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Evaluating Speech Acts in English Language Teaching Software: The Case of *Tell Me More*

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Abstract

More recently, technology-based settings such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) have developed amazing modern places for materials used to teach pragmatics. In terms of speech acts, one of the most fascinating conceptions of pragmatics (Eslamirasekh, 1993), no study has been focused on the presentation of speech acts in English language teaching software. This study aimed to analyze types, frequencies and distributions of speech acts presented in the dialogues of *Tell Me More* (version 10), a popular language learning software employed by a large number of academic institutions around the world, based on Searle's (1976) speech act taxonomy. Using descriptive research including qualitative and quantitative investigations, the results revealed that interactive dialogues of entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* totally provide learners with a noticeable number of speech acts along with numerous texts, pictures or movies to explain context. The results of chi-square test also showed inequality and variation in the distribution of present speech acts, namely assertive, directive, expressive and commissive in dialogues of each level and also entire 10 levels of software. Declaration speech act was absent in dialogues of *Tell Me More*. The research findings have some implications for CALL material designers, language teachers and learners.

Keywords: Computer Assisted Language Learning, Material analysis, Pragmatics, Speech Acts, *Tell Me More*

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1. Introduction

Due to the importance of communication in the today's world, language pedagogy has emphasized on communicative features of language. According to Chapelle and Sauro (2017), language learners want to feel competent to communicate with different speakers. Pragmatic competences as one of the necessary components of communicative competences (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) play a crucial role in today's era of globalization and transculturalism**,** where communication and ability to appropriately achieve the mutual comprehension is critical. This knowledge is so vital that its lack may lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding in international situations (Taguchi & Sykes, 2013). Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) empowers a foreign language learner to state and interpret intentions and meanings appropriately within a specific sociocultural context of communication. In other words, ILP addresses both linguistic and sociocultural factors to interpret message (Sykes, 2017).

The crucial features of pragmatic competences are perception and production of speech acts in various conditions (Eslamirasekh, 1993). A speech act is an expression including speaker's idea and the actions which he/she hopes to convey in any exchange of communication; therefore, people produce speech acts when they need to ask, order, promise, invite, apologize, refuse, recommend, introduce and so on (Searle, 1979).

Many learners may not know about culturally and socially relevant patterns of second language (L2) in English as a foreign language (EFL) condition such as Iran where they are not exposed to L2 in their daily lives; therefore, language learners must be supported by appropriate materials including real samples of speech act to improve their pragmatic competences. Recently, the use of CALL has facilitated the production of technology-based materials concentrating on pragmatics. These materials can encompass transnational aspects focused on the improvement of pragmatic competence necessitated for communication in different situations (Sykes, 2017).

Although one can refer to a fruitful body of pragmatic studies addressing the use of speech acts in papery materials (i.e., language textbooks) (e.g., Aksoyalp & Toprak, 2015; Alemi, Roodi & Bemani, 2013; Delen & Tavil, 2010; Ekin, 2013; Kohandani, Farzaneh & Kazemi, 2014), there has not been a firm enough conclusion about the presentation of speech acts in CALL materials yet. To fill in this gap, this research tried to evaluate *Tell Me More* in terms of speech acts.

Today, *Tell Me More* language software is known as a popular technology-mediate package (Nielson, 2011) which is more often used as supplement to pedagogical program or independently by learner in self-study context (Godwin-Jones, 2017). This software is claimed by designers to

provide a communicative approach to learn a new language. However, the software has not been investigated in terms of speech act use; therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the types and frequencies of speech acts presented in dialogues of each level and entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* language software (version 10) based on Searle's (1976) speech act taxonomy?

2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the distribution rate of speech act types presented in dialogues of each level and also entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* language software (version 10)?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics as one of the branches of pragmatics and interlanguage studies (Schauer, 2009) was initially explained by Kasper and Dahl (1991) as L2 learners' perception and presentation of speech acts, and how they acquire L2 speech act information. Taguchi (2017) discussed that ILP investigates L2 learners' knowledge, use and improvement in performing sociocultural functions. In fact, L2 learners require linguistic forms and skills to carry out social functions in the target language. Although in general all aspects of pragmatics are topic to cross-cultural contrasts, scholars have focused on politeness and speech acts.

