



SOCIALIZING LANGUAGE THROUGH SPEECH ACT THEORY

Speech act theory

Speech act theory was proposed by John. L. Austin and has been developed by J. R. Searle. They believe that language is **not only used to inform or to describe things, it is often used to "do things", to perform acts.**

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ABSTRACT :

Speech Theory is central to pragmatics. It is the study of meaning supported by the context, especially social context. Language is connected with society as organization. The social context an integral aspect. Speech Act Theory is a process of socializing language. This paper attempts to present the socializing process of language.

KEY WORDS - language, speech act, society etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Pragmatics deals with meaning as communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the listener in a particular context. In a way, the speaker is at the centre of the communication process. He has an intention and he wants to communicate via (language) utterance. It is natural that it has communicative force and certain actions are being performed. The speaker not only produces his utterances but certain actions are performed via them. It is the essence of the process of communication. J.L. Austin realized this fact and proposed theory of 'Speech act' in his book **How to do Things with Words** (published in 1962). The book was published after his death. J. L. Austin was an Oxford philosopher who thoroughly worked with a philosophic language and came out with some illuminating ideas. He is the first linguist who talked about theory of speech act. According to J.L. Austin, the speaker not only produces utterances but also performs certain actions. They have communicative function. Such utterances are called speech acts. A speech Acts can be defined as the actions performed via utterances. In English, they are commonly given more specific terms such as promise, apology, complain, warning, compliment, request etc. e.g.

1. You are villain.
2. You are most welcome.
3. You are crazy.

These Three examples show different types of communicative force intended by the speaker. The first example indicates an abuse. The speaker has an intention of abusing the listener. The second example shows the communicative force of invitation. In the last example, the speaker either complains or compliments habits of the listener. Thus, the three examples have three different communicative force and they are realized as speech act because they perform actions of giving abuse invitation, appreciation or complain.

Developing the concept of speech act, J. L. Austin classifies speech acts in three ways:

1. Locutionary Speech Act 2. Illocutionary Speech Act 3. Perlocutionary Speech Act

A **locutionary speech** act is mere a linguistic expression without any special or communicative meaning. e.g. The earth goes the Sun. This is an ordinary statement without any communicative force.

An **illocutionary speech** act is a linguistic expression which carries a strong communicative force such as suggestion, request, invitation, warning, compliment etc. This is an utterances produced by the speaker with a communicative intention.

A **perlocutionary speech** act the third dimension of speech act in which the speaker accepts a psychological impact of his speech on the listener's participation or response to what he says.

The Illocutionary force of the utterances is realized by a device which is known as **Illocutionary Force Indicating Device or IFID**. The device is a verb that explicitly names the Illocutionary act which is performed. Such a verb is called a **performative verb**. For example 'I promise I will see you later'. In the above example the verb 'promise' is an Illocutionary force indicating device because the verbs shows that the speaker is performing the act of promise through this utterances. Speakers do not always perform their speech act so clearly but they sometimes describe their speech act which is performed. Observe following conversations.

Ajay : Can I talk to Meera?

Vijay : No, she is not there.

Ajay : I am asking you, can I talk to Meera ?

Vijay : I am telling you she is not there.

'I am asking you' and 'I am telling you' are the expressions which not only perform the speech act but they describe it.

THE ROLE OF FELICITY CONDITIONS IN SPEECH ACTS

There are certain appropriate circumstances which play a significant role in the performance of speech act. They are technically known as **felicity conditions**. The performance of speech act depends upon such felicity conditions. Observe the following: They utterance is produced by a judge. 'I declare you a culprit.' This is an appropriate utterance which specifies the context, and the performance of speech act.

Pragmatists classify felicity condition in different ways. There are **general felicity condition** in which the speaker and listener understand the language of each other and they are not nor sensual.

There are **content felicity conditions** in which the speaker suggest the future event. e.g. 'I promise you that I will not miss a single class'.

In **preparatory felicity conditions** circumstances suggest that the preparation for the performance of speech act is created in order to happen the event. The speaker acts very seriously. Secondly the event has beneficial effect. in this sense preparatory conditions are significant.

Sincerity felicity Conditions are related to preparatory condition. In sincerity conditions, the speaker genuinely wants to carry out the future event. He comes out with the speech act honestly.

Finally there are **essential Felicity conditions** deal with the fact by which the speech act becomes sounds significant. It talks about creation or obligation which are significant in speech act.

CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH ACT

J. L. Austin proposed a general classification of speech act: Representatives, Declaratives, Directives Expressives and Commissives.

These are in fact the functions performed by the speech act. They are explained below.

1. **The representative speech act** states what the speaker believes to be the case or not. In simple words thought, beliefs of the speaker are stated by these speech act. for example:
 2. The Earth is flat.
 3. Shakespeare did not write about his friend.
2. **The declarative speech act** changes the world via utterances. They express facts, statements, conclusions, result etc. For ex.
 1. You are out.
 2. You have disqualified himself for the exam.
3. **The expressive speech act** states feelings, emotions etc. They express psychological state of emotions etc. They express psychological state of mind of the speaker. They are the statements of pleasure, pain likes, dislikes, joy , sorrow etc.

Ex. 1. I am sorry. 2. Congratulations!

4. **The directive speech acts** are used to get someone to do something. They express what the speaker wants. They are order, commands, suggestion, recommendations, advice etc.
 1. Read this note.
 2. Don't touch the chair.
 3. Could you lend your pen, please.
5. **The commissive speech acts** state the speaker's commitment about future action. They state what the speaker intends. They are promises, threats, refusals etc.
 1. I will not do that.
 2. I will be back within ten minute.
 3. I will certainly help you.

Another model of classification of speech Acts : 1. Direct and 2. Indirect speech act

Another model of classification of speech acts could be presented on the basis of structure. There are three general types of basic structure.

1. Declarative
2. Interrogative
3. Imperative

And they have corresponding three functions such as statement, question and command respectively.

- Ex. 1. He bought a new car on the 1st day of the new year. (Declarative)
 2. Did he buy a new car ? (Interrogative)
 3. Buy a new car. (Imperative)

These are three basic sentences or structures and they have their own functions such as statement, question and command respectively. Whenever there is the direct relationship between the a structure and its function, we have a **direct speech act**. Thus the declarative sentence, which is used to make a statement, is a direct speech act. When a declarative sentence or structure is used to make a request, it is known as **an indirect speech act**. In the above example, there is a direct relationship between structures and function. Therefore the above example is direct speech act.

Look at the example of indirect speech act.

Ex. It is very cold outside. (Indirect speech act)

In the above example there is a declarative structure but it functions as a kind of command or advice.

1. I hear by request you that it is very cold outside and you close the door.
2. You have a stand before the T.V. camera.

It is a literary structure but function as an order. So it is an indirect speech act. The interrogative sentence is normally used for making a request rather than for asking questions.

Ex. Would you passed the salt please?

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