From research to the textbook: assessing speech acts representation in course book series for students of English as an L2

**Abstract**.- Studies on speech acts represent an extensive, multidisciplinary area of research, encompassing diverse theoretical approaches such as those stemming from pragmatic, conversational, discourse, cognitive, constructional, and functional perspectives. Altogether, these theories offer an eloquent picture of the type of knowledge that is necessary to perform and understand speech acts correctly. EFL teachers need to be aware to what extent such contemporary research findings on speech acts have actually made their way into present-day textbooks and this paper sets out to elucidate this issue.

First, we look at contemporary studies on speech acts in search of the key theoretical aspects of illocutionary performance that should ideally be included in course book series for students of English as a second language (L2). Second, we analyze a collection of seven such course series in order to assess to what extent they actually incorporate those theoretical findings. Finally, we consider the weaknesses of present-day textbooks in relation to the teaching of illocutionary acts, thus providing an informed ground for their elaboration and improvement.

**Keywords**.- pragmatics, speech acts, teaching, second language, course books

**1. Introduction**

Mastering the production and understanding of illocutionary acts is an essential condition for reaching successful competence in a foreign language. Shortly after the onset of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) this belief started to be enacted in most textbooks of English as an L2, with sections devoted to the teaching of speech acts being routinely included in almost every course book. Over half a century has gone by since the aforementioned foundational studies and a plethora of competing theories of speech acts have been developed from the most diverse perspectives (i.e. functional, cognitive, conversational, pragmatic, etc.). Within each of these theoretical frameworks, the amount of discoveries on how speakers produce and understand speech acts has mounted up over the years.

EFL teachers need to be aware of whether the representation of speech acts in present-day textbooks is up to the quality of contemporary research on this area. Previous studies on this issue, however, have a limited scope, focusing on how textbooks approach the teaching of a few individual types speech acts. By way of illustration, Boxer and Pickering (1995) deal with *complaints*, and Limberg (2015) with *apologies*. In addition, these studies often take an exclusively pragmatic stance (Diepenbroek & Derwing, 2014), leaving out of their analysis other considerations which may also influence the teaching of speech acts (e.g. cognitive operations, illocutionary constructions, etc.). This paper investigates to what extent research developments on speech acts within diverse theoretical frameworks have made their way into current course book series of English as an L2. In addition, the study is not restricted to one specific speech act type, but it rather aims to offer a more comprehensive picture of the number and types of speech acts that are nowadays included in the syllabi of EFL textbooks. The collection of analytical categories for study have been selected among the contributions made over the last 50 years within three groups of theoretical frameworks: (1) pragmatic and conversational, (2) functional, and (3) cognitive and constructional theories of speech acts. Each course series under analysis comprises three different proficiency levels (i.e. starters, intermediate, advanced).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, we offer an overview of the main advances on the study of illocution within each of the three theoretical perspectives under scrutiny. This review yields the set of analysis categories for our study of EFL textbooks. Second, we summarize the contributions of previous studies on the representation of speech acts in EFL course book series, highlighting those areas in need of further research. Third, we provide a description of the corpus chosen for analysis. Forth, we assess the extent to which contemporary theoretical advances have been implemented in the textbooks under consideration. Finally, we conclude with a summary of the main weaknesses of current course book series in relation to the teaching of speech acts, paving the way for their future improvement.

**2. Contemporary Theoretical Advances on Speech Acts**

This section sums up the main contributions to the study of illocution made in the last few decades within different theoretical frameworks, from traditional pragmatic approaches to more contemporary functional and cognitive theories. The final list of analysis categories drawn from the present review (AC1-AC10) provides a thorough characterization of those aspects of illocutionary performance which should ideally be made available to students in textbooks of English as a second language, and, therefore, allows an assessment of the latter in order to establish a solid ground for their improvement.

2.1. Advances Stemming from Pragmatic and Conversational Theories of Speech Acts

Pragmatic approaches to the study of speech acts (e.g. Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson 1987; Spencer-Otey, 2005) highlight the fact that the motivation of indirect speech acts lies on politeness requirements. As shall be made apparent in this section, each of these theories offers slightly different proposals on how to determine the degree of politeness required by a given speech act.

For the purpose of calculating the politeness needed in the performance of speech acts, Brown & Levinson (1987, pp. 61-62)) coined the notions of *negative* and *positive* *face*. The former is defined as the want every person has that their actions be unimpeded by others, while the latter refers to the desire people have that their wants be desirable to others. It is in the interest of both speaker and addressee to maintain each other’s face and to try to minimize the socially undesirable consequences of certain face threatening acts (i.e. ordering, requesting, threatening, criticizing, etc.). The use of linguistic politeness is thus proposed as a relevant strategy to be learned by students of a second language in order to be able to minimize the negative impact of this type of speech acts.

Leech’s *Politeness Principle* (“Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs/Maximize the expression of polite beliefs”), which parallels Brown & Levinson’s notion of *face*, is articulated around several maxims (i.e. tact, sympathy, generosity, etc.). By way of illustration, the *Tact Maxim* states that speakers should “minimize cost to other and maximize benefit to other” (Leech, 1983, pp. 132–133). While Brown & Levinson’s classification of speech acts, stemming from the notion of *face*, is binary in nature (i.e. face threatening vs. non-face threatening acts), Leech’s politeness theory introduces a set of scales (i.e. cost-benefit, indirectness, authority, social distance, and optionality scales) which makes it possible to distinguish different degrees of politeness in the realization of illocutionary acts. According to Leech (1983), therefore, teaching how to perform illocutionary acts correctly should involve instructions on the above pragmatic scales, their interactions, and the linguistic strategies that allow speakers to use the necessary amount of politeness on each specific occasion. By way of illustration, the higher the *optionality* offered to the addressee to perform the proposed action, the more intrinsically polite a speech act will be (cf. *Close the window* (ORDER-low optionality) vs. *Could you close the window?* (REQUEST-higher optionality)). On the contrary, the higher the *cost* of the action, the higher the intrinsic impoliteness of the speech act will be (cf. *Wash the dishes* (ORDER-costly action) vs. *Have another cake* (OFFER-beneficial action)).

Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) theory of politeness brings together some of the pragmatic concerns in both Leech’s and Brown and Levinson’s proposals by introducing the broader notion of *rapport* (i.e. the harmony that exists between interlocutors). Rapport can be threatened via attacks to (1) face sensitivities; (2) sociality rights and obligations; and (3) interactional goals (2008: 14). Spencer-Oatey’ theory, thus, reconceptualizes Brown and Levinson’s notions of face, by addressing face-attacks as only one of three potentially rapport-damaging acts; she also includes in her model sociality rights and obligations (where she places the idea of negative face) and interactional goals (also known as transactional goals in Leech’s theory of politeness) (2008, p. 14). It follows that *rapport management*, in Spencer-Oatey’s (2005, pp. 96-97) own words consists in the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people:

I take the management of rapport, therefore, to include not only behavior that enhances or maintains smooth relations, but any kind of behavior that has an impact on rapport, whether positive or negative, or neutral. People in a given exchange will determine the impact of utterances on the relationship depending on how appropriate they are to the situation. This degree of appropriateness is, in turn, informed by interactant’s expectations based on behaviors that they believe are suggested (polite), accepted (politic/neutral), or disallowed (impolite) in their given culture or community.

Speech acts have potentially positive or negative effects on rapport which need to be considered in their realizations in particular contexts.

Unfortunately, pragmatic theories of illocution fail to provide a clear inventory of the linguistic realization procedures available for the expression of speech acts with different degrees of politeness requirements. In addition, pragmatic analyses focus on single utterances, ignoring the fact that, in real life interactions, speech acts are often built in a cooperative fashion throughout a series of conversational turns. This facet of illocutionary performance has been dealt with within conversational approaches to speech acts, which have contributed several notions worthy of being considered in the teaching of illocution. One of them was put forward by Levinson (1983, p. 361) who revealed the usefulness of *pre-sequences* in the realization of face-threatening speech acts:

1. A: Have you got a pen?

B: Yes, blue or red?

A: Blue, please

B: Here you are

In example (1), *Have you got a pen?* is a literal question about the hearer’s possession of a pen. However, it functions as a *pre-request,* prompting the hearer to make an offer in return (i.e. *Yes, blue or red?*). Learning how to produce pre-sequences of this type is useful for students of a second language in order to trigger their hearers’ compliance while avoiding the performance of inherently costly, and therefore, face-threatening speech acts.

A second relevant notion developed by conversational analysts is that of *adjacency pairs*. The performance of certain speech acts requires not only an initial statement by the speaker, but also an answer, confirmation, or ratification by the hearer (Locastro, 2012). Teaching speakers to master the strategies to get the required ratification, on the one hand, and teaching hearers how to ratify (or reject) a specific illocutionary force in accordance with the rules of politeness at work in their culture, on the other hand, appear as relevant aspects of speech act performance which should be included in the syllabi of course book series of English as an L2. In this connection, it would also be useful for students of a second language to be taught about structural preferences in conversation for some actions (i.e. preferred) over others (i.e. dispreferred). Thus, initiating speech acts (i.e. requests, offers, invitations) have, as unmarked turn shapes, responsive actions which agree with the position taken by the first action. Preference organization (Pomerantz, 1984; Glaser, 2009; Carroll, 2011) explains that such preferred turns are not preceded by silence nor are they produced with delays or mitigation. Some responding acts (e.g. refusals) would, on the contrary, be marked turn shapes (i.e. dispreferred actions).

In addition to concerns about the motivations of speech acts, pragmatic studies of illocution have also attended to the classification of illocutionary acts into sets of categories whose members share some common characteristics. One of the most influential classifications of speech acts was proposed by Searle (1979), who distinguished among *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives*, and *declarations*. Although there have been many alternative proposals, Searle’s classification remains one of the most comprehensive up to date and, as noted by Vanparys (1996, p. 39), most of the subsequent semantic classifications of speech acts can be seen as variations on Searle’s initial classification. Searle’s (1979) classification is based on four criteria: (1) illocutionary point or purpose of the speech act, (2) direction of fit between the words uttered and the world to which they relate (an order, for example, makes the world fit the words), (3) expressed psychological state (a promise, for example, expresses the speaker’s intention to do something in the future), and (4) propositional content. The resulting categories of speech acts are the following (see Table 1 below for a list of speech acts within each of the five general categories):

*Assertives* commit the speaker to something being the case (e.g. stating, as in *Europe is in the Northern hemisphere*).

*Directives* try to push the addressee to perform an action (e.g. begging, as in *Please, please, please, could you close the window?).*

*Commisives* commit the speaker to doing something in the future (e.g. promising, as in *I will take you to Paris next summer*.

*Expressives* express how the speaker feels about a situation (e.g. apologising, as in*I am sorry about my behaviour yesterday*.)

*Declarations* change the state of the world in an immediate way, as in*I declare you husband and wife.*

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The analysis in Section 5 looks into the number of speech act categories dealt with in the textbooks under scrutiny, in order to assess where they are truly representative of the variety of illocutionary acts involved in human interaction. The quantitative representation of speech act categories in EFL textbooks has already been signalled as potentially inadequate in the literature (Ulum, 2105; see Section 3 on this issue), and it arouse as a necessary part of our study after the assessment of the first two textbooks, which revealed that the number and variety of speech act types included as part of their syllabi was shockingly low.

As has been made manifest in this section, pragmatic and conversational analysis approaches to speech acts have placed the focus on relevant aspects of speech act realization. These should be dealt with in textbooks of English as a second language which aim at an effective teaching of speech acts and conform the first four analysis categories for our study. Next to each analysis category (henceforth, AC) we provide an example of the type of text book content that would operationalized it:

**AC 1:** Teaching those **pragmatic scales** (i.e.cost-benefit, optionality, and indirectness) which modulate the **politeness** requirements of speech acts

 E.g. Order the following imperative utterances according to the cost/benefit they represent for the speaker/hearer and reflect on whether the degree of politeness required to achive compliance varies accordingly: *Have all my reports ready ASAP, Have your suitcase ready if you want to come, Have another sandwich.*

**AC 2:** Teaching those **pragmatic variables** (power, social distance, and formality) which modulate the **politeness** requirements of speech acts

 **E.**g. Reflect on how the power relation or social distance between these pairs of people may alter the need of politeness strategies (e.g. use of adverb ‘please’) when trying to ask each other to comply with a request for action: boss-employee, siblings, friends, two strangers who meet for the first time.

**AC 3:** Teaching the role, usefulness, and effects of **rapport management** in the realization of contextually and socially felicitous speech acts.

