

Hypnotherapist's Speech Acts in Treating Client with Mental Health Issues

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Abstract:- This study aims to describe the types and functions of speech acts used by hypnotherapist when treating clients with mental health issues. Several cases were randomly selected for this study, including clients with PTSD, acrophobia, and hemophobia. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing a case study method where the researcher acted as a participant observer, posing as a relative of the client. The researcher directly observed the hypnotherapy sessions and recorded the hypnotherapist's speech acts. The findings indicate that directive speech acts play a crucial role in the hypnotherapy process. Hypnotherapist use directive speech acts including questioning functions are vital during hypnotherapy to extract information from clients and rapport building. Furthermore, giving hypnotic suggestions can lead clients into a state of relaxation. Additionally, expressive speech acts not only reinforce positive behavior but also strengthen the therapeutic relationship, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the hypnotherapy sessions.

Keywords: speech act, hypnotherapy, mental health

1. Introduction

Hypnotherapy has gained recognition as a valuable therapeutic approach for addressing various mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, and anxiety disorders. Hypnotherapy also holds significant relevance in efforts to improve behavior as well as mental and physical health conditions [1]. In the realm of mental health, hypnotherapy has proven to be an effective tool for addressing a variety of issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder [2]. The process of suggestion in hypnotherapy allows therapists to directly interact with the client's subconscious mind, helping them to change harmful thought patterns and absorb positive suggestions that support mental well-being [3].

The therapeutic process in hypnotherapy is centered around the concept of suggestion, which enables therapists to bypass the conscious mind and engage with the subconscious. This interaction facilitates the transformation of negative cognitive frameworks into more beneficial ones, thereby promoting mental health. By accessing the subconscious, therapists can instill positive affirmations and suggestions, which can help clients develop healthier mental patterns and improve their overall psychological state. The efficacy of hypnotherapy in altering maladaptive thought processes underscores its potential as a vital therapeutic intervention.

Furthermore, hypnotherapy also offers substantial benefits for physical health conditions, including chronic pain management, weight control, and even smoking cessation [4][5][6]. The ability to influence the subconscious mind not only aids in mental health improvement but also translates into physical health benefits. For instance, through hypnotherapy, individuals can manage chronic pain more effectively, adhere to weight management programs, and overcome addictive behaviors such as smoking. The dual impact on both mental and physical health highlights the versatile and holistic nature of hypnotherapy as a comprehensive treatment modality.

The effectiveness of hypnotherapy significantly depends on the quality of communication between the therapist and the client. Effective communication can enhance therapeutic rapport, increase client trust, and improve treatment outcomes. For instance, the structure and mechanism of messages in hypnotherapy are crucial.

Furthermore, therapists use techniques such as metaphors and indirect communication styles based on Milton Erickson's principles to facilitate better understanding and engagement from the client [7]. Additionally, the therapeutic relationship's quality, as perceived by both clients and therapists, is strongly correlated with improvements in mental health outcomes [8]. Therefore, the ability of hypnotherapist to communicate effectively and build a strong therapeutic relationship is vital for the success of hypnotherapy.

In the practice of hypnotherapy, the role of language is highly significant, serving as the primary means of communicating with clients and guiding them into a state of deep relaxation and focus. [9] states that language is essential in achieving the objectives of hypnotherapy, as every stage of the hypnotherapy process relies on language as the medium for hypnotic communication. One aspect of language study or linguistics that can be used to analyze the language system in hypnotic communication is pragmatics, particularly in the context of speech act. This is because the use of language in hypnotic communication is closely related to its impact on the interlocutor.

Speech acts are a fundamental concept in pragmatics, a subfield of linguistics that studies how context influences the way language is used to convey meaning. The term "speech act" refers to an utterance that serves a function in communication. According to the theory developed by philosophers [10] and [11], speech acts can be categorized into different types based on the function: Locutionary Act: This is the act of saying something with a specific meaning. It involves the actual utterance and its literal meaning. Illocutionary Act: This refers to the intention behind the utterance. It is the function that the speaker intends to perform, such as promising, ordering, greeting, warning, inviting, or requesting. Perlocutionary Act: This is the effect that the utterance has on the listener. It encompasses the response or reaction of the listener to the speaker's words, which might involve persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, or inspiring.

