

How are the Sociolinguistic Competences applied in the English Textbook?

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Abstract

Promoting the sociolinguistic competences in the teaching process is vital since the students are required to use English for real-life communication. One of ways that teachers can do is by inserting sociolinguistic competences in their teaching materials. However, rarely did they focus on the sociolinguistic competences. Therefore, this content analysis research aims to void this gap by analyzing the use of sociolinguistic competences in the textbook entitled "Let's Talk". The result shows that the textbook has already applied the sociolinguistic competences in the dialogs including the social factors, speech functions, and Leech's Politeness Principles (PP). To summarize, textbooks should provide more dialogue models with diverse sociolinguistic contexts for practicing interactional and transactional communication. At that time, the learners would have been exposed to learn effective language use, as well as fluency practice and language accuracy, as these are prerequisites for achieving communicative competence goals.

Keywords: English textbook; politeness principles; sociolinguistic competence

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1. Introduction

In Indonesian junior high school system, English is one of the required subjects. The aim of learning English is to help students improve communicative skill in both spoken and written forms in order to achieve functional literacy, to raise awareness of the significance of English in improving the nation's competitiveness in a global society, and to deepen students' understanding of the language-culture relationship. As a result, the use of textbook in the teaching English is critical. It is designed to facilitate students to communicate according to the context of the language use. It also enables students to access information to prepare them to achieve the goal of learning English.

Additionally, the English textbook should be based on a literacy approach so that students can gain a wide range of learning experiences by taking into account factors such as

interpretation, convention, cooperation, cultural understanding, problem solving, reflection, and language use. For students, it should be practical, meaningful, and interesting. It must be written in proper, natural, current, and Standard English. It has to connect the language, social, and cultural value of the society. The textbook is an instructional guide that helps learners engage with these value-laden texts in order to expect them to learn the appropriate ways of thinking, behaving, doing, valuing, and being in the world (Widodo 2018). One of the examples is by focusing on the social factors and value of politeness in the dialogs of the textbook.

Being linguistically polite entails speaking to people in a manner that is appropriate for their relationship with the other speaker (Holmes, 1992: 296). In order to speak respectfully and naturally, students must understand the social value of a society. Politeness should be present in the textbook dialogue so that the conversation appears natural, despite the fact that the speech or conversation was designed by material designers. In addition, all speech components and functions must be considered during the conversation. In this part, a sociolinguistic competence is a must to learn.

Sociolinguistic competence is an understanding of the social context including the settings, the relationship of the speakers, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction (Hubei: 2008). Additionally, Saputra et.al (2019) state that sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics specifically examining the use of language in society. Moreover, sociolinguistics is also familiar among scholars of linguistics, sociology and anthropology since this field studies the relation between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structures of the users (Spolsky, 2010 in Susilawati, 2020). The reasons why the speakers speak differently in different social contexts all could be found in sociolinguistics (Holmes, 1992).

Additionally, to date, there is no or little investigative effort examining how sociolinguistic competences are applied in the textbook. For this reason, I would like to contribute to a better understanding of in what ways sociolinguistic competences are discursively represented in this textbook so that teachers and students gain heightened awareness that any texts in textbooks contain particular values drawn from a larger sociolinguistic context.

2. Method

In order to analyze sociolinguistic competences in the textbook, the researcher conducted content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) in which it emphasized describing the phenomenon of language use in its context through data interpretation. In this study, one book, “Let’s Talk for Junior High School Grade IX” by Bima, Winardi, and Nuralina was selected for a more in-depth analysis.

Thus, this study examined language usage, particularly as it related to speech style, from a sociolinguistic standpoint. The researcher herself served as the primary research instrument, interpreting, comprehending, and analyzing the data. It is compatible with Bogdan and Biklen's (1982: 27) statement that content analysis as one of the qualitative data analysis method (Yazar, 2020) uses the researcher as the primary instrument. Burns (1994: 295) also argues that the role of the researcher in qualitative research is that of an instrument. As a result, the research served as the researcher's designer, data collector, data analyst, data interpreter, and data reporter.

