

Charismatic Imperative Utterances by Teachers in Coaching Elementary School Speech Contest Participants in Gresik, East Java, Indonesia: A Pragmasyntactic Analysis Model

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the forms and functions of imperative utterances employed by teachers in the context of coaching elementary school students for speech competitions, using a pragmasyntactic approach. The study is motivated by the need for a deeper understanding of educational communication strategies that are not only structurally effective but also sensitive to social relationships and pragmatic contexts. Data were collected through recordings of verbal interactions between teachers and students at three elementary schools (public and private) in Gresik Regency, East Java, Indonesia and analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method based on functional syntax and contextual pragmatics. The findings reveal that the imperative forms used by teachers extend beyond direct commands and are modified through pragmasyntactic strategies such as interrogative imperatives, ellipsis, evaluative-motivational expressions, and explicit directives with pedagogical reasoning. These modifications enable teachers to deliver instructions effectively and constructively, while cultivating a charismatic communicative style. The study affirms that imperative strategies in educational contexts represent an interaction between syntactic structures and communicative intent rooted in pedagogical values. This research contributes theoretically to the development of pragmasyntactic studies in the Indonesian language and offers practical implications for enhancing teachers' communicative skills in ethical and inspiring learning environments.

Keywords: imperative utterances, charismatic communication, speech coaching, functional syntax, contextual pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of influence, control, and the catalyst of social action. In the context of school-based learning practices—particularly in coaching students for academic competitions such as public speaking, storytelling, or science Olympiads—teachers' language plays a central role in shaping students' attitudes, motivation, and mental preparedness. One dominant linguistic form in this context is the imperative utterance, that is, speech directed toward prompting action (Cruse, 2006). However, in pedagogical settings, imperative utterances are not always direct and explicit; rather, they are often realized through pragmatic strategies that take into account social relationships, communicative goals, and the speaker's self-image. This phenomenon falls within the scope of pragmasyntactic studies, an approach that examines how syntactic structures interact with pragmatic contexts to construct meaning in utterances (Lambrecht, 1994; Givón, 2001).

In the context of coaching elementary students for speech contests, the teacher assumes not only the role of an instructor but also that of a charismatic mentor—one who exerts communicative influence while remaining wise and nurturing. The imperative utterances used are not limited to mere commands; they are syntactically and pragmatically modified to maintain positive interpersonal relationships with students. For instance, a direct instruction such as *"Repeat this part more firmly!"* may be transformed into a more tactful suggestion like *"How about delivering this part with a firmer tone?"* While both forms serve the same directive function, the latter illustrates syntactic and pragmatic modifications that reflect a charismatic communication strategy.

A pragmasyntactic investigation of these charismatic imperative forms is essential for deepening our understanding of effective educational communication practices. Previous studies in Indonesia have been relatively limited in addressing imperatives within an integrated syntactic-pragmatic framework—especially in specific pedagogical contexts such as speech coaching. This article, therefore, aims to describe and analyze the pragmasyntactic strategies employed by teachers in shaping imperative utterances that guide, direct, and simultaneously motivate students.

The research data were collected through observation and recordings of verbal interactions between teachers and students during speech training sessions at three elementary schools (public and private) as a representation of all elementary schools in Gresik Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The analysis employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach grounded in functional syntax theory and the principles of relevance in pragmatics. This study is expected to contribute to the development of pragmasyntactic inquiry in the Indonesian language and to enrich the understanding of effective and humanistic educational communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Imperative Utterances and Directive Functions

Imperative utterances are a form of speech act aimed at directing the listener to perform a specific action. In Searle's (1976) speech act theory, imperatives are classified under the category of directives, which are utterances intended to influence the behavior of the hearer. Imperatives are not always realized through grammatically direct commands. They may also appear in interrogative, declarative, or indirect forms that carry directive intent (Yule, 1996).

