘await’, it showed invitation to participants to visit the demonstration of printing technology.

D. Declarations

Declarations, according to Searle (1969), are defined as intentions that affect an immediate change of affairs. Paradigm cases including in declarations are declaring, baptizing, resigning, firing from employment, hiring, booking, arresting, and allowing.

For declarations, there were also two paradigms found in the press releases – booking and allowing, and only direct speech act occurred in the texts. The followings were some examples of direct speech act in booking and allowing to show declarations.

A) Booking

Booking, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to buy tickets, or to arrange to have or use something at a particular time in the future

Example:

(10) At present, more than six months before the trade fair starts, a good 85 per cent of the display area total from 2016 has already been booked again.

- Meaning of ‘book’: to buy tickets, or to arrange to have or use something at a particular time in the future

Performative verbs were applied in this analysis as well for clear and further understanding on direct speech act. Verb ‘book’ showed as a performative verb to change the affair immediately to owning something after arranging it. So, the example was direct speech act.

B) Allowing

Allowing, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to give someone permission to do or have something

Example:

(11) Our involvement with the ExpoDrev Russia fair allows us to offer our German and international customers from the primary and secondary wood processing technology sectors a well-established marketing platform for this region.

- Meaning of ‘allow’: to give someone permission to do or have something

(12) Draft legislation for this was recently submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress.

- Meaning of ‘submit’: to formally give something to someone so that they can make a decision about it

Performative verbs were also analyzed in these examples as they would explain clearly on direct speech act. Verb ‘allow’ and ‘submit’ showed as performative verbs to give someone permission that could change the affair immediately after authorization received. These examples were, thus, undoubtedly direct speech act.

C) Declaring

Declaring, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to announce officially that something is true or happening.

Example:

(13) The prizes were awarded prior to Interpack, and the winners are now set to compete with one other for the WorldStar Awards at the trade fair.

- Meaning of ‘award’: to give someone a prize or other reward because they have achieved something

The analysis in performative verbs was focused in this example for clear explanation in direct speech act.

Verb ‘award’ was a kind of declaration to show who deserved for the prize, and it could also change the affair from the normal people or place to winner. Consequently, these were direct speech act.

For the declaration, it could be summarized that booking, allowing and declaring clearly appeared in the content, and all of them were shown as direct speech act.

E. Expressives

Expressives, according to Searle (1969), are defined as intention to express some sort of psychological state. Paradigm cases including in expressives are greeting, thanking, apologising, complaining, congratulating, welcoming, and deploring.
For expressives, there were three paradigms occurring in the press releases – thanking, welcoming and pleasing, and only direct speech act was found in the contents. The followings were some examples of these paradigms to show expressives.

A) Thanking
Thanking, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is used for telling someone that you are grateful for something that they have said or done.

Example:
(14) Thanks to the partnership with KFEC, Deutsche Messe can now offer its international clients premium marketing platforms in two of Russia’s most important forestry and wood processing regions.

The analysis in sentence types was used in the example because it would explain clearly on direct speech act. The example above showed that the sentence type went along with the speech act class. Thanking will be direct speech act when it is declaration sentence, and this was shown in this example.

B) Welcoming
Welcoming, according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to ask someone to come to see you or to spend time with you socially.

Example:
(15) We will welcome exhibitors from China and Iran for the first time.

C) Pleasing
Pleasing according to Macmillan English Dictionary 2nd Edition, is to make someone feel happy and satisfied.

Example:
(16) “EUROPOLTECH at AMBEREXPO will not only make the participants feel more comfortable at the trade fair and the conference but will also reduce organisation costs, which translates into decreased participation expenses.

Meaning of ‘feel’: to experience a particular emotion or physical feeling

The analysis in performative verbs was also discussed in the sample sentence for clear understanding on direct speech act. According to the meaning of verb ‘feel’, it clearly related to feeling and emotion, and the example indicated comfort, a positive feeling, of the visitors to join the trade fair, so it was considered as direct speech act.

For the expressives, it could be concluded that thanking, welcoming and pleasing were expressed in the content, and all of them were direct speech act.

According to the results above, they showed that all of five speech act classes appeared in the press releases, and all of them were direct speech act. However, although there are many paradigms in each class, only a few ones were used in the contents. This might be due to the need in concise and relevant purposes and information of enterprises for efficient business decision, and also the time and page limitation for the news in press releases.

For further understanding in the overview of the intention and the use of speech act in the whole contents, the percentage of the frequency of the use in five speech act classes were calculated as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of speech act</th>
<th>Amount (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>54.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>22.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarations</td>
<td>9.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressives</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicated that representatives were used most in the highest level at 54.83% while directives and expressives were expressed least at the same level of 6.45%. They reflected that the core information, stating fact and true, about the trade fairs were highly needed for business decision, and the irrelevant information were shown much less. Moreover, according to the results, direct speech act was extremely necessary for press releases, and it was showed in every speech act classes.

IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION
The research showed that all of five speech act classes, according to Searl’s theory – 1) representative 2) commissives 3) directives 4) declarations and 5) expressives, were found as in the researcher’s hypothesis. Representatives were chosen most for the press releases.
in the highest level at 54.83% while directives and expressives were expressed least at the same level of 6.45%. This reflected that the core information for fact and true about the trade fairs were highly demanded for business decision, and the irrelevant information were mostly discarded. In addition, direct speech act was extremely needed for press releases to show the purposes and information of the fair because, according to the results, it was shown in all speech act classes. The findings also reflected the correlation between the business characters in conciseness and relevance and the speech acts in press releases that were clear and direct.

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REFERENCES