To collect the data, firstly the researcher thoroughly read and reread the textbook in order to extract valid and relevant information based on perception, knowledge, theories, and speech frame of sociolinguistic competences. Then, she took notes on the dialogs which included the sociolinguistic competences. The valid and relevant data was selected and classified by the researcher. The data was processed into the data sheet by the researcher. After being analyzed, the result of the analysis was in the form of description.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 Implementation of Sociolinguistic Competences in the English Textbook

In this part, the results were presented. The researcher analysed the dialogs from the textbook entitled “Let’s Talk for Junior High School Grade IX” and then categorized based on the social factors, speech functions, and Leech’s Politeness Principles (PP). The data consisted of two dialogs due to the space limitation. Here is the following analysis.

Dialog 1

Lisa was in Ratih’s house. When Lisa came, Ratih was reading a book.

Lisa : Hello, bookworm! What. . . are you reading?

Ratih : Oh, hi Lis! Guess what I’m reading!

Lisa : Well, is it on crime?

Ratih : No, it’s not.

Lisa : So, maybe it’s about . . .er. . . drug abuse?

Ratih : Ha . . .ha! Wrong again!

Lisa : Well, just tell me please. I’m all ears.

Ratih : All right, it’s about computers. I want to know not only the names of the parts of a computer but also the function of those parts.

Lisa : Wow! May I have a look?

Ratih : Sure.

Dialog 2

Ratih and Lisa are at the zoo.

Ratih : Excuse me, Sir. Can I ask some questions?

Mr. Kunto : Sure, please.

Ratih : What animals do you take care of?

Mr. Kunto : Well, I study and take care of tapirs, gorillas, and orang-utans.

Ratih : I see. Would you please tell us about tapirs?

Mr. Kunto : Well, let me tell you a little bit about tapirs, Miss . . .

Ratih : Ratih, Sir. Just call me Ratih. And this is my friend, Lisa.

Mr. Kunto : All right. You see, girls . . ., tapirs are only found in Central and South America, Sumatra, and Malaysia. They live in the forests. Look here! They have eyes but they cannot see very clearly, or . . . how do you say that . . . ah, partially-blind.

Ratih : Really? That’s interesting! How about hearing and smelling?

Mr.Kunto : A good question, Ratih! Tapirs can both hear and smell very well.

Taken from: Let’s Talk, 2005

Analysing dialog 1, it was about two friends. Lisa went to Ratih's house when Ratih was reading a book. Lisa was very curious. She asked Ratih what she read. While Dialog 2 was the dialog about Ratih and Lisa who went to the zoo. Ratih was very interested on the animals at the zoo. She wanted to know more about them. So, she asked the Mr.Kunto, a zoo keeper.

3.1.1. Social Functions

Holmes (1992: 1) states that sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to its context. It focuses on why people say things in different ways, as well as identifying the social functions of language and how to express social meaning through language. Furthermore, according to Holmes (1992), the conversation contains some social functions; the speakers, the interaction's setting or social context, the topic, and the purpose or function. Here is the analysis of social functions based on the dialogs above.