E.g. Which of the following utterances have a negative impact on rapport? Match them to the speech act types listed below them:

*Pay your debt, or I’ll kill you; Could you lend me your copy of Rome and Juliet? Lend me your copy of Romeo and Juliet at once!!!; Take a seat, please; Watch out! There is a step in front of you.*

Order warning offer request threat

**AC 4:** Teaching those speech acts which are involved in **pre-sequences** and **adjacency pairs,** and the impact of **preference organization** on judgements of politeness, and on the complexity and degree of modification of a speech act realization.”

 E.g. What would be the unmarked/preferred response to an invitation?

 a. Acceptance

 b. Refusal

 Which response (i.e. preferred / dispreferred) requires of a higher degree of politeness in its execution?

2.2. Advances Stemming from Functional Theories of Speech Acts

Within functional approaches to speech acts, the school of *Systemic-Functional Grammar* (Halliday, 1978, 1994) paid special attention to grammatical aspects of illocutionary performance. As argued in Author (2001a, p. 37), in the Functional-Systemic approach, grammar is not equated with syntax, but rather it goes beyond it to accommodate lexicogrammatical, prosodic, and kinesic aspects of language. Thus, it is argued that speakers may choose different elements from within this system of options to produce highly specialized speech acts adapted to specific contexts. An order like *Close the door!* for example, represents a co-patterning of selections, including the choice of the imperative mood, a second person singular subject, and a falling intonation. Altogether, this collection of choices enables the performance of an order. The degree of imposition of the speech act could be increased by making different choices, such as the use of a satellite of immediateness (i.e. *Close the door, at once!!!*). The choice of question tag would, on the contrary, render the utterance into a more polite order or even a request (e.g. *Close the door, will you?*).

Thus, Systemic-Functional Grammar places emphasis on how the combination of linguistic realization procedures into different co-patterns leads to the performance of speech acts with different degrees of politeness, optionality, authority, etc. This comes to fill a notorious gap in contemporary pragmatic theories, which put forward useful strategies (i.e. pragmatic scales) to calculate the amount of necessary politeness in the performance of a specific illocutionary act, but fell short of offering an inventory of linguistic strategies (i.e. realization procedures) to produce speech acts displaying different degrees of politeness.

Compatible to a certain extent with Halliday’s proposal, Dik’s (1989, 1997) *Functional Grammar* set forth an inventory of *grammatical illocutionary converters* that allow speakers to transform the basic illocutionary force of an utterance (i.e. the force associated with its sentence type: declarative, interrogative, or imperative) into a derived illocution (i.e. a request, an order, an exclamation, etc.). The adverb *please* when used iteratively, for example, transforms an imperative into a begging (e.g. *Please, please, please give me the scalpel*.) This approach, therefore, also highlights the importance of providing students of a second language with a rich inventory of linguistic realization procedures for the production of contextually-adapted speech acts.

Within the range of functional theories of illocution, Givon’s (1989) Functional-Typological Grammar is one of the first to consider that illocutionary categories can be defined in terms of prototypes. Since the parameters that define each illocutionary category (i.e. cost-benefit, optionality, power, indirectness, etc.) are scalar in nature, it is often possible to establish illocutionary continuums between different speech act categories. Thus, as the degree of authority of the speaker increases and, consequently, the optionality of the addressee decreases, for example, a continuum arises between the prototypical categories of orders and requests. The psychological reality of prototypical and blurry or peripheral instances of speech acts seems an issue relevant enough to be given consideration in textbooks.

 Givon’s proposals on illocutionary acts also include, although only as a theoretical postulate, which was not fully developed into practice, the need to approach speech acts from a typological perspective. In connection to this, comparison of how a particular speech act is realized in the first and second language, in order to pinpoint those areas of mismatch, which could be of difficulty for students, appears as a useful and desirable strategy to be incorporated in speech acts teaching materials.

The analysis categories AC5-7 below summarize the main theoretical contributions of functional approaches to illocution which are of interest in the teaching of speech acts and which will be considered in our analysis of textbooks in Section 5:

**AC 5:** Teaching the options offered bythe different levels of language organization for the expression of illocutionary meaning (**linguistic realization procedures**).

E.g. Choose the linguistic realization procedures which would be useful in the expression of an impolite order from the list below:

Tag questions (e.g. *will you? can you?),* adverb *please*, imperative sentences, satellite markers of immediateness (e.g. *at once, right now*, etc.), imposing intonation, questioning intonation, expressions of optionality (e.g*. if you please, if you will,* etc.), expressions minimizing the cost of the action (e.g. for a minute, for a second, etc.).

**AC 6:** Making students aware of the **prototypical nature of speech acts** and its effects on illocutionary performance.

E.g. Which of the following utterances is the best example of a *threat* to you? Which is the worst example of a *threat* to you? Could each of them function as a *threat* in the right context?

*Raise your hands, Raise your hands at once!!! Raise your hands, or I’ll shoot!, Raise your hands, will you?, Raise your hands, please*

**AC 7:** Teaching students about **typological issues** of illocutionary performance: similarities and differences between L1 and L2 and their effect on the learning/teaching of speech acts (interlanguage interferences, typological clashes).

E.g. In Spanish, requests can be linguistically realized through the use of an interrogative sentence in the present simple tense (e.g. *¿Me esperas?* \*Do you wait for me?). This is not possible in English. Which types of interrogative sentences can be used in English to express the same request intention.