2.2. The Speech Act Theory

The speech act was firstly expanded by Austin (1962) to describe the presumption that people make use of language not only to provide information and facts, but also to do actions. Austin (1962) also defined three various types of act: Locutionary act, Illocutionary act, and Perlocutionary act. Focusing on the second type, Austin (1962) developed five varieties of illocutionary acts: (a) Exercitives (b) Behabitives (c) Verdictives (d) Expositives (e) Commissives. Austin's speech act model was improved by Searle (1969) who distinguished between the illocutionary aspect of an expression and its propositional meaning which Austin (1962) named locution and illocution. Revising Austin's classification, Searle (1976) finally proposed his own category of illocutionary acts based on what the speaker intends to express in his/her utterances as the following: Expressives, Declarations, Representatives or (Assertives), Commissives and Directives.

2.3. Pragmatic Failure

According to Thomas (1983), most of our misunderstandings of other people is due to pragmatic failure or fail to understand a speaker's intention. Preferring the term 'pragmatic failures' instead of 'pragmatic errors', she argued that grammar errors can be described according to prescriptive principles while the quality of the pragmatic failures is such that it cannot be said that the pragmatic forces of speech is inaccurate, but this can be said that it failed to attain the speaker's intention.

Drawing distinction between Sociopragmatic failures and Pragmalinguistic failures, Thomas (1983) discussed that Pragmalinguistic failures may occur because of two reasons: teaching-induced errors and the improper transference of speech act strategy from the mother tongue to the target language of speeches that are semantically and syntactically similar, but, due to various interpretive bias, demonstrate different pragmatic force in the target language. On the other hand, sociopragmatic failure is caused by cross-culturally different understandings of what comprises suitable linguistic behavior. Because sociopragmatic is related to social features such as imposition, different levels of society and relative responsibility, sociopragmatic failures occur from various assessments of these components.

Pragmalinguistic failures are not difficult to master because pragmalinguistic competence includes the awareness of protocols which can be easy taught as part of the grammar. Vice versa, sociopragmatic competence is difficult to learn because it deals with the learners' belief as much as their awareness of the language (Thomas, 1983; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

2.4. Pragmatic Teaching

Some features of pragmatic competence may not be easy to acquire or appear late in learners' systems (Taguchi, 2010). In fact, second language learners meet noticeable difficulty in learning pragmatics since they must address the accessibilities of linguistic forms, their functional feasibilities and contextual factors. These form, function and context factors are complex and do not follow systematic correlations. (Taguchi, 2015). Therefore, many researchers believed that there is a need for L2 pragmatic teaching to raise learners' pragmatic awareness (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Kasper, 1997). This awareness empowers language learners to recognize sociopragmatic custom of target language (Eslami-Rasekh & Noora, 2008). In this regard, researchers attempted to discover creative ways to comprise pragmatics in a classroom (Taguchi, 2015).

2.5. The Role of Technology to Teach Interlanguage Pragmatics

Many EFL teachers have acquired English language as a foreign language. They may have not had any communication with native speakers or sufficient time to perfectly develop their pragmatic knowledge. Therefore, their ability to support learners by enough pragmatic learning opportunities may be restricted. For those non-native teachers, book-based programs can be beneficial in teaching of pragmatic competence (Kim & Hall, 2002). The previous evaluations of English language teaching (ELT) textbooks have indicated that many ELT textbooks offer insufficient examples of pragmatic information required for improving learners' pragmatic competence (e.g., Bagherpour & Barkat, 2017; Kohandani et al., 2014; Nourdad & Roshani Khiabani, 2015; Poupari & Bagheri, 2013; Vaezi, Tabatabaei & Bakhtiarvand, 2014). In addition to textbooks, nowadays, there are several technological devices that can be used to facilitate teaching and support the learners' needs. Today, computer technologies have improved from their secondary position in the pedagogical program to become a primary resource of real experiences in language teaching (Otto, 2017). The application of CALL in developing interlanguage pragmatics is differed from pragmatically concentrated content, to telecollaboration and interactive digital simulation (Sykes, 2017).

Li (2013) addressed the critical role of computer technology to teach pragmatics: 1) Computer technology is appropriate to teach pragmatic aspects which are difficult to integrate in conventional classrooms. 2) Technology can provide a real learning condition where learners practice pragmatics while engaged in an actual conversation. 3) Computer technology also allows measuring the exact amount of instruction needed for pragmatic learning. Consequently, computer technologies are useful to develop the efficient use of pragmatic language and encourage the learning of pragmatics, that is not easy to achieve in formal education (Taguchi, 2015).

Furthermore, developing internet technologies and shifting methods about authorships, information production, inspection and publishing have increased authenticity and availability for dynamic content dissemination. This allows the production of available, digital content which can encompass the variability and complicacy related to interlanguage pragmatics (Sykes, 2017).