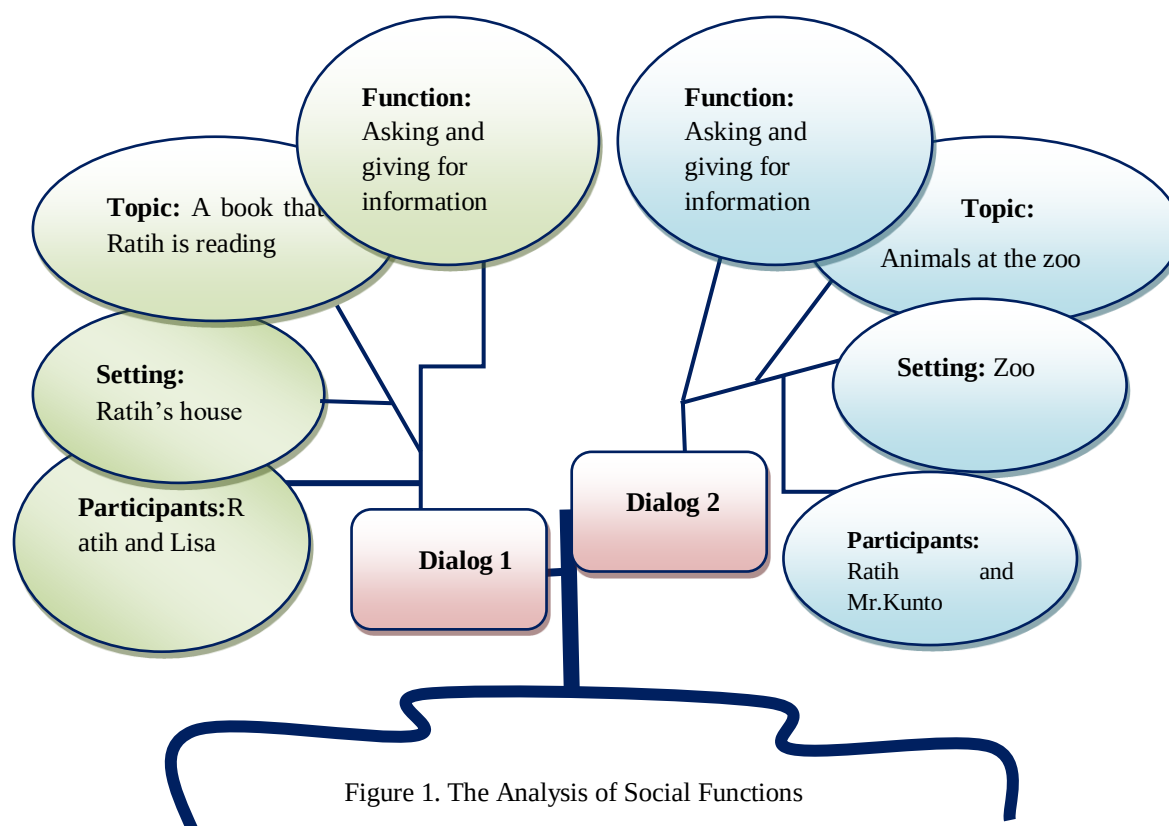


Figure 1. The Analysis of Social Functions

The data showed that the dialogs had already fulfilled the social functions of a conversation. The dialog 1 above was between Ratih and Lisa, according to the dialogue. They appeared to be close friends based on the way they spoke to each other. They spoke in a non-standard language. They had the conversation at Ratih's house. Dialog 2 showed that the conversation took place at the zoo. The participants were Ratih and Mr. Kunto. Ratih was a zoo visitor and Mr. Kunto was a zoo keeper. Ratih asked information about animals at the zoo. Both speakers used the standard language. This was because they just knew each other. Then, Mr. Kunto explained the information about those animals happily.

3.1.2. Speech Functions

Holmes claims that the functions of speech can be classified in a variety of ways (Holmes, 1992: 286). Expressive utterances express the speaker's feelings, e.g. I'm feeling great today. Directive utterances attempt to get someone to do something, e.g. clear the table. Referential utterances provide information, e.g. at the third stroke it will be three o'clock precisely. Metalinguistic utterances comment on language itself, e.g. 'Hegemony' is not a common word. Poetic utterances focus on aesthetic features of the language, e.g. poem and a rhyme: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Phatic utterances express solidarity and empathy with others, e.g. Hi, how are you, lovely day isn't it!. Furthermore, one of the most visible areas where social factors influence language is in the choice of address word. To be polite, the speaker normally addresses someone else using different terms. Wardaugh (2000: 267) proposes the types of English addressing terms such as addressing terms using name (e.g. Jack, Will, Rich, etc.), addressing terms using kinship (e.g. Mom, Dad, Grandma, etc.), addressing terms using intimacy (e.g. darling, dear, sweetie, etc.), addressing terms using respect (e.g. Mr. Jacob, Mrs. Anne, etc.), and addressing terms using mockery (e.g. fool, freak, damn, etc.).