According to Cruse (2006) and Mulyono (2025a), the structure of imperatives can vary from explicit forms such as "Do it now!" to more implicit ones like "It would be good if you finished it now." In educational contexts, this variation reflects an effort to maintain a harmonious social relationship between teacher and student, and to foster a supportive learning environment.

In the study of the Indonesian language, Chaer (2010) notes that imperatives can be distinguished as direct and indirect forms, with lexical and syntactic choices conditioned by social relationships and communicative purposes. This highlights the role of context in shaping both the meaning and form of imperative utterances.

The Pragmasyntactic Approach

Pragmasyntax is an interdisciplinary approach that explores the relationship between the syntactic form of an utterance and its pragmatic function within a particular context. Lambrecht (1994) asserts that the syntactic structure of a sentence cannot be separated from pragmatic information such as topic, focus, and communicative intent. This approach demonstrates that grammar is not autonomous, but is always shaped by the strategies of language use in actual discourse.

Givón (2001) also emphasizes the importance of a usage-based approach, whereby syntactic structures are seen as outcomes of communicative strategies aimed at conveying meaning efficiently and effectively. In the context of coaching for speech competitions, syntactic forms such as inversion, ellipsis, or the use of specific particles can be understood as pragmasyntactic strategies used to emphasize, motivate, or correct in a non-confrontational manner (Mulyono, 2025b).

In Indonesian language studies, pragmasyntactic research remains relatively limited. One relevant study is by Suwandi (2018), who concluded that indirect sentence forms used in classroom settings often exhibit pragmasyntactic patterns aimed at preserving communicative ethics. This underscores the relevance of the pragmasyntactic approach for analyzing educational communication practices.

Charismatic Communication in Educational Contexts

Charismatic communication refers to a communicative style characterized by personal appeal, symbolic authority, and the ability to influence others without coercion. In educational contexts, a charismatic teacher

does more than deliver content; they also shape student attitudes, self-confidence, and work ethic through a communicative style that is both instructive and motivational.

Suyanto's (2020) study found that teachers with charismatic communicative styles tend to use variations of imperative utterances that are formative rather than rigid or authoritarian. For example, instead of saying "Don't make that mistake again!", a teacher might say "Let's try to improve this part together, okay?"—demonstrating pragmatic awareness in sentence construction.

Research by Antonakis et al. (2016) further emphasizes that charismatic communication can be shaped through linguistic devices such as metaphors, repetition, rhetorical questions, and affirmatively toned imperatives. These findings reinforce the idea that pragmasyntactic strategies are integral to effective communication in leadership—including in pedagogical settings.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a pragmasyntactic analytical framework. This approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth portrayal of the relationship between the syntactic forms of imperative utterances and their pragmatic functions in the context of coaching students for speech competitions. A qualitative inquiry is also appropriate for uncovering the implicit meanings embedded in teachers' communication strategies, which cannot be reduced to grammatical structure alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data were collected from several teachers at three elementary schools (public and private) in Gresik Regency, East Java, Indonesia, who coached sixteen students preparing for speech contests at the subdistrict and district levels. The data consisted of recordings and transcripts of verbal interactions between the teachers and students during the training sessions. The collected data were then selected, coded, and interpreted.

Additionally, non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students to enrich the contextual interpretation of the utterances.

Imperative utterances were identified and classified based on their syntactic forms (e.g., direct, indirect, ellipsis, interrogative imperatives, etc.). The pragmatic functions were analyzed by examining the speech context, students' responses, and the communicative intentions of the teachers. The analysis was conducted using the pragmasyntactic model (Lambrecht, 1994; Givón, 2001), focusing on the interplay between sentence structure and directive strategies, such as soft commands, motivational reinforcement, or constructive corrections. The primary unit of analysis was imperative utterances that carried a charismatic dimension—namely, those that directed students firmly yet educationally, without intimidation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the classification and analysis of imperative utterances, several forms of pragmasyntactic strategies were identified:

Indirect imperative (interrogative imperative)

Example: Bisa kafu ulangi bagian pembuka dengan ekspresi lebih semangat? 'Could you repeat the opening part with more enthusiasm?'