According to Sykes (2017), there are several accessible, online pedagogical contents to teach and learn pragmatics: 1) A website for learning Spanish speech acts including 10 units with particular pragmatic functions. Exercises promote learning through observation, examination, and reflection. 2) A set of isolated modules to teach and learn English pragmatics. The

nature, extent and target of modules is based on the writer. 3) A site including seven units with strategies to learn Japanese speech acts. Exercises comprise evaluation and reaction exercises make easy the comprehension of Japanese pragmatics. 4) A collection of videos including conversation, exercise and culture representations to develop pragmatic function. The website does not clearly explain pragmatics. It addresses the subjects to develop ILP. 5) A set of resources with conversation exercises in Portuguese. The website does not clearly expound pragmatics. It mentions subjects to develop ILP.

2.6. Empirical Studies

Recently, several studies have investigated the efficiency of computer technologies such as CALL, social networking and computer mediated communication (CMC) to improve L2 pragmatics (e.g., Belz & Kinginger, 2003; Belz & Vyatkina, 2005; Gonzalez-Lloret, 2008; Kagegawa, 2009; Sykes, 2005, 2009, 2011; Utashiro & Kawai, 2009; Vyatkina & Belz, 2006). These studies have indicated that computer technology can develop essential conditions such as input, interaction and simulation for developing L2 pragmatics.

Scott (2015) analyzed Twitter hashtags by means of the lens of implicature and conversational form. Hashtags as a digital practice consist of words and phrases that follow a '#' sign to state an issue, feeling or situation. Hashtags are a noticeable symbol of socio-pragmatic behavior. They may lead the hearer to explicit and implied meaning. In online communication, learners must recognize how to interpret and produce hashtags to correctly convey their own meaning.

According to Taguchi and Sykes (2013), recent advancements in technology have developed the scope of research in interlanguage pragmatics in several important ways: 1. Technology has enhanced our understanding of the construct of pragmatic competence through empowering researchers to collect data on aspects of L2 pragmatic performance which are otherwise difficult to examine (e.g., performance fluency). 2. Technology empowers the digitization of audio recordings to raise proficiency in oral fluency tests. 3. Technology has promoted the context of analysis for pragmatic competence to comprise a diversity of venues to produce L2 data to document characteristics of learners' language and make conclusion of their acquisition process. 4. Computer-based techniques allow researchers to examine large amount of texts in a reliable way and make L2 pragmatic analysis of written language easy.

Regarding the importance of digital material in teaching and learning pragmatics, some research has been established in this area. Cohen and Sykes (2013) investigated the role of language learner strategies in the development of L2 pragmatic awareness within the domain of intercultural education. To

address these issues, an instructional website including strategies for learning L2 speech acts (e.g. compliment, gratitude, leave taking, request, apology, invitation, advice, suggestion, disagreement, complaint, reprimand) and a virtual space that give participants a chance to further explore their L2 pragmatic performance and to put into practice the skills and strategies, played a major role in content delivery. The research findings indicated that strategy instruction enables learners to move beyond language to culture and supports them in developing interpretative capabilities so that they can make truly informed choices about just how pragmatically appropriate they wish to be. The results also showed the benefits of making accessible to learners through digitally-mediated spaces numerous varieties of strategies, speech acts, contextual situations, models and examples that may help learners engage in pragmatically informed interactions.

Utashiro and Kawai (2009) investigated the effect of integrating CALL into classroom instruction for the teaching of Japanese reactive tokens (RTs). In the classroom, the teaching of RTs is not easy since they are verbal and nonverbal reactions in real life communications. To overcome this problem, the researchers developed a CALL program to provide language learner with videos including native speaker dialogues with different RTs. The research findings indicated that the language learners developed meaningfully their proficiency to identify and create RTs. The results showed the advantage of integrating CALL into instructional model to teach L2 pragmatic aspects.

In another study, Ward, Escalante, Bayyari and Solorio (2007) examined a CALL solution for teaching RTs behavior in a second language. The researchers indicated that pair work and teacher fronted exercise can be useful to acquire some types of RTs, but classroom learning is not enough for learning vastly conversational behaviors. A CALL program for interactive behaviors has been employed since they were not easy to attain from classroom instruction alone. The program included explanation, audio samples, visual signals, auditory and visual feedback. Results showed that learners would present better after the instruction than before.

Today, the case of technology-based learning and teaching of pragmatics is in its immaturity (Sykes, 2017). Previous research has led to better comprehension of the important role of computer technologies to teach and learn interlanguage pragmatics; however, very few studies have focused on the effectiveness of digital materials for teaching pragmatics (e.g., Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Utashiro & Kawai, 2009; Ward et al., 2007). Furthermore, no research has been focused on the presentation of speech acts in CALL materials.