Referring to speech functions, it was found three kinds of utterances in dialog 1 out of six utterances proposed by Holmes (1992); expressive, directive, and referential. Lisa expressed her amazedness by saying 'wow!'. This expression was categorized as an expressive utterance. Then, it was also found a directive utterance used by Ratih. She said 'Guess what I'm reading!'. She asked Lisa to guess the topic of the book. Besides, Lisa also used a directive utterance to ask Ratih telling the information of the book that she had just finished reading. The last point was a referential utterance. It could be seen from Ratih's statement when she explained the information to Lisa.

On the other hand, there were four utterances in dialog 2; expressive, directive, referential, and metalinguistic. The expressive utterances were found in the sentences 'It is Really? That's interesting!'. The speaker looked surprising about tapirs. It was also found a directive utterance here. Ratih asked Mr.Kunto to explain more about the animals. Then, Mr.Kunto gave the information what Ratih wanted to. The way he gave information was categorised as a referential utterance. The last point was that Mr.Kunto responded Ratih's statement. His utterance was called metalinguistic. The speech functions can be seen in figure 2 and 3.

In addressing, the speaker usually uses address terms to call each other during the conversation (Holmes: 1992). To address different backgrounds of addressees, speakers must use different addresses. In dialog 1, Ratih addressed her friend by her nickname, based on the dialog "Oh, hi **Lis**! Guess what I'm reading!". She simply said "Lisa" instead of Miss or Ms since Ratih and Lisa had a close bond, as shown by their engagement. As a result, it did not matter.