Searle further categorized illocutionary acts into five types: Assertives: Statements that describe a state of affairs in the world. Directives: Attempts by the speaker to get the listener to do something. Commissives: Commitments by the speaker to a future action. Expressives: Expressions of the speaker's psychological state. Declarations: Statements that change the reality they are describing.

In the context of hypnotherapy, pragmatics focuses on how context influences the interpretation of meaning, making it ideal for examining how hypnotherapist utilize specific linguistic patterns and speech acts to facilitate the induction of a hypnotic state, which involves decreased awareness of the environment and heightened suggestibility [12]. The various types of speech acts, such as directives, assertives, and expressives, are employed to influence the subconscious mind and facilitate therapeutic change [13]. These speech acts are strategically used to create a therapeutic environment that promotes relaxation and receptiveness to suggestions, ultimately impacting the client's mental state and behavior [14]. Understanding the pragmatic functions of speech acts in hypnotherapy is essential for optimizing communication and enhancing therapeutic outcomes.

However, research on the use of speech acts in the context of hypnotherapy has mostly focused on medical treatments, such as dental hypnosis. There is limited research on its application to mental health issues. Therefore, this study aims to explore in greater depth the use of speech acts by hypnotherapist when addressing clients with mental health problems. To achieve the research objectives, the researcher poses three research questions: First, what types of illocutionary acts are used by hypnotherapist during hypnotherapy sessions? Second, what are the functions of hypnotherapist's illocutionary acts?.

2. Methods

This study employs a mixed-method approach. This approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The quantitative aspect includes analyzing the types and functions of speech acts that are predominantly employed during the hypnotherapy session by using statistical analysis. The qualitative aspect involves describing the perlocutionary effects of the hypnotherapist's speech acts during hypnotherapy sessions through detailed observations and interviews. By integrating these methods, the study aims to offer a holistic view of how speech acts contribute to the therapeutic process in hypnotherapy.

In this study, the researcher acts as a participant observer, specifically as a relative of the client undergoing hypnotherapy, and observes the entire hypnotherapy process in one of hypnotherapy clinic in Makassar Indonesia. The researcher recorded all the utterances using of the hypnotherapist using while handling clients with different cases. The cases addressed by the hypnotherapist in this study include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), acrophobia, and hemophobia.

The collected data were analyzed and classified based on the categories of types and functions of illocutionary speech acts used by hypnotherapist during hypnotherapy sessions. Additionally, the percentage of usage for each type and function of illocutionary speech acts was calculated to determine which ones were most dominantly used by hypnotherapist during hypnotherapy sessions. The data were then presented in the form of tables and charts. Furthermore, the interview data with the hypnotherapist regarding the use of speech acts were presented in the form of narrative text.

3. Results

a. Types of Illocutionary Act

This study focused on the illocutionary acts category that are employed by the hypnotherapist during therapy. Illocutionary acts are speech acts that carry specific intentions or purposes. Based on observations and data analysis, in this study, there are three types of illocutionary acts are used by hypnotherapist during sessions with the clients: assertive speech acts, directive speech acts, and expressive speech acts. The data is presented as follow:

Table 1. Types of Illocutionary Act Used by Hypnotherapist During Hypnotherapy

No.	Types of Illocutionary Acts	%
1.	Assertive Speech Acts	19%
2.	Directive Speech Acts	78%
3.	Expressive Speech Acts	3%
	Total	100%

The table above shows that, overall, hypnotherapist predominantly use directive illocutionary acts, with a usage percentage of 78%. This is followed by assertive illocutionary acts at 19% and expressive illocutionary acts at the smallest percentage of 3%. The percentage of speech act usage is presented in the following chart:

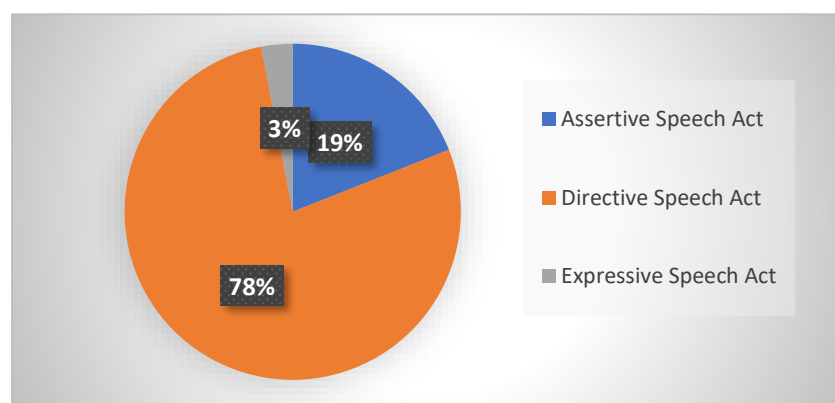


Figure 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Act Types Used by The Hypnotherapist During Hypnotherapy Sessions

The chart reveal a significant reliance on directive speech acts in hypnotherapy sessions. The dominance of directive speech acts suggests that hypnotherapist employ a structured and guided approach to ensure clients follow the therapeutic process effectively.

b. Functions of Illocutionary Act

Each type of illocutionary speech act serves a specific function. Based on the data analysis, there are 15 functions of illocutionary speech acts were identified during hypnotherapy sessions. Based on the data analysis, the functions of illocutionary speech acts used by hypnotherapist during sessions with the clients are categorized into assertive, directive, and expressive functions.

Assertive Functions involve providing information and sharing knowledge with the client. These include:

- Informing: Providing factual information to the client.
- Giving Opinion: Sharing personal views or judgments.
- Explaining: Clarifying procedures, techniques, or concepts.
- Asserting: Emphasizing or affirming statements.
- Convincing: Persuading the client to accept certain ideas or actions.
- Stating: Making declarations or statements of fact.

Directive Functions are aimed at guiding and influencing the client's actions and responses. These include:

- Asking: Posing questions to gather information or provoke thought.
- Giving Suggestion: Giving hypnotic suggestion using metaphor
- Instructing: Giving clear directions or instructions.
- Requesting: Asking for a specific action or response.
- Ordering: Issuing commands.
- Offering: Presenting options or help.
- Prohibiting: Forbidding certain actions.

Expressive Functions are used to convey emotions and build rapport with the client. These include:

- Thanking: Expressing gratitude.
- Praising: Offering compliments or positive feedback.

These functions highlight the multifaceted role of language in hypnotherapy, showcasing how hypnotherapist use various speech acts to inform, guide, and support the clients throughout the therapeutic process. To identify the dominant functions of illocutionary speech acts used by hypnotherapist during hypnotherapy sessions, the following table presents the results of the analysis:

Table 2. Functions of Illocutionary Act Used by Hypnotherapist During Hypnotherapy

No.	Types	Functions	%
1	Directive	Asking	44.1%
2		Giving Suggestion	20.6%
3		Instructing	4.4%
4		Requesting	3.7%
5		Ordering	0.7%
6		Offering	3.7%
7		Prohibiting	0.7%
8	Assertive	Informing	6.6%
9		Explaining	3.7%
10		Asserting	1.5%
11		Convincing	5.9%
12		Giving Opinion	0.7%
13		Stating	0.7%
14	Expressive	Thanking	1.5%
15		Praising	1.5%
Total			100%

Based on the table above, the percentage of the functions of illocutionary speech acts are as follows: for directive functions, asking is used 44.1% of the time, giving hypnotic suggestions 20.6%, instructing 4.4%, requesting 3.7%, ordering 0.7%, offering 3.7%, and prohibiting 0.7%. For assertive functions, informing is used 6.6%, explaining 3.7%, asserting 1.5%, convincing 5.9%, giving opinion 0.7%, and stating 0.7%. For expressive

functions, thanking and praising are each used 1.5% of the time. These percentages highlight the predominant use of directive functions, especially asking and giving hypnotic suggestions, which together account for a significant portion of the speech acts used by hypnotherapist. Assertive functions are also present, with informing and convincing being more frequently used. Expressive functions, though less common, still play a role in the therapeutic communication process. This distribution reflects the hypnotherapist's focus on guiding the client through directives while also providing information and support through assertive and expressive acts.