3. Method

This study followed a descriptive method and collected the data through the analysis of the content of the dialogues in *Tell Me More*. Then, the data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

3.1. Materials and Instruments

3.1.1. Material

Tell Me More (version 10) English language teaching software was produced by a Parisian company, Auralog, in 2012. It is a popular language learning software used by individuals**,** language schools**,** universities and corporations around the world**.** Developed by a team of engineers and professional linguists, *Tell Me More* is claimed by the designers to follow a communicative approach in its materials by using real world situations that address all areas of language learning like speaking, comprehension, reading, writing, grammar, and cultural knowledge. This software provides learners with 10 different levels of teaching, from novice to advanced level. Users can begin their English exercises by taking a test to identify their level of English ability or select from one of 10 levels. Content in *Tell Me More* is organized into lessons. Each lesson includes an enormous range of activities for learners who want to integrate a computer in their language learning. Many components of the text and features in the application are interactive. The dialogues which form the basis of learner's first experiences in the program provide learners with text, images and videos related to the particular topic of that lesson accompanied by natural sounding audio spoken by multiple native speakers, both male and female. Learners can improve their communication competence with interactive conversations, charts and 3D spirited response items. In dialogue section, the software asks users questions and they will be able to answer just as if they are engaging in real conversation with a real person. Learners listen to multiple correct answers to questions and then designate the one they want.

3.1.2. Instrument

The instrument of the research to investigate the material was Searle's (1976) classification of speech act. To ensure the content validity of the instrument, two professional experts in applied linguistics and English language teaching assessed the components and subcomponents of the instrument and confirmed this model is appropriate to the subjects under study. The reliability was estimated through calculating the index of inter rater reliability using Pearson Correlation analysis (r= 0.89). Searle's (1976) speech act taxonomy is as the following:

(1) Representatives or (Assertives): This type of Illocutionary act is relevant to the fact of the proposition. The aim of the assertive speech act is

to inform the hearer about something. In other word, the speaker tells the addressee how things are. The member of assertive class deals with the dimension of evaluation including true and false. The direction of fit in this class is words to the world; the psychological state is the speaker's opinion. The different instances in this class are: state, boast, complain, claim, report, assert, describe, call, conclude, deduce, characterize, predict, classify, identify, accuse, diagnose, affirm, deny, emphasize, illustrate, concede and so on. Example: I predict he will come; I state that it is raining.

(2) Directives: The speaker expects the addressee to do something. The direction of fit in this class is world to the words; the psychological state is want. A directive speech act is referred to an expression in which the utterance makes the listener perform some actions as a response. The different instances in this class are: ask, request, invite, advise, order, command, beg, defy, plead, pray, entreat, dare, challenge and so on. Example: "Could you open the door?"

(3) Commissives: They are expressions in which the speakers bind themselves to do some actions in the future. This type of Illocutionary act is prospective and related to the speakers' commitment to the forthcoming act. The direction of fit in this group is world to the words; the psychological state is the speaker's aim. The Different instances in this group are: promise, vow, pledge and so on. Example: I promise to give the pencil back.

(4) Expressives: This type of Illocutionary act occurs when speakers state own feelings about some psychological conditions of occurrences. In performing an expressive speech act, the direction of fit is neither world to the words nor words to the world, but the fact of the proposition stated in an expressive speech act is supposed. The different instances are: greet, thank, apologize, condole, deplore, welcome, congratulate and so on. Example: I'm sorry about your mother.

(5) Declarations: The successful performance of one members of this class makes changes in the world to match the propositional content. As an instance, if people successfully do the act of naming a person as candidate, then he/she is candidate. The direction of fit in this group is both words to the world and world to the words. The psychological state cannot be observed in declaration speech acts. The different instances of this group are: declare, pronounce, resign, name, appoint, excommunicate and so on. Examples: I declare the session adjourned.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

Dialogue plays an important role in providing conditions for speakers to produce various speech acts in their utterances (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990). To have a relevant sample size in conversation analysis, it is necessary to examine samples of everyday dialogues based on the topics and identify speakers' intention: if they are important conversations of topics in which the speakers attempt to have an influence on each other; if they are funny stories about different issues; are they gossiping devices; are they to amuse a group of people (Guerin, 2004). The entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* language software (version 10) include 48 lengthy dialogues on 48 topics in whole. Dialogues is organized interactively and step by step. Each dialogue includes Many questions which each question, by itself, follows multiple correct answers.