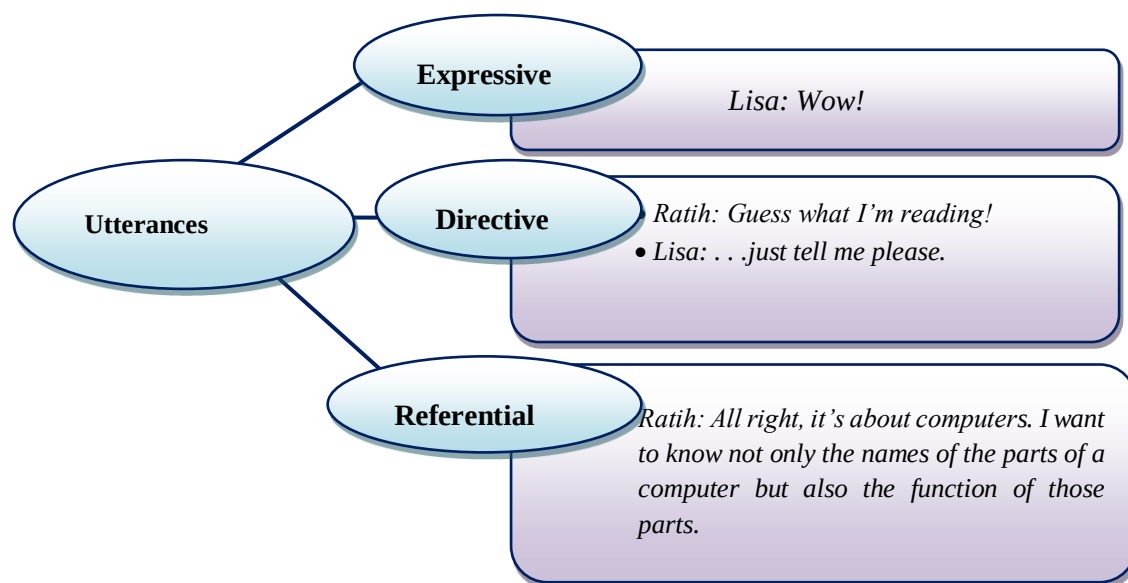


Figure 2. Speech Function of Dialog 1

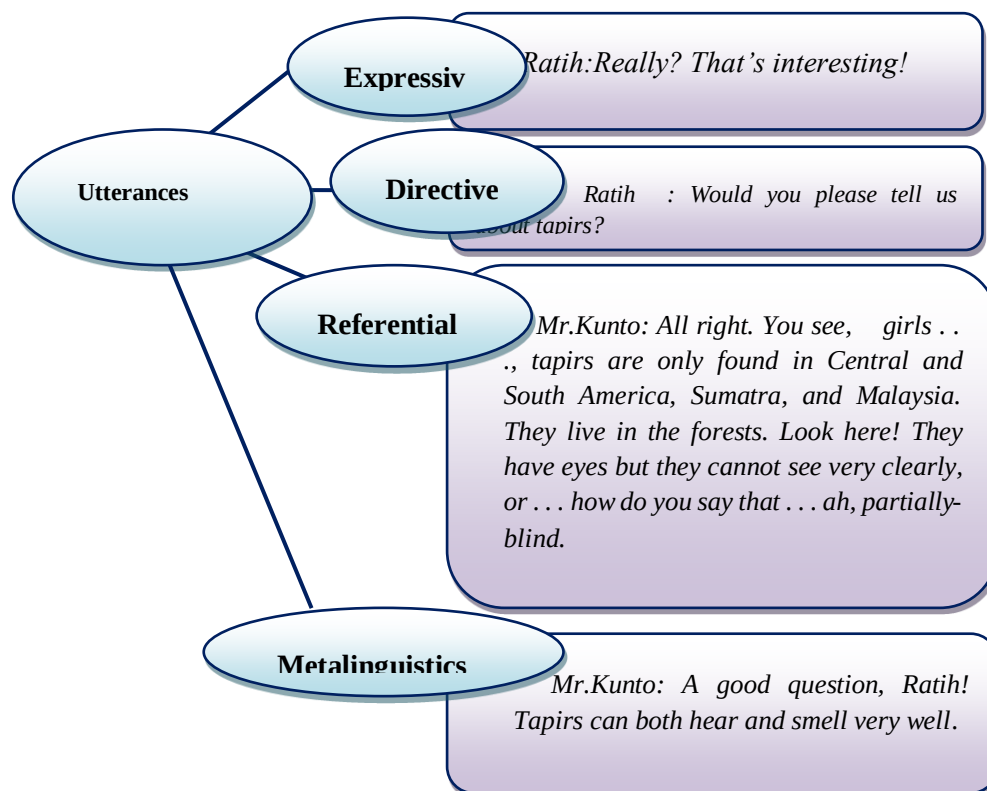


Figure 3. Speech Function of Dialog 2

Oppositely, Mr.Kunto addressed Ratih by using terms respects in dialog 2. She just called “Miss” and Ratih also did the same. She called Mr.Kunto using “Sir” because she respected Mr.Kunto as an elder. However, in the end Ratih asked Mr.Kunto to call her by using her nickname.

3.1.3. *Leech’s Politeness Principles*

To obtain the goal of the successful conversation, it is needed to consider the polite when speaking. It is to avoid disappointment and insult the addressee, hurt the feeling and break the self-esteem. Leech suggests a number of maxims to the politeness (in Coulmas, 2005: 85). The politeness principles are minimizing (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs, and there is a corresponding positive version (maximizing (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs) which is somewhat less important. Here are Leech’s Politeness Principles (PP):

- a. The Tact maxim is minimizing cost to other and maximizing benefit to other. It focuses on the hearer or recipient. It applies the directive and commissive. It is categorized as ‘impositive’ in ordering, requesting, commanding, advising, and recommending. Then, it is commissive if it is used for promoting, vowing, offering, etc.
- b. The Generosity maxim states to minimizing benefit to self and maximizing cost to self. It focuses on the speaker rather than the addressee. This maxim applies ‘asserting’ (stating, boasting, reporting) and ‘expressive’ (thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, and condoling).
- c. Approbation Maxim requires to minimizing dispraise of other and maximizing praise of other.
- d. Modesty Maxim is praise of self and maximizes dispraise of self.
- e. Agreement Maxim is to maximize agreement between self and other people and minimize disagreement between self and other.
- f. Sympathy Maxim is minimizing antipathy between self and other. It maximizes sympathy between self and other.
- g. Irony is to say the opposite. It applies only for close friends.
- h. Banter is the use of impolite, but unserious words. It is used to close friends as well.
- i. Hyperbole is an overstatement.
- j. Litotes is an understatement. It refers to the speaker rather than the hearer.