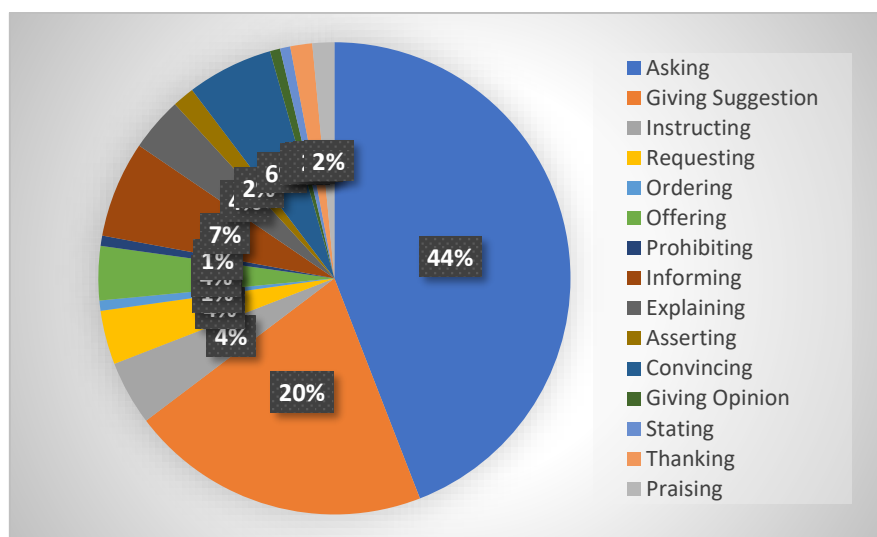


Figure 2. Distribution of Illocutionary Act Functions Used by The Hypnotherapist During Hypnotherapy Sessions

The chart highlights that directive functions, particularly asking and giving hypnotic suggestions, dominate the communication during hypnotherapy sessions, with asking being the most prevalent at 44%. This suggests that hypnotherapist primarily focus on engaging and guiding clients through questions and hypnotic suggestions. Assertive functions like informing (6%) and convincing (7%) are also important but less frequent. Expressive functions like thanking and praising are used the least, reflecting supportive but not central role in the therapeutic process. This distribution underscores the hypnotherapist's emphasis on directive and informative communication to facilitate effective therapy.

The use of directive speech acts with the function of asking questions is predominantly employed by hypnotherapist during the hypnotherapy process. Based on interviews with the hypnotherapist, he stated that an interview session with clients, known as the "intake interview". It is conducted to delve deeper into the clients' issues. The responses from clients are crucial in hypnotherapy. Furthermore, asking many questions is highly beneficial for rapport building. Rapport building in hypnotherapy is the process of establishing a positive, trusting, and respectful relationship with the client.

Furthermore, observations revealed that hypnotherapist often give hypnotic suggestion instructions to clients dealing with PTSD. This approach helps induce a deep state of relaxation, making clients more receptive to positive suggestions and aiding in her recovery from trauma.

4. Discussion

4.1 Hypnotherapist's Illocutionary Acts

Based on the findings of this study, three categories of illocutionary speech acts used by hypnotherapist were identified: assertive, directive, and expressive, each with its respective functions. These findings align with those

of [15] and [16], which demonstrated that the use of directive and assertive speech acts is effective in hypnotic communication for reducing pain and inducing relaxation.

However, this study differs from [15] and [16] in terms of the functions of speech acts. In the previous studies, directive speech acts with the function of commanding were predominantly used, whereas in this study, the directive function of asking questions or eliciting information was more frequently employed. The types of questions used by hypnotherapist included open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, and yes/no questions to obtain clear responses from clients. This highlights a key difference between the use of speech acts in medical contexts versus hypnotherapy contexts. In hypnotherapy, eliciting information from clients is crucial for the continuation and success of the therapy, as client responses are essential, based on interviews with hypnotherapist.

