

“SPEECH ACT” IN INTERACTION

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Abstract

Actually, the interaction between speaker and hearers does not always run well. There are some factors which influence how well the interaction is and one of them is by developing speech act understanding. In short, my thesis statement is that speech acts will establish a smooth and meaningful interaction. To deepen this discussion, it will be followed by explaining the Speech Acts in detailed-perspective, the reasons why we choose Speech Acts, some considerations in developing Speech Acts and the conclusion. The basic function of all the utterances is a command or request but only the imperative structure represents a direct speech act. The interrogative structure is not being used only as a question. Hence, it is an indirect speech act. The declarative structures are also indirect requests. The usefulness of Speech Act analysis is in illustrating the kinds of things we can do with words and identifying some of the conventional utterance form we use to perform specific actions. Through Speech Acts, we can see how speakers can mean considerably more than their words say. However, we do need to look at more extended interaction to understand how those actions are carried out and interpreted within speech events.

Keywords: Speech Act, interaction, action, meaning.

A. Introduction

People interact in order to make meanings: to make senses of the world of each other. The overall purpose of language can be described as a semantic one, and each text we participate in is a record of the meanings that have been made in particular context. SFL seeks to demonstrate that linguistics texts are typically making not just one but a number of meanings simultaneously (Eggins, 1994: 11).

Since the interaction happens among people, consequently it deals with social interaction. Each social interaction will always create a discourse which is influenced by social contexts. Social contexts are realized as texts which are realized as sequences of clauses (Martin and Rose, 2003: 4). In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances and both the actions deal with the meaning which is conveyed (Yule, 1996: 47).

In each interaction process, a speaker establishes interaction with hearers. When they produce utterances, they convey meanings which are performed by the actions, actions performed via utterances. When we work in a situation where a boss has a great deal of power, then the boss' utterance of the expression: "You are fired." It is more than just a statement. The utterance can be used to perform the act of ending employment.

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B. Discussion

To deepen this discussion, this part covers the definition of Speech Act, the purposes of Speech Act, the kinds of Speech Act, the classification of Speech Act, IFID, Felicity Conditions, the precondition of Speech Act, and Direct and Indirect Speech Act.

1. The Definition of Speech Act

Actions which are performed via utterances are called *Speech Acts* (Yule, 1996: 47). Kempson (1984: 50) also states that the central insight of speech act semantics is that we use language to do things. Additionally, Mey (1993: 111) further explains that the first thing one should notice is that speech acts are actions happening in the world, that is, they bring about a change in the existing state of affairs. Jenny Thomas cited Austin originally (1960: 52) used the term “Speech Act” to refer an utterance and the total situation in which the utterance is used.

2. The Purposes of Speech Act

The descriptive terms for different kinds of Speech Acts apply to the speaker’s communicative intention in producing an utterance. The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer. Both speaker and hearer are usually helped in this process by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. The circumstances including other utterances are called speech events. In many ways, it is the nature of the speech event that determines the interpretation of an utterance as performing a particular speech act.

3. The Kinds of Speech Act

There are three kinds of Speech Act as follows:

a. Locutionary Act

Locutionary act is the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning, comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance. A Locutionary act is act of 'saying something' in the full normal sense is the performance of locutionary act. The examples are as follows:

He said to me: "*Shoot her!*"

Anji said to Sheila: "Love me true!"

b. Illocutionary Act

The semantic 'illocutionary force' of the utterance is a real, intended meaning. The concept of an illocutionary act is central to the concept of a speech act. Although there are numerous opinions as to what 'illocutionary acts' actually are, there are some kinds of acts which are widely accepted as illocutionary, as for example promising, ordering someone, and bequeathing. It is a complete speech act, made in a typical utterance that consists of the delivery of the propositional content of the utterance, and a particular illocutionary force. The examples are as follows:

He advised/ ordered me to shoot her.

Father promised "I will try my best to be at home for dinner".

Greeting (in saying, "Hi John!", for instance), apologizing ("Sorry for that!"), describing something ("It is snowing"), asking a question ("Is it snowing?"), making a request and giving an order ("Could you pass the salt?" and "Drop your weapon or I'll shoot you!"), or making

a promise ("I promise I'll give it back") are typical examples of "speech acts" or "illocutionary acts".

In saying, "Watch out, the ground is slippery", Mary performs the speech act of warning Peter to be careful.

In saying, "I will try my best to be at home for dinner", Peter performs the speech act of promising to be at home in time.

In saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, please give me your attention", Mary requests the audience to be quiet.

In saying, "Race with me to that building over there!", Peter challenges Mary.

c. Perlocutionary Act

It is an actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring, or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not. Perlocutionary act is an effect or the consequence of an illocutionary act, some results. The examples are as follows:

He has persuaded me to shoot her.