2.3. Advances Stemming from Cognitive and Constructional Theories of Speech Acts

One aspect that was generally overlooked by pragmatic, conversational, and functional approaches to speech acts was the one related to the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes at work in illocutionary performance. This challenge was timidly taken up by cognitive linguists in the middle 80s (Gibbs, 1984; Verschueren, 1985), and investigated in full from the 90s onwards (Author, 1996; Gibbs, 1994; Panther & Thornburg, 1998). Cognitive approaches to illocution carried out after the turn of the century were particularly powerful because of their focus on the integration of proposals belonging to different theoretical frameworks, including previous contributions by pragmatic and functional theories (Author, 2001a; Author & Co-author, 2002; Panther & Thornburg, 2003, 2005; Baicchi, 2015). These approaches provided a detailed picture of the cognitive and mental processes underlying the production of speech acts. It was postulated that the production of indirect speech acts hinges on the metonymic activation of a variable number of the semantic/pragmatic attributes which define a particular speech act. Thus, as shall be illustrated below, such metonymic activation involves the explicit linguistic rendering of one or more of the features conforming the semantics of a particular speech act, in such a way that the whole speech act category gets activated in the mind of the hearer. This metonymic activation requires a detailed formalization of those semantic features/attributes making up each speech act category. Initially, the collection of attributes used in the description of speech act types took the form of *illocutionary scenarios*. These included BEFORE, CORE, and AFTER components/attributes (Panther & Thornburg, 1998). Thus, according to these authors, an utterance like *Can you hold the book for a second?* managed to activate the illocutionary category of requestive speech acts metonymically by referring to just one of its BEFORE components (i.e. the ability of the hearer to perform the requested action). In turn, an expression of the type *You will hold the book for a second, won’t you?* would do so by metonymically activating the AFTER component. Subsequent proposals (Author, 2001; Takahashi, 2012) argued that the aforementioned three components (i.e. BEFORE, CORE and AFTER) were not enough to account for the conceptual nature of speech acts, which ultimately had to be contextually-adapted in relation to the particular pragmatic factors of politeness, indirectness, optionality, power, social distance, etc. at work in a specific conversational situation. The realization that those pragmatic factors, already described by pragmatists like Leech (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1987), were a relevant part of the semantics of illocutionary categories motivated a shift towards the description of the latter in terms of *illocutionary propositional cognitive models* (henceforth illocutionary ICMs)*,* which could accommodate such additional information. It was further shown that for each of the pragmatic/semantic attributes contained within an illocutionary ICM, the language system provides a myriad of linguistic realizations (as was already foreseen by previous functional grammar approaches, see Author, 2001a). Constructional theories of speech acts (Author, 2001a, 2013; Author & Co-author, 2011; Del Campo, 2013), therefore, propose that the metonymic activation of a variable number of the pragmatic/semantic attributes included in a given illocutionary ICM allows speakers to produce illocutionary acts with varying degrees of politeness, optionality, indirectness, etc., and therefore, fully adapted to the pragmatic requirements of each particular context. Thus, the difference in degree of politeness of two utterances like *Can you hold this book?* and *Would you mind holding this book for a second, please?* lies on the fact that the second one metonymically activates a larger number of attributes of the ICM of requests (i.e. the use of the modal verb in the past tense increases politeness, the use of the expression *would you mind* increases optionality, the expression *for a second* minimizes the cost of the requested action, which in turn, also renders the act more polite, and the use of the adverb *please* mitigates the force of the act with a similar effect in politeness).

Explicit teaching of grammatical constructions to students of English as a second language has already been shown to have a marked effect on language learning (Waara, 2004; Valenzuela & Rojo, 2008). Therefore, teaching second language learners about the metonymic motivation of illocutionary acts, and offering them explicit instruction on illocutionary constructions, appears as a highly desirable goal for textbooks of English as a second language.

The relevant analysis categories stemming from cognitive and constructional theories of illocution which will be taken into account in our study are the following:

**AC 8:** Teaching students about **cognitive processes** underlying illocutionary performance (i.e. metonymic activation of the variables included in each illocutionary ICM).

E.g. The cognitive model of the act of begging includes semantic information such as the fact that (1) the proposed action results in a cost for the hearer and a benefit for the speaker, (2) speakers are aware of the fact that they do not have the necessary power to impose the realization of the action on the hearer and that the degree of optionality of the hearer to choose whether to do the action or not is high, and (3) the speaker’s willingness that the action takes place is high.

Which of the above semantic attributes of beggins is activated linguistically by the insistent repetition of the adverb *please* in the following utterance and, thus, helps to metonymically activate the act of begging in the mind of the hearer?

 *Please, please, please, bring him home!*

**AC 9:** Offering students explicit description of the **semantic/pragmatic attributes** of illocutionary ICMs.

E.g. After studying the semantic/pragmatic attributes of the illocutionary cognitive model of the act of offering, say which of the following statements are true or false in relation to this speech act:

a. The proposed action is to be carried out by the speaker

b. The proposed action is to be carried out by the hearer.

c. The action results in a cost to the hearer and a benefit to the speaker.

d. The action results in a benefit to the hearer and a cost to the speaker.

e. Offers can only be performed when the power relation between the speakers is asymmetrical (e.g. the speaker is more powerful than the hearer)

f. Offers can be performed regardless of the social distance that exists between speakers.

**AC 10:** Teaching students specific examples of **illocutionary constructions.**

E.g. *Can you X?* configurations may function as either request constructions or questions-for-information constructions. There are, however, some linguistic realization procedures which can further specify the *Can you X?* base construction and make the request meaning more explicit. In the following examples, underline the realization procedures which make the request meaning explicit and help to block a simple question-for-information interpretation:

a. Can you hold the book?

b. Can you hold the book for me, please?

c. Could you hold the book?

d. If it is not too much trouble, can you hold the book?

**3. Representation of speech acts in EFL text books: literature review**

Although much research has been conducted referring to speech acts, comparably fewer studies have been carried out to investigate speech acts in EFL course books. Most of the latter have pointed out that textbooks tend to offer classroom learners little opportunity for learning L2 pragmatics, but their conclusions, as will be illustrated in the present literature review, are often based on the analysis of isolated speech act categories, and stem from very specific theoretical perspectives. This section provides a state of the art of contemporary EFL textbook research and highlights its present needs.

One of the most obvious limitations of previous EFL textbook research is that they often take an exclusively conversational (Boxer and Pickering, 1995; Wong, 2001) or pragmatic stance (Diepenbroek & Derwing, 2014), leaving out of their analysis other theoretical considerations which may also influence the successful teaching and learning of speech acts (e.g. typological issues, cognitive operations, metonymical nature of illocutionary performance, illocutionary constructions, etc.). From such conversational/pragmatic perspective, most criticisms so far have revolved around the inadequacy of textbooks’ language samples, the lack of explicit discussion of conversational and pragmatic norms and practices, and, the shortage of “authentic examples of speech acts and of sufficient metapragmatic explanations to facilitate [their] acquisition” (Vellenga, 2004). A smaller number of studies have unveiled the lack of intercultural, interlinguistic information in EFL textbooks, emphasizing the need to provide students with knowledge of socio-cultural norms affecting the production of speech acts (Nguyen, 2011).

Recent studies have also warned of the scarce representation of speech act categories in EFL textbooks. Ulum (2015), for example, offers a statistical analysis of the frequency of occurrence of each sub-category of Searle’s (1976) speech act taxonomy in EFL textbooks with different levels of proficiency, only to conclude that their representation is far from sufficient: only directive and commissive acts are present in the evaluated EFL textbooks, while assertives, expressives, and declarations are excluded. Ulum’s conclusions, however, are based on the analysis of just one course book series, and restricted to the starters level, which asks for confirmation in a broader corpus of analysis.