The importance of client responses in hypnotherapy underscores the necessity of using directive speech acts to ask questions or gather information at the beginning of every hypnotherapy session, regardless of the case. As [17] states, it is imperative for a therapist to understand the events experienced by the client. However, it can be challenging for clients to narrate their experiences all at once because the subconscious mind requires time to access these memories. Therefore, hypnoanalysis often starts with small fragments of events (like pieces of a puzzle), bringing forth these pieces, and the therapist's task is to analyze the complete picture to make sense of it as a whole.

4.2 Hypnotherapist's Directive Speech Acts – Function of Asking for Rapport Building

Based on the interview data, the hypnotherapist mentioned that he used questions for rapport building. In the context of hypnotherapy, rapport building remains a key element in forming a positive and trusting relationship between the hypnotherapist and the client [18]. Building strong rapport can enhance the effectiveness of hypnotherapy sessions and help clients feel more comfortable and open to the hypnosis process [19].

Furthermore, client trust is a key element in hypnotherapy, and rapport building is the foundation for establishing that trust. Every individual is different, so the hypnotherapist needs to understand the client's needs and preferences on an individual basis. By building strong rapport, the hypnotherapist can create an environment that supports positive transformation and the desired changes for the client

4.3 Hypnotherapist's Directive Speech Acts – Function of Giving Hypnotic Suggestion for Relaxation

The speech acts of a hypnotherapist are often focused on creating a calm and relaxed atmosphere for the client. Hypnosis can help reduce stress and anxiety levels, which in turn can have a positive impact on the client's health. In this study, directive speech acts especially the function giving hypnotic suggestion used by hypnotherapist were found to be effective in helping clients overcome negative feeling of past trauma and enter a deep state of relaxation. The speech acts included instructions containing suggestions that could guide the client into a trance or hypnotic sleep [20]. The suggestion include the use of metaphors, indirect suggestions, and carefully structured language that can create a conducive environment for therapeutic change [21].

4.4 Hypnotherapist's Assertive Speech acts

Assertive speech acts play a significant role in hypnotherapy sessions by effectively informing and convincing clients. These acts help in establishing clarity, trust, and motivation, facilitating therapeutic progress and behavioral change. Furthermore the assertive speech acts used by the therapist helped in guiding the client towards recovery by providing clear, directive statements that instilled confidence and facilitated behavioral change [22]. In addition, clear, assertive communication from the therapist was key in guiding patients through the therapeutic process and in enhancing their coping mechanisms [23].

4.5 Hypnotherapist's Expressive Speech acts

In this study, hypnotherapist also used expressive speech acts to praise the client's success in entering the hypnotic trance stage. Additionally, the hypnotherapist thanked the clients for their willingness to follow the instructions. These expressive speech acts not only reinforce positive behavior but also strengthen the therapeutic relationship, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the hypnotherapy sessions [24][25].

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that hypnotherapist predominantly used directive speech acts with the functions of asking questions and providing hypnotic suggestions to clients. In hypnotherapy, asking many questions not only serves to gather information from the client but also aims to build rapport and establish trust with the client. Rapport building is a foundational element in hypnotherapy that enhances client trust and the overall effectiveness of therapeutic sessions. Additionally, hypnotherapist also use directive speech acts with the function of providing hypnotic suggestions to clients, aiming to induce a deep state of relaxation.

In summary, the process involves hypnotherapist using various speech acts, including directive and expressive acts, to create a calm and supportive environment. Directive speech acts help guide clients into deep relaxation and trance states, while expressive speech acts, such as praising and thanking, reinforce positive client behaviors and strengthen the therapeutic relationship.

This study indicates that these speech acts are essential for reducing stress and anxiety, which positively impacts clients' mental and physical health. Hypnotherapist's ability to adapt communication to individual client needs further supports the therapeutic process, making clients feel valued and understood.

Overall, the strategic use of speech acts in hypnotherapy facilitates a positive, trusting relationship between the hypnotherapist and client, promoting effective treatment outcomes and supporting clients' paths to positive transformation.

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