Father convinced to try his best to be home for dinner.

4. The Classification of Speech Act

Speech Act is divided into five classes:

a. Declarative

A declarative speech act is a speech act that can change the world via the utterance. The following examples illustrate that the speaker has to have a special institutional role, in specific context, in order to perform a declaration appropriately:

Priest: I pronounce you husband and wife.

Referee: You're out.

Jury: We find the defendant guilty.

b. Representative

A representative speech act is a speech act that states what the speaker believes to be case or not. They are statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, descriptions, as illustrated in the following:

The earth is flat.

Chomsky didn't write about peanuts.

It was a warm sunny day.

c. Expressive

An expressive speech act is a speech act that states what the speaker feels. They express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy and sorrows. They can be caused by something the speaker does or the hearer does but they are about the speaker's experience:

I'm really sorry!

Congratulations!

Oh, yes, great, mmmmm, ssahh!

d. Directive

A directive speech act is a speech act that the speakers use to get someone else to do something. They express what the speaker wants. In using a directive, the speaker attempts to make the world fit the world via the hearer. They are

commands, orders, requests, suggestions and they can be positive and negative:

Gimme a cup of coffee. Make it black.

Could you lend me a pen, please?

Don't touch the fire!

e. Commissive

A commissive speech act is a speech act that speakers use to commit themselves to some future action. They express what the speaker intends. They are promises, threats, refusals, pledges:

I'll be back.

I'm going to get it right next time.

We will not do that.

5. IFID

The most obvious device for indicating the illocutionary force (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) is an expression of the type illustrated below where there is a slot for a verb that explicitly names the illocutionary act being performed. Such a verb can be called a performative verb (Vp): "promise" and "warn" would be the performative verbs and, if stated, would be very clear IFID. Speakers do not always 'perform' their speech acts so explicitly but they sometimes describe the speech act being performed. The following examples: A man trying to contact Mary and Mary's friend.

Him : Can I talk to Marry?

Her : No, she's not here.

Him : I'm asking you- can I talk to her?

Her : And I'm telling you- SHE'S NOT HERE!

In this scenario, each has described, and drawn attention to, the illocutionary force (“ask” and “tell”) of their utterances.

6. Felicity Conditions

A felicity condition is a condition which is appropriate with what is expected since the performance of a speech act to be recognized as intended. The following example goes:

Jury in court: I sentence you to six months in prison.

7. Precondition on Speech Act

There are five preconditions on Speech Act as follows:

a. General Condition

It is a condition which shows that the participants in interaction understand the language being used and that they are not play-acting or being nonsensical.

b. Content Condition

A further content condition for a promise requires that the future events will be a future act of the speakers.

c. Preparatory Condition

When we promise to do something, there are two preparatory conditions: first, the event will not happen by itself and second, the event will have a beneficial effect.

d. Sincerity Condition

The speaker genuinely intends to carry out the future action for a promise and for the warning the speaker genuinely believes that the future events will not have a beneficial effect.

e. Essential Condition

The utterance changes our state from non-obligation to obligation for a promise and for warning the utterance changes our state from non-informing into informing.

8. Direct and Indirect Speech Act

A different approach to distinguishing types of Speech Acts can be made on the basis of structure. A fairly simple structural distinction between three general types of speech acts is provided by the three basic sentence types declarative, interrogative, imperative, and the three general communicative functions: statements, questions and command or request in the following examples:

- a. You wear a seat belt. (Declarative)
- b. Do you wear a seat belt? (Interrogative)
- c. Wear a seat belt! (Imperative)

A direct Speech Act happens when there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function. Whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an Indirect Speech Act.

Thus, a declarative used to make a statement is a direct speech act, but a declarative used to make a request is an indirect speech act. When it is used to make a statement, it is functioning as a direct Speech Act. When it is used to make a command/request, it is

functioning as an indirect Speech Act. The examples are as follows:

- a. It's cold outside.
- b. I hereby tell you about the weather.
- c. I hereby request of you that you can close the door.

Different structure can be used to accomplish the same basic function. The following example: the speaker wants the addressee not to stand in front of the TV.

- a. Move out of the way!
- b. Do you have to stand in front of the TV?
- c. You'd make a better door than a window.

The basic function of all the utterances is a command or request but only the imperative structure represents a direct speech act. The interrogative structure is not being used only as a question. Hence, it is an indirect speech act. The declarative structures are also indirect requests.

C. Conclusion

The usefulness of Speech Act analysis is in illustrating the kinds of things we can do with words and identifying some of the conventional utterance form we use to perform specific actions. Through Speech Acts, we can see how speakers can mean considerably more than their words say. However, we do need to look at more extended interaction to understand how those actions are carried out and interpreted within speech events.

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