In addition, previous research has mainly focused on how EFL textbooks approach the teaching of a limited number of individual types of speech acts. In this connection, studies have dealt mainly with the representation of *directive* acts in EFL course books. The act of *requesting* has traditionally received the highest attention (Barron, 2007; Petraki and Bayes, 2013), most studies concluding that its treatment in EFL textbooks is, limited, inadequate or unrealistic (Aksoyalp and Toprak, 2015). To the best of our knowledge, the analysis of how other types of speech acts in Searle’s taxonomy are approached in EFL textbooks has received much less attention, with a few studies on high-frequency *expressive* acts, such as *complaints* (Boxer and Pickering, 1995), and *apologies* (Limberg, 2015), while analysis on EFL textbooks portrayals of *declarations*, *commissives* and *assertives* being largely inexistent.

In view of the above, this paper includes a (1) quantitative analysis of speech act categories aimed at revealing how many of the illocutionary subtypes in Searle’s (1979) taxonomy are actually covered in our corpus of EFL textbooks, and (2) a comprehensive study on how EFL textbooks approach the teaching of speech acts, according to several criteria deriving from contemporary research, not only on conversational/pragmatic issues, but also on functional, typological, and cognitive considerations (see Section 2 for a detailed description and operationalization of the analysis categories).

**4. Corpus**

The corpus of analysis consists in seven course book series for the teaching of English as a second language: *English Unlimited (Cambridge University Press), Face2Face (Cambridge University Press)*, *Speak Out (Longman), New English File (Oxford University Press)*, *New Headway (Oxford University Press)*, *New Total English (Longman-Pearson)*, and *Outcomes (Cengage)*. For each of the series, we have included three volumes representing three major landmarks in the learning process: starters, intermediate, and advanced.

The criteria for corpus selection include variety and representativeness. Thus, we have included courses in general English by some of the leading editorial houses (i.e. *Oxford*, *Cambridge*, *Pearson*, *Cengage*). Some of them are designed specifically for adult learners (*English Unlimited*, *Speak Out*, *New English File*). Others can be used by adults and teenagers (*New Headway*). Some of them give pride of place to grammar (*New Headway*), while others advocate a strong communicative approach (*Outcomes*, *New English File*). Some take on a functional stance within a systematic approach (*New Total English*), and others, while likewise centred on purposeful, real-life objectives, additionally promise a special focus on intercultural competence as a ‘fifth skill’ (*English Unlimited*). All in all, the seven course book series chosen for analysis constitute a highly diverse sample of current methods and approaches to the teaching of English as a second language.

**5. Results**

This section presents the results of the analysis of our corpus with the aim of assessing how many of the contemporary research findings on speech acts, as summarized in our analysis categories (AC 1-10) in section 2, are being implemented in contemporary textbooks.

5.1. EFL textbooks representation of Searle’s taxonomy of speech acts.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

The bar chart in Figure 1 shows the types of speech acts dealt with in the textbooks. The sections inside each stacked bar display the amount of speech act types for each of the five general illocutionary categories distinguished by Searle (i.e. assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations). To facilitate comparison, stacked bars have been grouped according to the three proficiency levels (i.e. starters, intermediate and advanced) for each of the seven EFL textbooks in our corpus.

As can be observed, at the starters level, the vast majority of textbooks include assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive illocutions. The qualitative analysis of our data, however, reveals that the amount of speech act subtypes considered within each of these categories is surprisingly low. Only 3 or 4 types of assertives (i.e. telling, describing, explaining, giving opinions) and directives (i.e. requests, suggestions, asking for information) are found in all textbooks. Other common directives, such as giving instructions and inviting, are dealt with only in some of them (i.e. *English Unlimited*, *Face2Face*, *New English File*, *New Headway* and *New Total English*). The teaching of commissive speech acts is restricted to offers in all textbooks at this level of proficiency. Expressive illocutions are only represented by the acts of thanking and apologizing in most cases. Exceptionally, a couple of textbooks timidly examine the illocutionary acts of greeting and complimenting (e.g. *Speakout* and *New Headway*, respectively). Declarations or social speech acts, those that need to follow certain fixed formulas and social conventions, such as baptizing or marrying, are not to be found in any of the textbooks.

All in all, at the starters level, our findings point to an overall poor treatment of illocution as far as the number of speech act types included is concerned. Only a handful of random speech acts are covered, and basic, everyday life illocutions like orders, threats, warnings, and promises, to name just a few, are not given any consideration.

As is the case with the starters series, declarations are not included in the syllabi of any of the intermediate level textbooks under scrutiny. In fact, in some cases (e.g. *Face2Face* and *Outcome*) the number of general speech act categories dealt with at the intermediate level is smaller than in the starters series. In this connection, it is observed that intermediate textbooks include assertive, directive and expressive speech acts, but only one of them (i.e. *English Unlimited*) includes the study of commissives illocution (i.e. offering and promising) in written English.

The analysis of each category of speech acts in isolation at the intermediate level of proficiency reveals that, with the only exception of course book series *Outcome*, the number of assertive speech acts grows considerably in comparison to the starters level course book series. While the latter only included 3-5 basic assertives (e.g. *telling*, *stating*, *describing*, *giving opinions*), the intermediate level series incorporate others like *evaluating*, *clarifying*, *speculating*, *deducing*, *predicting*, *agreeing*/*disagreeing*, and *generalizing*. As regards directives, the increase is neither so noticeable, nor as systematic. Some textbooks double the number of directives included in their syllabi, as is the case with *Speakout* (i.e. giving permission, giving instructions, asking for information, recommendations). Others include a similar number of directives at both levels, but dealing with different categories each time. Thus, *New English File* introduces *requests, asking for information, giving instructions, suggestions, and invitations* at the starters level, while it deals with *commands, requests, asking for information, suggestions,* and *permissions* at the intermediate level. Similarly, the number of expressive illocutions is fairly low both in the starters and the intermediate series, and the introduction of different types of expressives is largely unsystematic. Some series include expressive illocutions in their starters textbooks (e.g. *Face2Face*), but not in their intermediate textbooks. Others start to incorporate expressives at the intermediate level (e.g. *English Unlimited*) for the first time. In some cases, the number of expressive illocutions under scrutiny is even slightly higher in the starters series (i.e. thanking, apologizing, complimenting) than in the intermediate series in which only the illocutionary acts of thanking and apologizing are dealt with (e.g. *New Headway*).

