A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DENSITY OF DIRECTIVE AND COMMISSIVE SPEECH ACTS IN *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

Hussain Hameed Mayuuf (PhD), Ahmed Ali Mohammed

University of Babylon, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of English

husm56@gmail.com, alamiliahmed@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the Directive and Commissive speech acts by comparing them in order to discover the density of the use. They have functions of language because directive is to direct people's behaviour and commissive to undertake the speaker to do something. Due to the complexity of pragmatic meaning, the present study identifies and analyzesdirective and commissive speech acts in literature, especially in drama modern play because it represents fairly rich resources. The problem is that how one can distinguish between a directive and commissive speech acts where there is no explicit performative verbs in the given conversational turn. The study hypothesizes that the distinction between directive and commissive speech acts is often indeterminate, especially in the language of play which heavily relies on dialogues. Also it hypothesizes that directive speech act is used more than commissive speech act. The finding of analysis of the present stud shows that the text cannot easily recognize if a certain speech act is a directive or commissive on account of the unrecognition of their illocutionary forces. It reveals that the use of directive speech acts is larger than the commissive speech acts. This is because people in everyday language tend to make suggestions, requests and orders than threats or refusals.

Key Words: illocutionary, Commissive, performatives,*exercitives*

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the concept"pragmatics" has been used to the study of language from the stance of the users, particularly the choices they make, the limitations they face in using language in social interaction, and the impacts their use of language has on other interlocutors in communication activity (Crystal, 2003: 364). For Cook (2003: 51), "pragmatics is the discipline which studies the knowledge and procedures which enable people to understand each other's words". According to this definition, the main goal is not the literal meaning, but what speakers' intention to do with their words and what it is which makes this intention obvious. Another delimitation concentrates on context, Pragmatics is the study of what people signify by language when they employ it in a specific context to accomplishcertain purposes. Unlike semantics which is the study of meaning as expressed in a language, it is focuseson its use in a specific context (Verdonk, 2002: 120, Bustan &Alakrash 2020).

Verschueren (1997: 261) refuses Leech's (1983: 4) straightforward account of pragmatics as a vitalelement of a linguistic theory, integral to semantics and/or grammar. Thereis multi-dimensional in that he emphasizes that pragmatics is associated with the complete complexity of linguistic behavior and it can be seen as a general, cognitive, social, and cultural stance on linguistic phenomena in regard to their usage in forms of behavior. This is an integrated view of pragmatics in which the string "cognitive, social, and cultural" (in the definition above) does not mean the separability of what the terms refer to. Rather, those aspects are correlated and should not be considered as isolated items as far as linguistic communication is concerned.

1.1 SpeechAct Theory

One of the most significant theories within pragmatics is the theory of speech acts. Speech act is a term taken from the work of the linguist J.L. Austin (1962) to point to a theory which sheds light on the function of utterances in regard to the behaviour of speaker and hearer in interpersonal communication (Crystal, 2003: 427).

Different approaches have been designated for the description of language use in context. Speech act theory has likely gained theattention of the majority of the scholars and it is the broadest (in scope) among issues in the general theory of language use and pragmatics (Levinson, 1983: 226). The *speech act* is a theory which is devoted to the analysis of the function of utterances in regard to the behaviour of the speaker and hearer in interpersonal communication (Crystal, 2003: 427).

The theory of speech act emerged as a response to a philosophical view (spread in 1930s) of logical positivism. For this view, unless a sentence can be *verified* in terms of truth or falsity, it is meaningless. It was in this period that Austin (1962), a philosopher of language, developed his theory of speech acts (Levinson, 1983: 227). In a set of lectures published as *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), Austin refuses the view of language that regarded truth conditions as beingvitalin the comprehension of language (ibid: 228).

In Searle's view, speaking a language is to be in a rule-governed intentional form of behavior (1969: 16). This rule-governed behavior can be used in the theory of speech acts. The reason why pragmatics concentrates on the study of speech acts is that all linguistic communication requires linguistic acts. Furthermore, the basic or the smallest unit of linguistic communication is not the word or the sentence, but speech act. Speech acts are "the production or issuance of a sentence token under certain conditions" (ibid). The theory of speech acts is explained in more details in the coming sections, via the works of prominentpragmaticians.

1.2 Speech Act Classification

Apart from the study of promises, Searle (1969) elucidate other speech acts counting on the classification of felicity conditions and illocutionary force; thus, offering an analysis of requests, assertions, questions, and thanks, etc. For instance, a comparison made on these dimensions between requests and warnings makes the point obvious (ibid: 66-76):

Table (1): Comparison between request and warning

Felicity conditions	Request	Warning
A: Propositional content condition	Future act of hearer (H)	Future event (E)
B: Preparatory condition	a. Hearer (H) is able to do act (A). b. It is not obvious to both speaker (S) and Hearer (H) that hearer (H) will do act (A) in the normal course of his own accord.	Hearer (H) has no reason to believe event (E) will occur.
C: Sincerity condition	Speaker (S) wants hearer (H) to do act (A).	Speaker (S) believes future event (E) is not in hearer's (H's) best interest.
D: Essential condition	It counts as an attempt to get hearer (H) to do act (A).	It counts as an understanding that future event (E) is not in hearer's (H's) best interest.