Syntactically, the utterance takes the form of a question, but pragmatically it functions as a directive. This strategy represents a soft directive with a motivational effect.

Elliptical imperative

Example: *Natasa, ya!* 'Natasa, yes!'

This utterance is a minimalist structure understood as a directive. The ellipsis reinforces familiarity and efficiency in communication between teacher and student who already share contextual understanding.

Evaluative-motivational imperative

Example: *Bagus, tapi perlu lebih tegas pas bagian akhir. Sekali lagi, ya?* ‘Good, but it needs to be firmer at the end. One more time, okay?’

This utterance combines praise with a directive to repeat, eliciting a positive response from the student. Pragmatically, it embeds an imperative within a reinforcement strategy.

Direct charismatic imperative with an educational tone

Example: *Jangan lupa kontak mata. Itu penting saat tampil.* ‘Don’t forget eye contact. That’s important when performing.’

This utterance is a direct command framed with an educational rationale. It reflects the teacher’s communicative authority while also demonstrating care.

Each of the utterance types above demonstrates that imperative syntactic forms in coaching contexts are not necessarily harsh or rigid, but may be modified through various pragmatic strategies to preserve interpersonal relationships and enhance learning effectiveness. This indicates that a pragmasyntactic approach can reveal the dynamics of educational communication that lie beyond the scope of purely formal syntactic analysis. In this context, the teacher functions as a grammatically and pragmatically competent communicator who manages social relations through utterance forms that align with communicative intentions.

The data presented illustrate that the imperative utterances used by teachers in speech contest coaching are inseparable from the pragmatic contexts in which they occur. Through a pragmasyntactic analysis, it becomes evident that syntactic forms are variously modified to deliver directive meanings in a targeted, humane, and constructive manner. These strategies also reflect the teacher’s charismatic communicative character.

Syntactic and Pragmatic Interaction in Imperative Utterances

As Lambrecht (1994) has asserted, sentence structure results from the interaction between grammatical and pragmatic information, particularly in terms of topic-focus relations and illocutionary intent. In the data collected, teachers frequently used indirect imperative forms in interrogative structures, as in the following example:

Bisa kamu ulangi bagian pembuka dengan ekspresi lebih semangat? (TSDIM-7) ‘Could you repeat the opening part with more enthusiasm?’

Syntactically, this sentence is an interrogative, but pragmatically it functions as a command. This strategy illustrates the use of interrogative imperatives, as described by Cruse (2006), to maintain harmonious relationships between teacher and student and to avoid an authoritarian tone.

A similar case is found in elliptical utterances such as:

02 - Natasa, ya!(TSDK-11) ‘Are’you, Natasa!’

This relies on situational context and the personal relationship between speaker and listener. According to Givón (2001) and Mulyono (2021), such ellipsis is part of a syntactic economy principle that only functions effectively when the context and meaning are pragmatically accessible.

In the category of evaluative-motivational imperatives, teachers frequently insert praise or evaluative commentary before delivering a directive. For example:

03 - Bagus, tapi perlu lebih tegas pas bagian akhir. Sekali lagi, ya?(TSDM9) ‘Good, but it needs to be firmer at the end. One more time, okay?’

This strategy fosters emotional continuity between teacher and student and aligns with what Bass and Riggio

(2006) describe as transformational communication, which motivates through persuasive rather than coercive means.

A more direct yet educationally framed imperative is illustrated by:

04 - *Jangan lupa kontak mata. Itu penting saat tampil. (TSDK12)* ‘Don’t forget eye contact. That’s important when performing.’

This utterance demonstrates the use of a mitigated directive—still explicit, but supported by educational reasoning. Within a pragmasyntactic framework, this form reflects a consciously structured expression by the teacher to guide without creating resistance.