As the analysis moves on to the advanced level course series, the expected progression in the number of speech acts and their depth of analysis only seems to be fulfilled as far as assertive illocutions are concerned. In fact, speech acts within this category are the main focus of attention in all the advanced textbooks under scrutiny. In contrast, the amount of directive illocutions that are taught at this level is generally lower than that found in the starters and intermediate course books. In one extreme case, no consideration at all is given to this illocutionary category (e.g. *Outcome*). In most cases, only 2-4 types of directives are considered among a restricted inventory including *requests*, *recommendations*, *suggestions*, *advising*, *giving permission*, *commands*, and *proposals*. These are basically the same directive speech act types that had already been studied at previous levels. No additional frequently-used categories of directives, such as *threats*, are included, and no fine-grained teaching of the differences in meaning and performance displayed by specific subtypes of directives within each subcategory is attempted (e.g. *orders* vs. *commands, demands, instructions*, etc.). It may be too far-fetched to deal with these subtle distinctions at the starters and intermediate levels, but the advanced level series should ideally attempt to accommodate their study. Acquiring proficiency in English as a second language does not seem possible in the absence of knowledge of this type of distinctions.

Expressive speech acts are included in only three of the textbooks at the advanced level (i.e. *English Unlimited*, *Speakout*, and *New English File*), which deal with just three commissive speech acts respectively (i.e. criticizing, regretting, and complaining). Equally unsettling is the lack of coordination between the different levels of each of these course series in relation to the treatment of expressive acts. By way of illustration, the act of criticizing had already been dealt with in *English Unlimited-Intermediate* at a similar degree of depth than in *English Unlimited-Advanced* (p. 93), so much so that the explanation included in the latter, consisting in a list of several linguistic realization procedures for the act of criticizing with or without softening strategies (e.g. use of hedges: *It doesn’t seem* quite *right*), comes through as highly redundant. Granted that the aim was to consolidate the learning of this speech act type through repetition, we are left to wonder why the same strategy has not been followed with the expressive acts of complaining and regretting, which were included in the *English Unlimited* intermediate level textbook, but no so in the syllabi of the advanced series.

Finally, the study of commissive speech acts and declarations is not entertained in any of the advanced textbooks under analysis. In fact, these two illocutionary categories are largely underrepresented throughout the different levels of the course series. Declarations are fully absent from the syllabi, and commissives are restricted to shallow presentations of the act of offering, mostly at the starters level. Shockingly enough, a highly frequent commissive act (i.e. the act of *promising*) is only dealt with once in our corpus at the intermediate level of the *English Unlimited* course book series.

5.2. Representation of pragmatic/conversational analysis categories

The bar chart in Figure 2 summarizes our findings on the EFL textbooks representation of the four pragmatic/conversational analysis categories under scrutiny: pragmatic scales (AC1), pragmatic variables (AC2), rapport management (AC3), and conversational issues like pre-sequences, adjacency pairs, and preferred/dispreferred turns (AC4).

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

As can be observed, AC4 (i.e. adjacency pair, pre-sequences, preference organization) is the analysis category which receives a highest degree of attention in all EFL textbooks under scrutiny at the three proficiency levels. The space devoted to this analysis category, however, is inversely proportional to the increase in proficiency level, with advanced EFL textbooks devoting the lowest degree of attention to this matter. Other analysis categories, such as rapport management and the politeness effects of pragmatic scales and variables, receive comparatively less attention. Nevertheless, the graphs also show a steady increase in the representation of pragmatic and rapport management issues with each proficiency level. Let us offer a more detailed analysis of results in relation to each of the analysis categories under scrutiny:

*AC1*

Considerations of politeness in terms of pragmatic scales (AC1) are largely inexistent in the EFL textbooks under scrutiny regardless of their proficiency level. At the starters level, no reference has been found to the scales of cost-benefit, optionality, and indirectness, which may affect the politeness requirements of speech acts. This underrepresentation displays a very timid improvement at the intermediate and advanced levels in only three of the textbooks (i.e. *English Unlimited Intermediate, New English File Advanced*, and *New Headway Advanced*), which offer a few isolated explanations about the effects of mitigation in the overall degree of politeness of speech acts. *English Unlimited* (p. 82), for example, teaches how to mitigate the inherent impoliteness of complaints by means of indirect formulas or mitigating hedges.

*AC2*

Our data shows that the teaching of pragmatic variables (i.e. social distance, power asymmetries, formal vs. informal contexts-AC2) and their effects on the politeness requirements of speech acts is also absent from the EFL starters textbooks. It gains in representation, however, at the intermediate and advanced levels with a total of six out of the seven textbooks under analysis devoting some space to their consideration. *New Headway Intermediate* (p. 13), for example, introduces several realization procedures for the act of apologizing (e.g. *Sorry, I’m late* vs. *I apologize for the delay*) and reflects on their adequacy in situations in which there is a short social distance between the speakers (i.e. interactions among friends). In *New Headway Intermediate*, we are also presented with some linguistic realization procedures required in formal contexts. Thus, on p. 141 students are explained that “in the expression of obligation, *have to* is more formal than *have got to*; in the expression of requests, *Could you...?* is more formal and *Can you...?* more familiar”. In a similar vein, in *Speakout Advanced* (p. 130) the treatment of the act of regrettingincludes an explanation along the following lines: “In formal contexts, inversions such as *Had I known better, I wouldn’t have…* are preferable to the use of ‘if’ regrets (*If I had known better, I wouldn’t have…*)”. Similar explanations are found in the rest of the course book series at the intermediate and advanced levels. In fact, formality is the pragmatic variable which receives more attention with 16 occurrences out of a total of 21 instances in both intermediate and advanced textbooks. It is distantly followed by the variable of social distance with 4 occurrences and that of social power with only one.

Still, the treatment of politeness continues to be largely unsystematic. In most intermediate textbooks, the student is taught how to perform polite requests and complaints, for example, but no attention to politeness necessities is paid when dealing with other speech acts, like giving advice, suggesting, negotiating, etc., which are also subject to similar requirements. As shown above, in some of the textbooks different realization procedures with varying degrees of politeness are taught for either formal or informal contexts. However, even in these cases, the formality of the situation and its effects over the politeness requirements of the speech act are randomly considered in relation to some speech acts (e.g. invitations), but not others (e.g. suggestions, recommendations). Some textbooks take this lack of systematicity to an extreme. *New Headway* *Intermediate* (p. 87), for instance, specifically teaches students how to perform polite questions for information (e.g. *Could you tell me how…?* vs. *How…?*), while simultaneously devoting no reflection to the politeness required in the performance of requests for action, which have a potentially higher negative effect on rapport, because they generally represent a cost for the addressee and are, therefore, much more prone to require a polite handling.