Taken from Searle (1969: 66-67)

However, Searle was notcontent with his method of classification. This is because sub-types of questions, for instance, can be multiplied, and there may be aboundless number of tables like the one above that can be compared. What would be more outstanding and accurate would be to take

some overall schema that could demarcate the possible illocutionary force on principled grounds (Levinson, 1983: 239).

Indeed, Searle (1976, cited in Levinson; 1983: 240) states that there are just five basic kinds of speech acts in which illocutionary acts (IAs) play a vital role. In his taxonomy, IAs are employed to mean the speech acts, classified as follows:

(i) *Representatives*, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed propositions (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, remarking, etc.)

(ii) *Directives*, which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning, commanding, etc.)

(iii) *Commissives*, which commit the speaker to the future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering).

(iv) *Expressives*, which express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating).

(v) *Declarations*, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, Christening, etc.).

Verschueren (1999) thinks that Searle's taxonomy of speech acts is definitely "the most influential one ever proposed" (24). However, hementions two remarks. Firstly, the five basic types of speech are not mutually exclusive. Actual language use has many types of acts which, would have to be called hybrids (ibid). This remark supports the notion of the connection between speech acts. For instance, threats of the kind "If I ever see you with my sister again, I'll kill you." are at the same time directive and commissive. Secondly, the classification is totallydependent on three dimensions of variation ("psychological state", "direction of fit" and "illocutionary point"); slecting other dimensions would result in different classifications (ibid).

1.3 Austin's (1962) Model

According to the adherents of speech act, saying something is to do something. For Austin (1962), language is not only manipulated to make statements for the description of some states, events, or processes, in a way

of being true or false. Firstly, He differentiates constatives from performative utterances. Nevertheless, there is a gradual modification to the argument; therefore, what is suggested at the beginning is repudiated by the end of his book. Subsequently, He introduces a general theory of performatives which can deal with each utterance in the language as a sort of *perforamtive* (Levinson, 1983:231).

Austin (1962: 5) states that performatives are utterances that are existed to meet the following terms:

a. They do not "describe" or "report" or "constate" anything at all; they are not "true or false"; and

b. The uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as "just", saying something. Consider these examples:

1. "I do (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)."

2. "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth."

3. "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow."

In Austin's view (ibid: 14ff), rather than questioning whether performative utterances are true or false, one should question whether they work or not. Performative utterances can be *happy* (cheerful), or *unhappy* (sad) instead of being true or false. For this point, he (ibid) proposes six essential conditions for the effortless or "happy" functioning of a performative. Austin named these conditions as *felicity conditions*. Levinson (1983: 229) has made a little modification on Austin's model as follows:

A. (i) there must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.

(ii) The circumstances and persons must be appropriate, as specified in the procedure.

B. The procedure must be executed **(i)** correctly and **(ii)** completely.

C. Often, **(i)** the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings, and intentions, as specified in the procedure, and **(ii)** if consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must act accordingly.

Sincerity conditions requires the interlocutors to have necessary intentions, thoughts, and feelings. In this way, if the speech act does not

succeed in satisfying these above-mentioned conditions; then, it is a *misfire*, according to Austin. If the speech act is performed with a high degree of insincerity, it as *abuse*. These are the main general kinds of infelicity proposed by Austin.

Austin (1962: 151) makes a distinction among five general classes according to their illocutionary force:

1. The *verdictives*: they are verbs that are typified by providing a verdict, such as "assess, value, diagnose, estimate".

2. The *exercitives*: they are the verbs that grant the powers, rights, or influences such as "appoint, vote, order, urge".

3. The *commissives*: they are the verbs that are associated with promising or undertaking responsibility. They undertakes the speaker to do something, often to the hearer's side, such as "promise, swear, favour".

4. The *behabitives*: these verbs are within a miscellaneous group and they are associated with social behaviour and attitudes. They encompass verbs such as "apologize, thank, welcome, defy, curse, praise".

5. The *expositives*: are, to Austin (ibid: 152), hard to define. They make it clear how speakers' utterances fit into the course of an argument or conversation, and how the words they use are expository or illustrative. For instance: "I reply", "I argue", "I illustrate", "I assume", "I postulate".

In addition, Austin differentiates between implicit and explicit performatives. Implicit performatives are also called *primary*. To exemplify for implicit performative: "I will come tomorrow". By contrast, explicit performatives have a higher level of specification and precision, e.g. "I promise to come tomorrow".