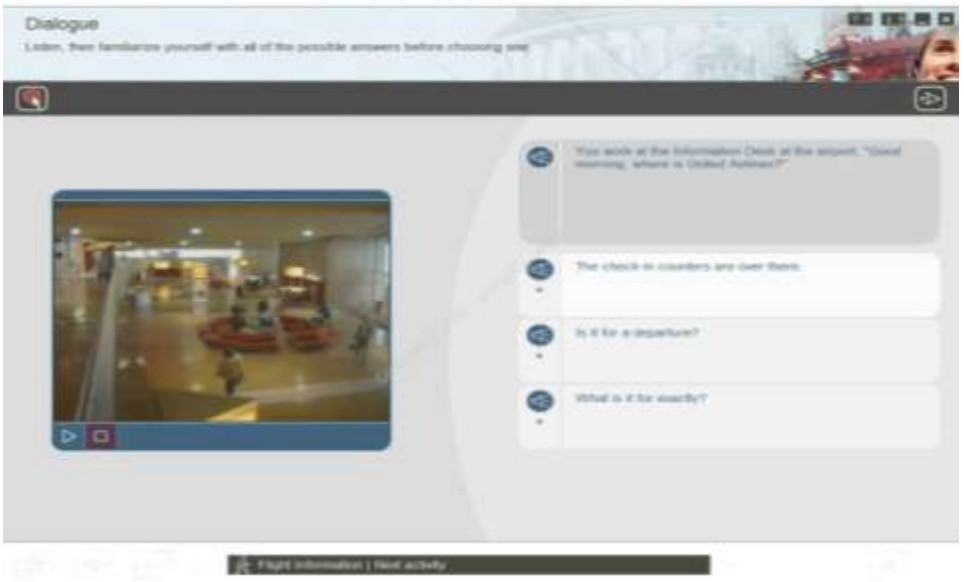


Figure 1. a Sample Dialogue of *Tell Me More*

Learners will be able to designate the one they want. Software recommends learners to familiarize themselves with all of the possible answers before choosing one. Dialogues consist of different sentences in the range of 53 to 167 sentences. Thus, in order to evaluate the dialogues in terms of speech acts, the data were collected by doing the following procedure:

1. Playing dialogues of *Tell Me More* (version 10) as the source of data by computer.

2. Following steps of dialogues by selecting multiple correct answers/options.

3. Recording data by copying each step of dialogue and printing it onto paper.

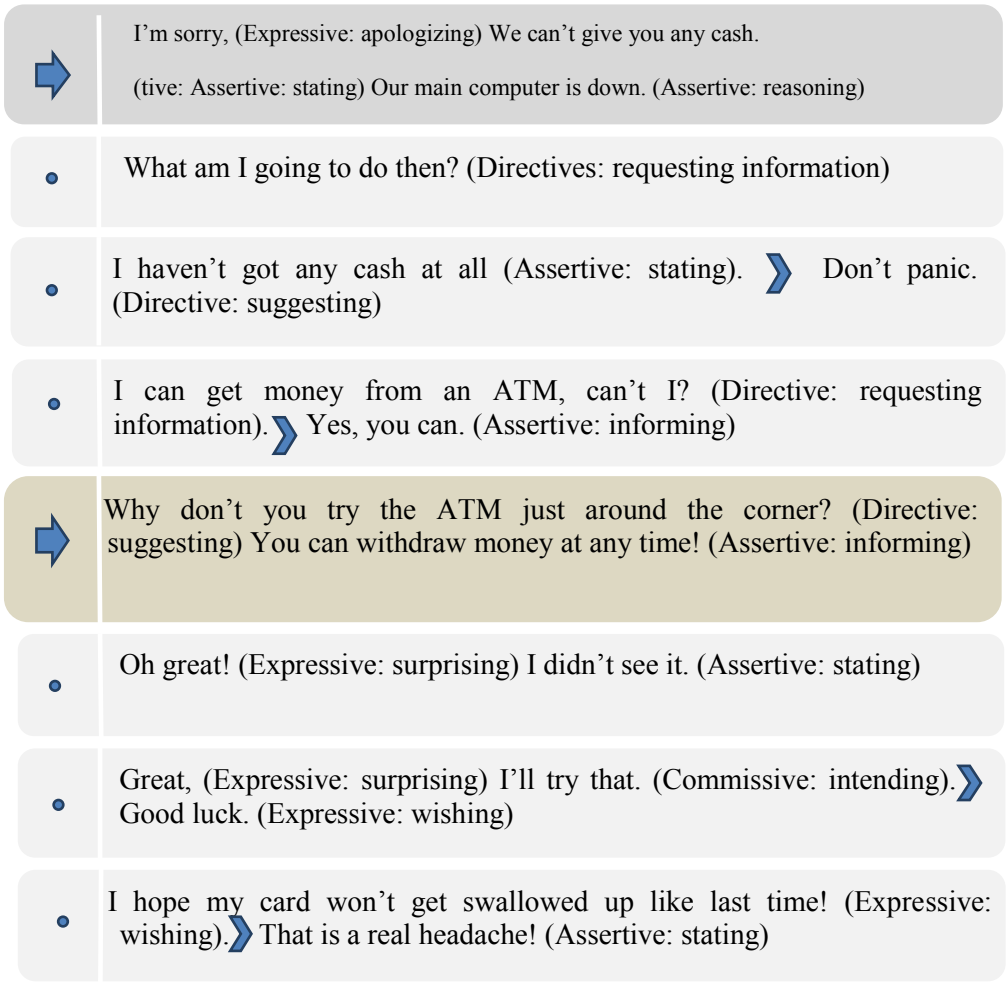
4. Replaying dialogues and comparing them with recorded data to make sure all utterances used in the whole 48 dialogues are extracted.