*AC3*

At the starters level, there are only two textbooks (i.e. *New Headway* and *Outcome*) which introduce a passing reference to politeness issues, which could be linked to rapport management and the need to have a positive impact in our interlocutors. By way of illustration, in *New Headway Starters* (p. 89), we find an explanation about general politeness issues in relation to the performance of the act of requesting:

(1) *I’d like* is more polite than *I want*.

The same strategy is pointed out in *Speakout Starters* (p. 134) where, in addition, the use of the past modal *would* is linked to the performance of requests. There is, however, no explanation as to why *I’d like* is more polite than *I want* in terms of the pragmatic scale of indirectness (AC1), or about the contexts in which such degree of politeness would be required in accordance with considerations of the social power and/or distance between the speakers, or the formality of the situation (AC2).

As can be observed in Figure 2, the representation of rapport management (AC3) increases in the intermediate level course book series. By way of illustration, consider the following explanation about the preferred/dispreferred turns for answering to requests for permission without creating a negative impact on rapport (*Face2Face Intermediate*, p. 137):

(2)

-We don’t usually say *no* to refuse permission because it isn’t polite.

-Instead of saying *no*, we usually give a reason to say why we refuse permission: Sorry, I don’t think we have the software for that.

-When we refuse permission, we often use *Sorry*, .... or *Actually*, ... at the beginning of the sentence to be polite.

Nevertheless, considerations of rapport are still largely restricted to offering a very limited number of random and far from exhaustive grammatical realizations which allow speakers to perform polite speech acts (e.g. requests using modal verbs in the past tense, idiomatic expressions such as *would you mind…?*, etc.) and which, therefore, contribute to a positive rapport. Thus, *English Unlimited Intermediate* (p. 82) offers a set of softening strategies that allow the speaker to decrease the force of complaints (e.g. *actually, a bit, it’s just that*...)*.* However, no explanation is given on the workings of these linguistic realizations or about the reasons (i.e. pragmatic scales-AC1) that interact with them to produce polite illocutions, and no comparison is offered with non-polite realizations of the same speech acts so that the student could avoid using impolite formulae which may have a negative impact on rapport.

The teaching of issues related to rapport management shows a marked increase in the advanced level series, almost doubling the attention received at the intermediate level of proficiency. All EFL textbooks under analysis include sections dealing with linguistics mechanisms (e.g. softening strategies, euphemisms, etc.) which contribute to maintaining a positive rapport in linguistic interaction. By way of illustration, *Face2Face Advanced* (p. 131) includes an explanation on how to perform the act of disagreeing politely. It is important to point out, however, that even though the inclusion of rapport management sections has generalised to all analysed textbooks at the advanced level, on average the number of occurrences of this analysis category is still rather low. Each of the EFL textbooks offers no more than 2 or 3 sections on these issues. In addition, the vast majority of them have to do with softening strategies, as if these were the only linguistic mechanisms having a positive impact on rapport.

*AC4*

As displayed in Figure 2, conversational phenomena like pre-sequences, adjacency pairs and preferred/dispreferred turns are by large the most amply represented analysis category in all EFL textbooks under analysis. Its representation also shows a decrease which is inversely proportional to the increase in proficiency level of the textbooks.

At the starters level, all textbooks offer an ample description of conversational issues of illocutionary performance: speech acts are not taught in isolation, but in connection to their expected replies (i.e. adjacency pairs). Other conversational aspects, like pre-sequences, are also included in two of the textbooks (i.e. *English Unlimited* and *Speakout*). Thus, as shown in example (3) below, taken from *Speakout* (p. 23), suggestions are taught as second turns preceded by an expression of need or desire (e.g hunger). Simultaneously, adjacency pairs (i.e. suggestion-acceptance) are also introduced:

(3)

A: I'm tired

B: Me, too

A: Let's go and have a coffee

B: Good idea

Similar results stem from the analysis of the intermediate and advanced course book series. All of them excel in the treatment of conversational aspects of illocution (AC4). As can be observed in Figure 2, however, the attention paid to conversational issues at these two proficiency levels decreases slightly in comparison to the starters textbooks. This is paralleled with an increase in vocabulary and grammatical activities at these levels, which seems to leave less space for conversational role plays and turn taking exercises. The focus of intermediate and advanced textbooks also shifts towards writing and reading comprehension tasks, thus focusing on assertive speech acts like those of describing, speculating, comparing, argumenting, etc., which are less prone to a conversational handling. Still, some textbooks are especially good at teaching conversational issues by introducing complex speech acts which involve adjacency pairs combining several illocutionary types. This is the case with *Unlimited English Intermediate* (p.74) which deals with the act of negotiating and in doing so it explains how this illocution often involves a combination of suggestions, objections, acceptances, and requests, which altogether conform a negotiation.

5.3. EFL textbook representation of functional analysis categories

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Results for analysis categories stemming from functional research on speech acts (i.e. realization procedures of speech acts, prototypical nature of speech acts, and typological issues) are rather asymmetric. The prototypical nature of illocutionary categories (AC6) and typological considerations of illocutionary performance (AC7) lack total representation in the EFL textbooks. Thus, students are not taught about prototype effects such as the blurry nature of some instances of speech acts, which display features of more than one illocutionary category (see Author (2001b) on the hybrid nature of threats, invitations and offerings, for instance). Neither are they informed about typological considerations such as specific differences between L1 and L2 as regards illocutionary performance, which could facilitate their learning. On the contrary, the teaching of those linguistic realization procedures (AC5) offered by the system of language for the expression of illocutionary force has a quantitatively rich representation in the EFL textbooks under study, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency. The depth and systematicity with which these realization procedures are dealt with in the course book series, however, deserves closer attention.

While in some cases students are explicitly announced that they are being taught a linguistic realization for the performance of a particular speech act (e.g. *Speakout Starters* (p. 134) teaches students to use *I’d like* expressions to make requests), in other cases linguistic realizations for the performance of speech acts are introduced without naming or introducing the illocutionary act at work (e.g. questions of the type *Would you like...? and Can I...?* are included in a practical exercise without an explanation of their potentiality to be used as offers, or requests for permission, respectively; *Speakout Starters* (p. 101)).