As he continued with his arguments in his lectures, Austin (ibid: 99ff) rejected the dichotomy of constative/performative in favour of a three-fold distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

1.4 Searle's (1969) Model

Following Austin's innovative proposal of speech act theory, a group of scholars have attempted to elucidate the theory of speech acts in a more systematic way. Austin himself believes that his model is very

unsatisfactory: "I distinguish five very general classes: but I'm far from equally happy about all of them" (1962: 151).

Pursuing Austin, speech act theory was reformulated by his American student John R. Searle. Searle schematized Austin's intuitions about felicity with the view that for a speech act to be felicitous four kinds of conditions are demanded. For instance, for a sentence like "2015 will be a year of prosperity and peace" to be a felicitous prediction, the following conditions should hold:

a) Propositional content condition: specification of a future state of affairs.

b) Preparatory condition: the speaker or writer has adequate information to form a "valid" opinion about the future state of affairs.

c) Sincerity condition: the speaker or writer expects that the future state of affairs will actually be as described.

d) Essential condition: the utterance regards as an act committing the speaker or writer to the probability of the future state of affairs to be as described (Verschueren, 1999: 23).

According to Searle (1969: 12), speaking a language is to be involved in a highly complex rule-governed form of behaviour. According to him, talking is performing acts in conformity with specific rules. He first interprets the idea of illocutionary acts by showing a set of "necessary and sufficient" conditions for the performance of special kinds of speech acts (acts of promising). Then he takes from these conditions a number of semantic rules for other performatives (ibid: 57, 62).

If this rule-governed account of performatives is accurate, it should be possible to state the essential and adequate conditions for each illocutionary act. A lot of these demand that the participants be conscious of social obligations required in certain relationships. For instance, a command such as "stand up!" from A to B can be called to be felicitous only in case B is not standing up, can stand up, and has an imposition to sand up if A so requests, and if A has a valid reason to make B stand up. Both A and B must be aware the validity of all these conditions if 'Stand

up!' is to be employed and abducted as a proper command (Wardhaugh, 2006: 288). It is worth mentioning that in case of any of these conditions is flouted, the utterance will not have its validity as a command (Alakrash& Bustan 2020).

The above-mentioned conditions for illocutionary acts resemble constitutive *rules* than *regulative rules* (Wardhaugh, 2006: 288). Regulative rules are something like regulations issued by government: they regulate what is right and wrong and sometimes bear sanctions if the rules are violated. Constative rules are like the rules of chess or football: they indeed define a specific activity in the form of 'doing X counts as Y'; hence, if, in certain circumstances, you strike a ball in a particular way, for example, that is considered as a 'goal'. Without these rules the game will not be possible. In the same way, speech acts are what they are because saying something is considered as doing something if specific conditions are present (Wardhaugh, 2006: 288).

1.5 A Synopsis of*Death of a Salesman*

*Death of a Salesman*was written by Arthur Miller and it is composed of two acts. The action begins in the home of Willy Loman, an aging salesman who has just returned from a road trip. Willy is having troublerecalling events, as well as differentiating the present from his memories of the past. His wife, Linda, suggests that he asks for a job in New York instead of traveling each week. Linda and Willy have an argument about their oldest son Biff. At this point, Willy relives many scenes from his past. Willy recollects a conversation with Linda in which he inflates his earnings but is then forced to admit he exaggerated when Linda figureshis commission. Linda reproaches her sons for leaving their father so as to pursue their own selfish desires, and she gives Biff a choice: Respect your father or do not come home. It is at this point that Linda notifies her sons that Willy wants to commit a suicide. The next morning Willy prepares to visit his manager Howard to request him for a job in New York. During the meeting, Howard tells Willy that there are no positions available in New York. Willy informs Howard that he named him, and he

was a very successful salesman when he worked for Howard's father. Howard remains cool and instead fires him. Upon being fired, Willy begins freefalling into his memories of the past. Willy returns home and starts building a garden, despite the fact that it is night. Linda expels Happy and Biff out of the house. Ben appears to Willy while he is planting seeds (Alakrash et al. 2020). He and Ben talk about his plan to commit suicide. Ben warns Willy that the insurance company is likely to refuse to pay a settlement and Biff will not forgive him. Biff comes to Willy in the garden to inform him he is leaving home for good. Biff and Willy have a long argument, and Biff confronts Willy with the rubber hose, saying he will not feel sorry for him if he commits suicide. Biff and Willy reconcile. Ben reappears to Willy and tells him of the insurance policy. Willy drives away. The Lomans, Charley, and Bernard gather at Willy's grave (Scheidt, 2001: 7-8,Elaf&Hussien 2020).