5. Classifying the data base on Searle's (1976) speech act taxonomy.

6. Giving codes on each datum.

The codification of the number of utterances used in a sample dialogue of *Tell Me More* (version 10) is presented here as an example.

Level 6-Lesson 3: Bank and ATM



3.3. Data Analysis

To analyze the data on qualitative stage of the research and answer the first question regarding types of speech acts, careful inspection of the

dialogues included in 10 levels of *Tell Me More* (version 10) was carried out manually to determine the frequency of each category of Searle's (1976) speech act model as well as their percentage. To ensure the reliability of the results, the second rater categorized and calculated the speech acts. The inter-rater reliability was estimated by using Pearson correlation analysis (r= 0.89). Furthermore, for the quantitative part of the study and to answer the second research question, chi-square test was applied to make a comparison between the distribution rate of speech act types used in dialogues of each level and also entire 10 levels of the software to manifest whether the distribution of speech acts is equivalent or not.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Analysis of First Research Question

As its first goal, this study tried to evaluate the types and frequencies of speech acts presented in the dialogues of *Tell Me More*. As Table 1 reveals, the total number of speech acts in each level of software includes: the first level: 421, the second level: 406, the third level: 464, the fourth level: 317, the fifth level: 443, the sixth level: 389, the seventh level: 301, the eighth level: 446, the ninth level: 595 and 10th level: 501.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Speech Acts in Dialogues of Each Level of Tell Me More

Tell Me More	Assertive (%)	Directive (%)	Expressive(%)	Commissive(%)	Declaration(%)	Total
Level1	250 (59.4)	82 (19.5)	82 (19.5)	7 (1.7)	0	421
Level2	255 (62.8)	92 (22.7)	38 (9.4)	21 (5.2)	0	406
Level3	209 (45.0)	133 (28.7)	90 (19.4)	32 (6.9)	0	464
Level4	173 (54.6)	106 (33.4)	19 (6.0)	19 (6.0)	0	317
Level5	177 (40.0)	165 (37.2)	52 (11.7)	49 (11.1)	0	443
Level6	191 (49.1)	131 (33.7)	46 (11.8)	21 (5.4)	0	389
Level7	165 (54.8)	96 (31.9)	19 (6.3)	21 (7.0)	0	301
Level8	224 (50.2)	140 (31.4)	52 (11.7)	30 (6.7)	0	446
Level9	284 (47.7)	181 (30.4)	55 (9.2)	75 (12.6)	0	595
Level10	255 (50.9)	109 (21.8)	91 (18.2)	46 (9.2)	0	501

These results indicate that there is not a close link between the proficiency level of *Tell Me More* and the frequency of the speech acts presented to the language learners. For example, the number of speech acts in the first and second levels is higher than those in the fourth level.

As Table1 shows, none of these levels present declaration speech acts while assertives and directives form most of the speech act examples of each level respectively. After assertives and directives, the most frequent category belongs to expressives and commissives.