Here are the politeness principles and maxims found in this dialogue.

Approbation Maxim Leech’s Politeness Principles (PP) of Dialog 1.

1) Lisa: “**Wow!**”

Agreement Maxim

1) Ratih : *Oh, hi Lis! Guess what I’m reading!*

Lisa : **Well**, is it on crime?

2) Lisa : *Well, just tell me please. I’m all ears.*

Ratih : **All right**, it’s about computers.

3) Lisa: *Wow! May I have a look?*

Ratih : **Sure.**

Banter

1) Lisa : *Hello, **bookworm!** What. . . are you reading?*

Based on the above data, Lisa expressed her amazement to Ratih's explanation since Ratih wanted to know the functions of the detailed computers. That script was categorised as an approbation in which Lisa was praise to Ratih's explanation. Additionally, an agreement maxim was found in the three scripts. The agreement was happened between the speaker and addressee. Lisa agreed to guess the topic of the book. Then, Ratih also did not mind to tell what the book was about. In the last part, it seemed that she also did not mind to lend her book to Lisa. Lastly, it could be seen that Lisa called Ratih "*bookworm*". She used an impolite but unserious word. As long as it was said to a close friend, it did not matter. However, the speaker should not use this word to someone who was not close enough. This was categorised as a banter. Additionally, here are Leech's Politeness Principles (PP) of Dialog 2.

Approbation Maxim

1) Ratih : **Excuse me**, Sir. *Can I ask some questions?*

2) Ratih : **Really? That's interesting!** *How about hearing and smelling?*

3) Mr.Kunto : **A good question**, Ratih!

Agreement Maxim

1) Ratih : *Excuse me*, Sir. *Can I ask some questions?*

Mr. Kunto : **Sure**, please.

3.1 Ratih : *Ratih*, Sir. *Just call me Ratih. And this is my friend, Lisa.*

Mr. Kunto : **All right**. *You see, girls . . . ,*

The 1st utterance 1 is the illocutionary function of pardoning in which the speaker maximizes praise the addressee. Ratih, the speaker, asks permission before asking questions. Then, the 2nd and 3th utterances are function of praising. First is that Ratih was really interested in what Mr.Kunto was explaining. In other way, Mr.Kunto prised Ratih when she asked a question about Tapirs' hearing and smelling. As the 1st and 2nd utterances showed, those were agreement maxims because the agreement was happened between the speaker and addressee. Mr.Kunto did not mind if Ratih wanted to ask questions. The 2nd utterance showed that Mr.Kunto also agreed to what Ratih said.

Based on the findings, the contents of the textbook can be discussed from several point of views based on the aim of the research. In the case of the numbers and the types of the dialogs being provided, the textbook has exposed sufficient numbers of dialogs which cover both interpersonal and transactional dialogs, the very basic kind of oral communication which are commonly practiced in daily conversations. Referring this case, Junior high school students must be taught interpersonal and transactional communication, according to the

2013 Curriculum. Interpersonal and transactional communication introduce students to the most common forms of communication that they can encounter in everyday life.

Curriculum 2013 mandates the teaching of interpersonal and transactional communication to junior high school learners. Interpersonal and transactional communication expose the learner to the real basic communication occurs in daily life. Interpersonal communication, also known as interactional communication or interactional expression, is (Corbett, 2003) a type of communication that occurs between people. It is done more for the purpose of forming and sustaining social bonds than for the transmission of facts and knowledge. Meanwhile, transactional communication is used to communicate or exchange specific information, such as buying and selling, instructing, and describing, among other things (Corbett, 2003). In line with Nunan (1991), he suggests that both interactional and transactional communication must be implemented inside the classroom.

Analyzing the data, both dialogs are in line with the theory proposed by Holmes (1992:12). He states that the conversation should include social factors such as settings, participants, topics, and functions (Holmes, 1992: 12). The setting is clearly identified for all the dialogs. They are supported by the involvement of participants with various social-relationship. Those findings are line with the theory of previous research (Ya, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2008; Holmes, 2013; Saputra et.al, 2019; Susilawati, 2020). Understanding context is crucial because people speak to different people, in different contexts, for different reasons in everyday speech, such as talking to friends, family members, attending an official meeting, shopping, and so on. They would not use the same language variety in such diverse contexts. To make their speech suitable for such a context, they would change their vocabulary, sentences, grammar, pronunciation, and formality level.

