

SPEECH ACTS

M.A. II (SEM. III)

PAPER XI (B)

STYLISTICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Disclaimer: The e-content is exclusively meant for academic purposes and for enhancing teaching and learning. Any other use for economic/commercial purpose is strictly prohibited. The users of the content shall not distribute, disseminate or share it with anyone else and its use is restricted to advancement of individual knowledge. The information provided in this econtent is developed from authentic references, to the best of my knowledge.

DR. STUTI KHARE

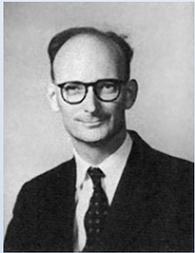
ISABELLA THOBURN COLLEGE,
LUCKNOW

Definition:

“an utterance made by a certain speaker/author
to a hearer/reader in a certain context”

-B. Kortmann.

The theory of the Speech Act is derived mainly from the work of two philosophers:



signs.

John Langshaw Austin, in his book, ***How to do Things with Words*** (1961) suggested that all speech and all utterance is the doing of something with words and



John Rogers Searle, Austin's pupil synthesized ideas from philosophers including **Paul Grice** and further elaborated on the Speech Act theory by giving his account of Austin's concept of illocutionary acts.

The basic tenets:

- When humans use language, they actually 'do' something more than simply uttering those words.
- Statements cannot only be evaluated only in terms of truth or falsity.
- There is more to language than just the meaning of individual words and phrases.
- In an utterance, it is important to understand:
 - i) the context
 - ii) the appropriateness
 - iii) the intended message

Sense:

- normal, logical meaning.
- act of producing a grammatical sentence

Force:

- performative meaning
- Act performed in uttering a sentence.

Constatives:

- statements which can be judged as true or false
- describe a situation or assert a fact.
- state whether something *is* or *not*.
- e.g. New Delhi is the capital of India.

Performatives:

- Explicit illocutionary acts.
- Cannot be verified as true or false.
- Part of doing or accomplishing an action.
- e.g. I promise to be regular in attending my classes

A speech act consists of three parts:

i) Locutionary act: the utterance of a sentence with grammar, sense and reference

ii) Illocutionary act: the speaker's communicative intentions and goals; the action that is performed through the utterance, e.g. the making of a statement, offer, promise, warning etc. in uttering a sentence.

iii) Perlocutionary act: the effect of the utterance on the hearer like persuading, deterring, surprising, misleading or convincing.

Kinds of Speech Acts

According to **Searle**, there are five basic kinds of actions that can be performed in speaking, hence five kinds of speech acts:

- i) **representatives**: commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding etc.).
- ii) **directives**: attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning) .
- iii) **commissives**: commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering).
- iv) **expressives**: express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, congratulating).
- v) **declarations**: effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment.)

Felicity conditions:

Austin produced a typology of conditions necessary for the success of a speech act:

He distinguished three main categories:

- Conventional procedure
- Proper execution: correct and complete
- Circumstances and persons: appropriate as specified in the procedure

Suggested readings:

- *Key Terms in Stylistics* by Nina Norgaard, Beatrix Busse and Rocio Montoro.
- *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* by Mick Short.