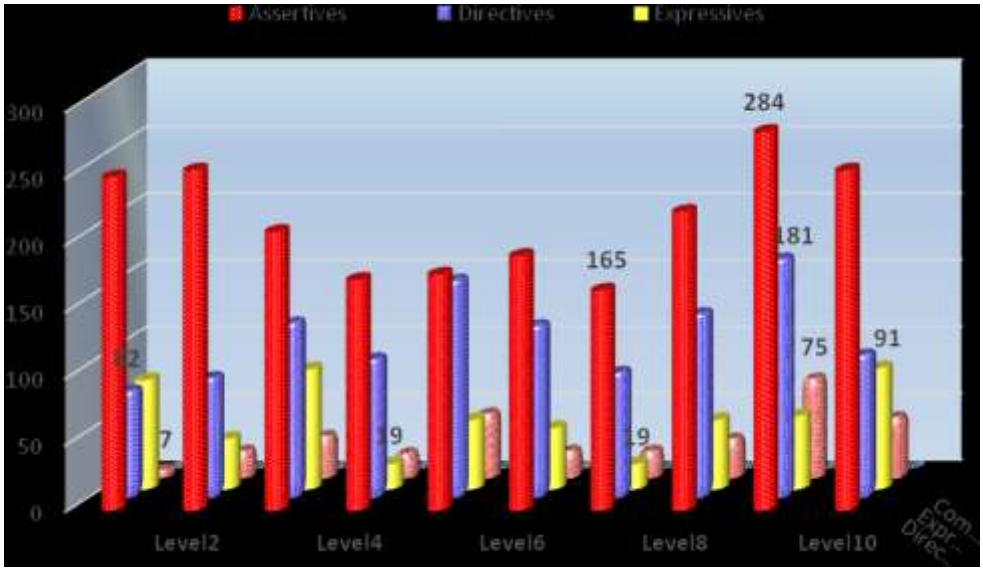


Figure 2. Distribution of Speech Acts Types in Each Level of *Tell Me More*

As shown in Figure 2, the comparison between levels of *Tell Me More* (Version 10) indicates that assertive speech acts represent the highest number in level 9 (i.e., 284) and the least frequency in level 7 (i.e., 165). While, level9 enjoys more directive speech acts (i.e., 181) than other levels of software, level 1 involves fewer ones (i.e., 82). Highest frequency of expressive speech acts belongs to level 10 (i.e., 91), however levels 4,7 cover the fewest number of them (i.e., 19). The most frequently used commissive speech acts in the levels of *Tell Me More* can be found in level 9 (i.e., 75) and the lowest ones in level 1 (i.e., 7).

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Speech Acts Types in Entire 10 Levels of Tell Me More

Speech act category	Frequency	Percent
Assertive	2183	51.0
Directive	1235	28.8
Expressive	544	12.7
Commissive	321	7.5
Declaration	0	0
Total	4283	

As Table 2 reveals, dialogues of entire 10 levels of software totally provides learners with 4283 speech acts. The most frequently used speech act categories are assertive, followed by directive. The third rank of speech act category belongs to expressive. After that, commissive which represents the least frequency and percentage can be found. However, declaration speech acts are not found at all in the dialogues of examined software.

4.2.2. Analysis of Second Research Question

The second aim of this research was to investigate if there was any significant difference between the distribution rate of speech act types presented in dialogues of each level and also entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* language software. The result of chi-square test to show a comparison between distribution rate of speech act types presented in dialogues of each level and entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* (version 10) have been depicted through Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Chi-square Result for Comparing Between the Distribution Rate of the Speech Act Types in Each Level of Tell Me More

Levels of *Tell Me More* (version10)	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Level 1	301.062[a]	3	.000
Level 2	336.601[a]	3	.000
Level 3	143.707[a]	3	.000
Level 4	211.543[a]	3	.000
Level 5	131.799[a]	3	.000
Level 6	188.882[a]	3	.000
Level 7	193.924[a]	3	.000
Level 8	212.117[a]	3	.000
Level 9	225.618[a]	3	.000
Level 10	196.030[a]	3	.000

According to the statistical conventions, the use of chi-square test is appropriate if the lowest expected frequency in any cell is five or more. Therefore, declaration speech acts whose frequency is zero was not included in chi-square test. According to Table 3, the results of chi-square test shows that there are significant differences between distribution rate of speech act types presented in dialogues of each level of *Tell Me More* (i.e., *Asymp. Sig.* = .000 (p< .05)). In other words, main categories of speech acts used in the dialogues of each level of software are not distributed equally.

Table 4

Chi-square Result for Comparing Between the Distribution Rate of Speech Act Types in Entire 10 Levels of Tell Me More

	Value
Chi-square	1964.668[a]
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000

As Table 4 shows, the result of chi-square test for comparing between distribution rate of speech act types presented in dialogues of entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* indicates that chi-square value is: x^2 = (3, n= 4283) =1964.668, and *p-value* is: .000. Therefore, the result is significant at p< .05. The significance of chi-square result shows that the main categories of speech acts used in the dialogues of entire 10 levels of software are not distributed evenly and equally.