 All course book series display an unsystematic treatment of the linguistic realizations of speech acts. While some illocutionary acts (usually requests, suggestions, and permission) are exhaustively taught in specific sections, and students are offered a choice of 5 or 6 different linguistic realizations for their performance, other speech acts (i.e. warning, advising, offers) are only dealt with in passing and the student is taught only 1 or 2 linguistic expressions for their realization.

It is also worth noticing that, for some reason, while at the starters level all course book series approach the teaching of speech acts in their spoken forms, many of the intermediate and advanced level textbooks focus on their written forms exclusively (as part of a thank you letter or an apologizing email, for example), as if these illocutionary acts were not used in oral conversations, and overlooking the fact that their spoken and written performance may differ largely (e.g. *New Total English Advanced*, p. 161, on how to write a proposal).

In addition, the analysis of the data has also revealed that the list of linguistic realizations taught for each illocutionary act does not obey to a careful choice of those which are the most frequently used or the most prototypical in different contexts. In fact, those linguistic expressions are rather randomly selected. In *New English File* *Advanced* and *New Headway Advanced*, to give just two examples, commands are dealt with in relation to modal verbs of obligation (e.g. *You have to…*, *You must…*,). Nevertheless, no indication is given about the fact that commands are often performed through other linguistic means, such as simple imperatives or performative verbs. This partial treatment of the linguistic realizations of speech acts may very likely result in a fragmented and incomplete learning process.

5.4. EFL textbooks representation of constructional/cognitive analysis categories

The results stemming from the analysis of our corpus of EFL textbooks reveals that the explicit teaching of analysis categories AC8-AC10 (i.e. the cognitive operations involved in illocutionary performance, the semantic/pragmatic attributes of illocutionary categories, or the different illocutionary constructions available to produce a particular speech act) lacks representation in all course book series under scrutiny. See section 2.3 for concrete examples of how these analysis categories could be operationalized and implemented in textbooks.

**6. Conclusions**

The findings reported in the previous section reveal the following general weaknesses of contemporary textbooks for students of English as a L2 in relation to their treatment of speech acts:

* The analysis of the data shows a lack of coordination and progression throughout the different levels. Only in the case of the representation of assertive speech acts do we witness a certain planning, with the number and difficulty of assertive illocutions growing steadily in each proficiency level of the series.
* The present study also reveals important gaps in the choice of those speech act types included in the syllabi of the textbooks under scrutiny. In fact, a student can reach and complete the advanced level of many of the course series under scrutiny without having received any instruction on how to perform basic, everyday life illocutions like promising, threatening, warning, or begging, to name just a few shocking omissions. Previous partial studies on this issue based on the analysis of isolated course book series (e.g. Moradi et al., 2013; Ulum, 2015) had already hinted to this shortcoming of EFL textbooks. The present study, which analyses a broader corpus of textbooks at three different levels of proficiency, confirms that there seems to have been little progress on this issue and that publishers should devote some time to improve the representation of speech act categories in their course book series, allowing for the necessary representation of all five categories of speech acts included in Searle’s taxonomy and providing a clear progression in their treatment throughout the three proficiency levels.
* In relation to our analysis categories AC1-AC10, the results of the present study reveal that the only theoretical advances, which have clearly made their way into contemporary textbooks, are the ones related to conversational aspects of illocutionary performance (AC4) and, to a lesser extent, the teaching of linguistics realizations for the performance of a given speech act (AC5). Thus, all textbooks under analysis address the teaching of speech acts in connection with either liable pre-sequences, or associated adjacency pairs, and some of them include explanations dealing with preference organization. On the contrary, politeness-related considerations (AC1-AC3) are shallowly and unsystematically dealt with. The analysis of the EFL textbooks in our corpus shows that politeness issues are arbitrarily considered in relation to some speech acts (e.g. requests, complaints, etc.), but not to others whose politeness requirements are similar (e.g. orders, threats, suggestions, etc.). The number and depth with which linguistic realizations of politeness are taught also varies a great deal from one speech act to another. Previous studies (Vellenga, 2004) had already revealed the lack of explicit discussion of pragmatic norms and practices, and the shortage of authentic and varied examples of speech acts displaying different degrees of politeness in different contexts and situations. The present study confirms these previous findings and reveals an unsettling degree of stagnation in this respect.
* The breach between contemporary research on speech acts and its representation in EFL textbooks is especially patent in relation to typological, cognitive, and constructional aspects of illocution (AC 6-10). Our data reveals that these theoretical advancements have not yet made their way into the current textbooks of English as an L2.

This study has a number of limitations. Its main objective was to provide a characterization as comprehensive as possible of how contemporary theories on speech acts have been implemented in EFL textbooks. This involved considering the contributions of contemporary research on speech acts carried out within three main theoretical perspectives: pragmatic/conversational, functional, and cognitive. Since the number of theories within each of these three theoretical perspectives is considerably large, it was necessary to choose the most representative among of them (see Section 2). Further studies could therefore be devoted to the implementation of other theories which have not been included in the present paper (i.e. Lakoff’s theory of politeness). Likewise, due to space constraints, we have only provided a very limited number of examples of how the analysis categories could be implemented in textbooks (section 2). The design of a higher number of feasible and concrete activities, especially in relation to those analysis categories which are underrepresented in EFL textbooks, could pave the way to pragmatically, functionally and cognitively adequate teaching materials. In spite of this and other limitations, we hope that this study can raise awareness about the need to further improve the present-day treatment of speech acts in EFL course book series. The challenge for publishers and authors of textbooks of English as an L2 is, therefore, served. The findings of this study should encourage careful consideration of contemporary proposals on speech acts, especially those which are most comprehensive in nature (i.e. cognitive-constructional approaches), for their implementation in future course series for the teaching of English to foreign students.

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| **General categories of speech acts** | **Subcategories of speech acts** |
| ASSERTIVES | Stating, Claiming, Describing, Telling, Insisting, etc. |
| DIRECTIVES | Ordering, Requesting, Warning, Advising, etc. |
| COMMISSIVES | Promising, Vowing, Offering, Threatening, etc. |
| EXPRESSIVES | Congratulating, Excusing, Thanking, Apologizing, etc. |
| DECLARATIONS | Baptising, Appointing, Declaring war, Resigning, etc. |

Table 1. Classification of speech acts (Searle, 1979)



**Figure 1.** Representation of Searle’s five speech act categories in the EFL textbooks under scrutiny.



**Figure 2.** EFL textbooks representation of analysis categories AC1-AC4

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**Figure 3.** EFL textbooks representation of analysis categories AC5-AC7