

# Considerations for Testing Speech Acts in TOEFL

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The purpose of this research is to consider how to test 'speech acts' based on TOEFL and develop the considerations for testing 'speech acts'. TOEFL tests EFL/ESL students' English proficiency. It is to estimate how well students can communicate with English native speakers and accomplish their academic purpose. So, it is important to test speech act in TOEFL. It should include the ways of speaking of English native speakers in various aspects. I analyzed the questions in Listening Comprehension-Part A of TOEFL upon a few aspects. I considered how they are testing speech act. The results suggest the considerations for testing speech acts upon various aspects.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of research**

- 1.To find patterns of speech acts testing in TOEFL
- 2.To develop the implications for accepting speech acts

### **1.2 The significance of testing I**

- 1.McNamara (2000): To get measures for students' language proficiency
2. Bachman (1990): To diagnose students' ability and to assist in evaluating student achievement

### **1.3 The significance of testing II**

Testing thus has direct relation with teaching and enables us to know whether examinees understand what they have learned and how well they can apply them outside the classroom

### **1.4 Communicative competence**

Many ESL/EFL students are learning English to accept communicative competence for their academic purpose. It is important to test how effective students can accomplish their communicative ability of native speakers as non-native speakers

## **2. Speech Acts**

### **2.1 Austin (1962) & Searl (1969)**

Categorized utterances according to functions.

The way of expressing and performing acts through speech of its own language.

No speech cannot be said to be context free about meaning or function and it is different from cultures and languages.

### 3. Test of English As a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

It is the test for measuring English language proficiency of ESL/EFL students whose first or native language is not English and who want to study in north American colleges or universities

#### 3.1 Listening Comprehension; Part A

It contains short conversations between two people and test takers are supposed to infer what was stated or implied in the conversation

The topics vary upon student life on campus and the participants in conversation have different purpose of speaking; Apologizing, giving advice, asking for information, etc.

#### 3.2 Method & Distribution

TOEFL Test Preparation Kit Workbook (ETS, 2002)

##### 3.2.1 The total number of speech acts questions and its distribution

Unit	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Speech Acts	11	9	11	7	14	8	60

##### 3.2.2 The distribution of questions on speech acts

Aspects	Advice	Refusal	Complaint	Compliment	Request	Apology	Total
number	29	12	10	4	3	2	60

### 4.0 Aspects of Speech Acts in TOEFL

#### 4.1 Advice

<p>(woman) I'm getting really stressed out. I just don't have the time to work on all three projects.(man) You need to set priorities-just take the time to figure out what has to be done first.(narrator) What does the man suggest the woman do?(answer) Decide which project is most urgent</p>
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- Seeking and giving advice
- Seeker: problem or worry
- Adviser: suggestion

## 4.2 Refusal

(man) My wife and I would like to have you over for dinner on Friday.  
(woman) That's very kind of you, but I have theater tickets for that evening.  
(narrator) What does the woman mean?  
(answer) She won't be able to come to dinner.

→ Indirective form

## 4.3 Complain

(man) Whoops! Did any of my coffee just spill on you?  
(woman) It's hot! Is that all you have to say?  
(narrator) What does the woman imply?  
(answer) The man should apologize.

→ Asking apology and remedy

## 4.4 Request

(woman) Do you want the windows open or closed?  
(man) I almost always prefer fresh air, if possible.  
(narrator) What does the man imply?  
(answer) He's like to have the windows open.

→ Request by using indirective form

→ Typical form: 'Could you...?'

## 4.5 Apology

(man) Oh, I'm so sorry. You must let me pay to have your jacket cleaned.  
(woman) That's all right...it could happen to anyone... and I'm sure that orange juice doesn't stain.  
(narrator) What can be inferred about the woman?  
(answer) She isn't upset about the incident.

→ Typical form: 'I;m sorry...'

→ Request form: Expressing emotion/compensation

## 4.6 Compliment

(man) You did an excellent job on that presentation.  
(woman) Thanks, I put a lot of time into it.  
(narrator) What does the woman mean?  
(answer) She worked hard on her presentation

→ Ways of responding: Enforcing the compliment or simple thank

## 5.0 Conclusion

### 5.1 Patterns on Speech Acts Testing

1. Indirective as communicative strategy
2. Typical form: I'm sorry.../ could you...?

### 5.2 Pedagogical Implication

1. Classroom: Teaching indirective speech acts according to various situations
2. Materials for test preparation: Accept speech acts upon aspects

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