To clarify the range of forms and functions of the imperative utterances identified, the following table presents a typology of teacher utterances along with examples and their pragmatic functions.

Table 1. Categories of Teacher Imperatives and Corresponding Pragmasyntactic Strategies

No.	Type of Utterance	Teacher’s Utterance	Pragmatic Function
1)	Indirect Imperative (Interrogative Imperative)	<i>Bisa kamu ulangi bagian pembuka dengan ekspresi lebih semangat?</i> ‘Could you repeat the opening part with more enthusiasm?’	Question
2)	Elliptical Imperative	<i>Natasa, ya!</i> ‘Natasa, yes!’	Brief directive conveying familiarity and efficiency
3)	Evaluative-Motivational Imperative	<i>Bagus, tapi perlu lebih tegas pas bagian akhir. Sekali lagi, ya?</i> ‘Good, but it needs to be firmer at the end. One more time, okay?’	Constructive feedback
4)	Direct Charismatic yet Educational Imperative	<i>Jangan lupa kontak mata. Itu penting saat tampil.</i> ‘Don’t forget eye contact. That’s important when performing.’	Explicit instruction

The table demonstrates that each category of utterance represents a unique pragmasyntactic strategy, which is not only tied to syntactic form but also to communicative intent, the management of social relationships, and instructional effectiveness within the coaching context.

Communicative Charisma as a Pragmatic Strategy

The phenomena identified in this study indicate that a teacher’s communicative charisma does not stem from authoritarian speech forms, but rather from the ability to deliver instructions in an effective, respectful, and motivational manner. This reinforces the findings of Antonakis et al. (2016), who argue that linguistic charisma is shaped through the careful selection of utterance forms appropriate to the audience and context. In this regard, the teacher demonstrates both linguistic and social competence, contributing to the achievement of coaching objectives in an optimal way.

Thus, it can be concluded that the pragmasyntactic approach provides significant insights into the dynamics of educational communication. It enables analysis not only of what is said, but also of how and why something is expressed in a particular form. These charismatic imperative strategies serve as concrete examples of how pragmasyntax operates in actual, meaningful language use.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates that the imperative utterances used by teachers in coaching elementary school students

for speech competitions cannot be understood merely as structurally directive forms, but rather as complex communicative acts involving social relationships, pragmatic strategies, and pedagogical considerations. Through a pragmasyntactic approach, it was found that the imperatives employed by teachers undergo various syntactic modifications—such as the use of interrogative structures, ellipsis, and evaluative integration—intended to deliver instructions gently, to motivate, and to maintain interpersonal rapport with students.

The communication strategies used by the teachers reflect charismatic qualities—namely, the ability to direct students with supportive and constructive authority. These findings support the views of Givón (2001) and Lambrecht (1994), who argue that syntactic forms in actual speech are not autonomous, but are selected based on communicative goals shaped by pragmatic context.

Accordingly, a pragmasyntactic perspective offers not only a richer understanding of syntactic dynamics but also opens a more holistic interpretation of effective communicative strategies within educational settings.

Theoretically, this study expands the application of the pragmasyntactic approach in the context of the Indonesian language, particularly in the domain of educational communication. The findings reinforce the relevance of functional syntax theory as an approach for analyzing language in real-life usage. Additionally, this research adds a new dimension to the study of directive speech acts, specifically the relationship between imperatives and charismatic strategies in instructional practice. It also contributes to the development of theories on charismatic communication in pragmatics and applied linguistics, especially in understanding how communicative power can be constructed through deliberate linguistic choices rather than explicit verbal pressure.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for educators seeking to develop language skills that support effective and humanistic learning processes. Teachers may utilize these findings to formulate communication strategies that guide students constructively, foster motivation, and create a positive classroom environment. Furthermore, the study offers insights for teacher training programs, language education curriculum development, and the design of communication skill modules for pre-service teachers. The identified pragmasyntactic strategies may serve as concrete examples in training programs focused on relationship-based rather than instruction-based educational communication.

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