1.6Method of Analysis

Arthur miller`s masterpiece*Death of a Salesman* will be analyzed in terms ofdirectives and commissives. A number of excerpts of this play are selected randomly from act 1 and act 2 for the sake of the analysis. The method of analysis used in this study is both function-based and character-based. It is function-based thatinvolves the main concentrationbeing on the directive and commissive function of utterances, irrespective of their mood or form. At the same time, the study is character-based thatinvolves the focal point of the analysis being on the directive and commissive speech acts of the major characters, namely Linda andWilly.

The study of directive and commissive speech acts in this play is very significant to reveal how Willy `s character comes to be shown as a "man lives in illusion". Most of the speech acts are uttered by Willy and Linda, asthey do most of the talk, and they are the main characters in the play.

1.7Analysis of Directives and Commissives in *Death of a Salesman*

In the turn (1) below, Linda begins with giving a command, and then she continues with an expressive act. After that she issues a command to Willy. The overall effect of these three acts (, the first being paralinguistic,)

is that the speaker can emphasize his power over the hearer through his order.

(1) LINDA (resigned): Well, you'll just have to take a rest, Willy, you can't continue this way.

But if this order is to be examined more carefully, it has the function of blaming both Willy`s cold indifference to his heath.

The next direct directive is issued in (2) below which is followed by a suggestion.

(2) LINDA: Take an aspirin. Should I get you an aspirin? It'll soothe you.

Here, the speaker shows her interest and love for her husband by decreasing the factor of obligation via being more sentimental. Now, the second utterance of turn (2) is followed by Wally's utterance with the different illocutionary point but with an increase in the illocutionary force. This increase in force happens because Willy wants to assert the promise of his still capability of traveling again despite his sickness and his old age (more than seventy). Below Willy uses a speech act of commissive, namely a promise:

(3) WILLY: I'll have to send a wire to Portland. I'm supposed to see Brown and Morrison tomorrow morning at ten o'clock to show the line. Goddammit,

The sincerity condition on orders is that Linda wants Willy to be aware of the fact that the work of a traveller salesman becomes unsuitable for his age. This job requires him to drive for long hours from one town into another. He becomes more than seventy and his sight gets weaker and weaker. Linda repeats her order in (74), when she sees his insistence on traveling, which proves his insincerity.

(4)LINDA: Willy, Talk to them again. There's no reason why you can't work in New York.

In (5) below, Willy`s last utterance to Linda consists of another type of commisssive which, constitutes one kind of speech act: it is a promise.

(5) *WILLY: I'll start out in the morning. Maybe I'll feel better in the morning.*

Table (1): Frequency of the use of directives and commissives

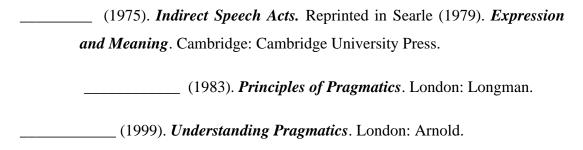| Characters	directives	commissives	
Linda	14	9	
Willy	12	8	
Total number of Directives&commissives	26	17	43

8.Conclusions

The present study arrived at a number of the main conclusions:

1- In the data analyzed, there is no obvious performative verb, e.g. "to command", "to ask", "to demand", while implicit illocutionary acts are manipulated commonly for directive and commissive speech acts. This fact shows the significance of implicit acts in the dramatic language.

2- The analysis of the data reveals that the use of directive speech acts is largerthan the commissive speech acts. This is because people in everyday language tend to make suggestions, requests and orders than threats or refusals.

3- It is important to emphasize the role played by both linguistic and situational contexts surrounding an utterance so as torecognize the implicit performative used by the speaker.Besides the use of implicit directives, there are a huge number of indirect directive speech acts. In the selected data, the realization of most directives is through the use of interrogatives, instead of imperatives or declaratives.

4- The realization of Directives can be represented in different syntactic forms (or sentence types), particularly in interrogatives. This fact indicates

that interrogative forms are the most productive kind of sentence used in the dramatic language, this is because they perform wide pragmatic functions. Interrogatives are characterized by flexibilitythat they can be employed not only as questions, but also as acts of ordering, insisting, invoking, suggesting, etc.

5- Despite using directive speech acts, the writer of the play could implicitly communicate his philosophical and political beliefs to his audience. These beliefs are conveyed by the writer on the authorial level and communicated to the audience through the characters, on the textual level.

6- In the dramatic language, there are a lot ofexamples in which the readers of the text cannot easily recognizeif a certain speech act is a directive or commissiveon account of the unrecognition of their illocutionary forces. For instance, in turn (2) there is an interrogative: "*Should I get you an aspirin?*". Is it a kind offer to the hearer that she should bring him aspirin, or is it a real question? However, byanalyzingelements such as the context, the speaker's character and intention, the researcher can recognize it as a directive.

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