The dialogs in the textbook of 'Let's Talks' also consist of the use of social value of a society. Those dialogs include the politeness terms of sociolinguistic. They use the components in every speech. The researcher found that the dialogs consist of all social factors and some speech functions; expressive, directive, reverential, and metalinguistic. Some maxims of politeness principles suggested by Leech are also used in the dialogs (Coulmas, 2005:85). The last point is found the use of addressing terms nickname and respect in the dialogs (Wardaugh, 2000: 267).

3.2 The Importance of Teaching Sociolinguistic Competences at Class

Foreign language teachers play an important role in setting up communicative situations and teaching not only the structure but also the purpose of language because foreign language learners do not have adequate access to native informants and cannot continuously verify whether what they say is sociolinguistically appropriate. Therefore, it is important to improve sociolinguistic competence, or the ability to comprehend which phrases are acceptable in which circumstances (Ya, 2008).

It is worth noting that teaching foreign languages in general entails teaching effective communication through the use of suitable registers or varieties. Invariably, speech has a social function both as a means of communication and as a way of identifying social groups (Bayyurt, 2006). Hence, to study speech without reference to the society, which uses it, is to exclude the possibility of finding social explanation for structures that are used in utterances. The English language is used in the classroom for instruction and interaction. Students' capacity to interact verbally is inextricably linked to their sociolinguistic contexts. A student's

sociolinguistic experience determines whether she/he is better or worse trained in oral communication. This is because there are instances of linguistic interference in the language usage of the student (Saputra et.al, 2019).

In addition to the relevant language focuses used within the genre of texts being studied, sociolinguistic competence should be reflected in the learning materials. The development of comprehensive English communicative competence would be supported by sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence implies the requirement of the inclusion of sociolinguistic contexts in the design of text materials and the language learning tasks. In addition, sociolinguistic competence implies the values of appropriacy or acceptability of language usage in terms of politeness, formality of the language style being used in the conversation. It should be as important as grammatical, discourse and strategic competences (Susilawati, 2020).

The use of sociolinguistic contexts in conversation text materials is intended to provide learners with learning opportunities to practice using English in real-life situations. The development of sociolinguistic competence would be aided by an understanding of the sociolinguistic context. It is defined by an understanding of the participants' positions, the knowledge they exchange, and the interaction's purpose (Saville-Troike, 2008). Understanding the sociolinguistic context is critical since it affects norm comprehension, appropriacy, and variability in communication. In a brief, sociolinguistic competence is concerned with probabilistic rules of occurrence that determine if anything is 'sayable' in a particular situation (Street & Leung, 2010: 291 in Susilawati, 2020). It also refers to the extent to which specific communicative roles, attitudes (such as politeness and formality), and proper ideas are utilized in a given situation (Canale, 2014 in Susilawati, 2020). For example, a speaker should be aware of the background of whom she or he is greeting, as well as the type of social role-relationship they have (whether they are in equal social status or stand, such as between friends, colleagues, siblings, or they are in different social status, such as between a student and a teacher, a young and an elder, and so on).

Learners should be aided with such learning materials in order to gain such communicative competence, particularly sociolinguistic competence. In this scenario, it is recommended that the student be exposed to credible materials that show how the English language is used in real life. Therefore, it is important to note that teaching foreign languages in a broader sense will involve teaching successful communication through the use of correct registers or appropriate varieties.

4. Conclusion

The result of the research shows that the English textbook has already applied the sociolinguistic competences. Using different types of speech styles in everyday learning experiences will help other students better know the implications of sociolinguistic competences in speaking. Additionally, the researcher hopes that this study will lead the textbooks' writer to apply more sociolinguistic competences in the English textbook. For the English teachers, the researcher hopes that they will teach sociolinguistic competences implicitly while teaching English at class.

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