THE SPEECH ACT THEORY. THE CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH ACTS

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Annotation: This article is devoted to one of the main issues of Pragmatics, the theory of Speech acts. The reader can get information by reading this article, about what does the pragmatics study and what is the speech act theory itself. Furthermore, the main part of the article is about John Searle's and Austin's classification of Speech acts. He classified into five main forms like, assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives.

Keywords: pragmatics, speech act theory, speech utterance, classification, performatives, addresser, addressee.

Speaking a language is performing speech acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making remarks, requests and so on, and more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating and that these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements. A theory of language is part of a theory of action, simply because speaking is a rule-governed form of behaviour. A great deal can be said in the study of language without studying speech acts, but any such purely formed theory is necessarily incomplete. The reason for concentrating on the study of speech acts is simply this: all speech communication involves linguistic acts. The speech act performed in the utterance of a sentence is in general a function of the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of the sentence does not in all cases uniquely determine what speech act is performed in a given utterance of that sentence, because a speaker may mean more than what he actually says, but it is always in principle possible for him to say exactly what (s)he means. Historically, speech act studies originate in the philosophy of language. The basic insights offered by the work of philosophers Austin, Searle, Grice, Bierwisch are based on the assumption that the minimal units of human communication are not linguistic expressions, but rather the performance of 3 certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, giving directions, apologizing, thanking, etc. It was in this same period that a British

philosopher J. Austin launched his theory of speech acts. Speech act is an attempt at doing something purely by speaking. There are very many things that we can do,or attempt to do, simply by speaking. We can make a promise, ask a question, order or request somebody to do something, make a threat, name a ship, pronounce somebody husband and wife, and so on. Each one of this is a particular speech act.

Communication has always been a necessity in human life. Through communication, the trade of thought among people, which directly contributes to the development of the quality of life itself, can be performed. The ability to percept utterances in communication can determine the actions followed. Communication can be conveyed through verbal and nonverbal communication. Buck (2002) states that there are two types of communication, they are verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is the way of communicating messages by using words as elements. Nonverbal communication is the way of communicating messages by using gesture, body movements, eye contact, facial expression, or general appearances as the elements. (Hidayat, 2016, p.1). According to Hidayat (2016), "Speech act, a variety of verbal communication and also a subdivision of pragmatics, often takes place in verbal and nonverbal communication. Yule (1996) states that speech acts are a study of how the speakers and hearers use language. Bach (1979) explains that an action in verbal communication has message in itself, so the communication is not only about language but also with action. In conclusion speech act is the utterance that occurs and act refers to an action". There are certain aims beyond the words or phrases when a speaker says something. Austin (in Tsui, 1994: 4) explains that speech acts are acts that refer to the action performed by produced utterances. In line with this, Yule (1996: 47) states that speech acts is action which is performed via utterances. Stating the same idea, Birner (2013) also says that uttering something means doing something. Here, people can perform an action by saying something. Through speech acts, the speaker can convey physical action merely through words and phrases. The conveyed utterances are paramount to the actions performed. In our opinion the above given perspectives are much more

understandable description of speech acts but they have some shortcomings. The claims are not fully improved, they need to be completed.

There are strong parallels between the later Wittgenstein's emphasis on language usage and language games and Austin's insistence that the total speech act situation is the only actual phenomenon which is the last resort we are engaged in elucidating. In his lectures that were posthumously published under the title "How to Do Things with Words" (1962) Austin set about demolishing the view of language that would place truth conditions as central to language understanding. Austin termed these peculiar and special sentences and the utterances realized in them, performatives, and contrasted them to statements, assertions, and utterances which he called constatives.

Austin isolates three basic senses in which in saying something one is doing something, and hence three kinds of acts are simultaneously performed:

1) locutionary act: the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense of reference.

2) illocutionary act: the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it.

3) perlocutionary act: the bringing about of the effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance.

In fact, Austin made a three-fold distinction: Locution – the actual words uttered. Illocution – the force or intention behind the words. Perlocution – the effect of the illocution on the hearer.

Classifying Speech Acts In the latter part of his seminal work How to Do Things with Words (1989), Austin came up with the following five basic types of performatives:

1) Commissives. Their whole point "is to commit the speaker to a certain action" (Austin 1989: 157). E.g.: promise, undertake, covenant, bind myself, contract, propose to, and give my word.

2) Expositives. They "are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and of references" (Austin 1989: 161). E.g.: "I turn next to," "I quote," "I cite," "I recapitulate," "I repeat that," and "I mention that."

3) Exercitives. They have to do with "the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it" (Austin 1989: 155). E.g.: appoint, dismiss, degrade, excommunicate, demote, and name.

4) Behavabitives. They "include the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct" (Austin 1989: 160). E.g.: apologize, thank, deplore, criticize, commiserate, compliment, condole, congratulate, and sympathize.

5) Verdictives. They "consist in the delivering of a finding, official or unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact, so far as these are distinguishable. A verdictive is a judicial act as distinct from legislative or executive acts…" (Austin 1989: 153). E.g.: acquit, convict, read it as, reckon, place, grade, assess, characterize, rule, and estimate. Austin (1989: 163) summarized his classification as follows: "To sum up, we may say that the verdictive is an exercise of judgment, the exercitive is an assertion of influence or exercising of power, the commissive is an assuming of an obligation or declaring of an intention, the behabitive is the adopting of an attitude, and the expositive is the clarifying of reasons, arguments, and communications."

Searle practically did not follow Austin's classification (the only thing he retained was Austin's commissives). He instead came up with his own five basic types of speech acts; namely: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

1)   Assertives- is an assertion which makes the speaker to value something or to admit something as a truth. Ordinary sentences and claims also belong to this very type.

e.g. "I admit that you said true, while speaking about me with your friend"

2)   Directives- is an assertion which makes the speaker to value something or to admit something as a truth. Ordinary sentences and claims also belong to this very type.

e.g. "Stay here!"

Don't open the window."

3)   Commissives-the aim of these speech act is to commit the listener for the future events and make them believe in the speaker's claims and words. Promising, threatening, refusing can be the best examples.

e.g. "I promise that in future we will have a happy and peaceful, wealthy life, my dear!"

4)   Expressives- is an assertion which makes the hearer to value something or to convey him or her according to the wishes, thoughts, perspectives of the speaker. Mostly they express feelings, behavior, attitude, mood, relationship of the speaker to the situation and event, like congratulating, thanking, liking or disliking and so on.

e.g. "I congratulate you with your 25 years of anniversary!"

5)   *Declaritives-* to declaring something. In usual this kind of declarations are causes to create new thing or oppositely ruining something. As an effect of these declarations impacts to the life of people and surrounding world like wedding ceremonies, hiring or firing a job procedures, declaring war or peace and so on.

e.g. "From that moment you are fired, you may seek for yourself a new job."

This Searle's classification is playing an essential framework while classifying Speech acts and most scholars consider this taxonomy as a basic notion and main concept of Pragmatics. In sum up, it was obvious that, Speech acts is doing something not with an action, but with the help of language. The term speech act is used to define several functions of oral communication like asking questions, ordering, requesting, informing, complaining, promising, inviting etc. it means that

the speaker does not do the action but says it as if he or she performs it in that very situation.

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