4.2. Discussion

Pedagogy based arguments concentrated on the statements about the importance of technology-based teaching to answer educational necessities. Such necessities are suggested by material developers or instructors based on their analysis of established educational rules to achieve targets of teaching. These argumentations encompass many features of language learning since computer technology presents different methods of developing learning (Chapelle, 2017). Data-driven learning as one of the educational arguments support the belief that learner could access to data including many samples of language use and benefit from investigating the language, that is, inspecting grammatical constructions, phrase structure and expressions to achieve information about the real samples of language (Higgins & Johns, 1984). Such investigations empower learners to resolve their learning difficulties independently, enhance their awareness about linguistic developments, discover patterns and examine theories (Chen, 2011). Recently, the use of CALL has improved the production of instructional materials focusing on pragmatics (Sykes, 2017). According to the research problem stated in this study, assessing technology mediated settings such as CALL materials that

appear to be efficacious to teach pragmatics becomes necessary for those who are making these choices. In fact, investigation of technologies for language teaching are recently established to make decision about usefulness of materials and appropriateness of instruction (Chapelle, 2017). *Tell Me More* which is the aim of the current research is also in the same vein. Therefore, this study analyzed the conversations of *Tell Me More* (version 10), so as to illustrate how the dialogue sections of 10 levels of software provide learners with adequate pragmatically competent information.

The results of current study indicated that the dialogue sections of entire 10 levels of *Tell Me More* (version 10) provide learners with a noticeable number of speech acts, namely a total of 4283 cases accompanied with numerous texts, pictures or movies explaining context while allowing learners to designate one of the multiple correct answers they want just as if they were engaging in concrete conversation with a real person. This finding is indirectly in line with Cohen and Sykes's (2013) study in which they indicated that digital materials are useful for teaching numerous varieties of strategies, speech acts, contextual situations, models and examples providing learners with greatly pragmatic and intercultural information while engaging them in pragmatically informed interactions.

Furthermore, the above mentioned result is in harmony with Utashiro and Kawai's (2009) as well as Ward et al. 's (2007) studies in which researchers suggest that digital materials or CALL solutions simulating highly conversational partners and interactive behaviors (e.g., how to make polite greetings, exchange pleasantries and request information) in contextualized manner are valuable educational sources because they facilitate learner's comprehension of conversations and improve pragmatics learning.

According to the results of the current study, dialogues used in each level of *Tell Me More* (version 10) suffer from lack of declaration speech act. The results from chi-square test showed that distribution rate of other existing speech act types is not evenly and equally in each level and in the entire 10 levels of the software. Assertives and directives form the most common speech acts, while expressives and commissives constitute a small percentage. This unequal presentation of speech acts may be due to the nature of communication. In daily conversations, the distribution of speech acts cannot be equal because the nature of the language makes it unavoidable. Participants in common communication acts may not need to state their feeling as much as they need to express realities, expound things and request somebody to do something. It can be concluded that dialogues of *Tell Me More* (version 10) provide sufficient input and appropriate speech situations for language learners who aim to communicate their essential need of stating, describing, confirming requesting, accepting, refusing, suggesting,

promising, apologizing, thanking and so on. In fact, *Tell Me More* facilitates such a goal through representing the role of different people in the target society, the way members of different levels of society state their intentions through utterances.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Due to the importance of CALL materials to provide curricular content in realm of teaching and learning of pragmatics, this study was so curious to know about the pragmatic nature of language teaching software and started with analyzing the dialogues of *Tell Me More* (version 10) in terms of speech act. Because there was no research in this regard, the present study can be useful for the EFL/ English as a second language (ESL) teachers to better consider CALL materials from the pragmatics side and select language teaching software in the English class that display the actual language context in order to equip students with various types of speech acts. The results can help CALL material designers to provide a full-fledged perspective of the speech acts in their future production. The findings also can be beneficial for learners who are interested in deciding appropriate language self-study software to improve their own pragmatic competence because they will have an idea about the presentation of speech acts in the dialogue sections of *Tell Me More* (version 10).

In the present study, Searle's (1976) speech act taxonomy were applied by the researchers to investigate pragmatic competence of language software; therefore, the results are not generalizable to other pragmatic aspects. Because the main criterion for recognizing the speech acts was the illocutionary force of participants in the dialogues.

It is hoped that the present research can encourage other interested researchers to conduct further related studies on content of CALL materials in realm of teaching and learning pragmatics. Because this pragmatic investigation examined *Tell Me More* (version 10) in terms of speech acts, the future research can be organized to evaluate the strategies of developing speech acts in the existing software. The same research can be conducted to examine other parts of this software rather than the dialogue sections. *Tell Me More* can be investigated from different features rather than the pragmatic one as well as this research can be replicated on different software other than *Tell Me More.*

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