

THE ILLOCUTIONARY LEVEL OF “SPEECH ACTS” THEORY: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF RICHARD MATHESON’S “BUTTON, BUTTON”

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Abstract:

The objective of the study is to analyze the speech acts, performed by the characters in short story ‘Button, Button’ on the illocutionary level of speech acts theory by John Austin (1962). The author believed that two major types of utterances exist; one is constative, used to illustrate the scenario, and the other is performative that illustrates a speech act. Speech acts are further classified into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Linguistic expressions have virtual meanings which contribute in truth conditions of sentences. It gives linguistic meaning in the recital of speech acts in terms of consumption of words and sentences. Analysis indicates classification of speech acts at delivery level, direct and indirect at structural level. Illocutionary level can be declarative, representative, expressive and commissive. There are numerous functions of speech acts we i.e. uniqueness, social depiction, personal grooming, communal grooming and pleasure (Flor, 2010). The current study adopted qualitative research method which is kept under consideration during data analysis.

Introduction:

The short story “Button, Button” first got published in “Playboy”, June 1970. In the real story, the plot presented differently. It is a story about a Arthur and his wife Norma who are offered a deal for \$50,000 by a Mr. Steward, an insurance agent. He gave them the proposal that if they pick to push the button, someone anywhere in the world, they don’t even know will die and they will receive the reward in form of the money. Steward is trying to force them to takes an opportunity and push the button to get a handsome amount of money as a reward.

Arthur and Norma received a box which is more like a gadget having a button in it. Right after getting the box with the button, doorbell rang and Mr. Steward offered them the money reward as a proposal if they will push the button. Mr. Steward made it clear that the one who will push the button will not see the unknown person die. Norma’s husband was not buying the idea and said it as unethical and immoral act by claiming it as ‘murder’. His wife seemed to be a greedy woman who wants a lot of money to spend a luxurious life which she has been rundown of till now. The couple had a long argument for a few days on whether to push the button or not.

Finally, Norma pushed the button even she knew that her husband was not in favor of this all and strictly marked this act as a murder. Right after pushing the button, accidentally her husband met a train accident and surprisingly dies. After that moment Norma receives a check for \$50,000 as a reward which was actually her husband's life insurance policy. Norma blamed Mr. Steward that he lied to them just for the sake of his own benefit. Mr. Steward asked Norma that if she really knew her husband ever in his life.

Speech acts are the utterances that show an action being performed. People usually use language to perform that particular action. Every word spoken by a person build up a speech which always has some function in it for say to express the command, to warn someone or to express the purpose people use different utterances already stored in their diction. Performing a speech act is not only the part of real life in fact we can see it in different circumstances such as dramas, movies, stories etc. The characters use the language to perform a certain action.

Significance of the Study:

This study is beneficial for both the researcher and the readers on bigger scale. It is a contribution for understanding of illocutionary level of the speech act along with its application to the researcher. The readers will be having an access to the story and the functions their speech has performed during conversation. The present study revolves around the detailed conversational analysis conducted among the three characters. The speech in this short story is somehow a mysterious one as it is not giving a direct meaning in any of the situations.

Research Questions:

1. What are the types of illocutionary acts engaged by the characters in the short story “Button, Button”?
2. What types of speech acts are performed during the conversation in the light of “Speech acts theory”?

Literature review:

Speech acts theory is kept in view while conducting this research. This theory gives a set of linguistics rules to speakers to generated different utterances and leads him or her to utilize

language with accuracy for say giving information, command or making request (Cortazzi & Jin, 2008). In people's point of view speech is the way of conveying information and proposing something (Chaika, 1982: 71). Austin proposed that speech is basically the way of performing some action by using words. Sociolinguists and anthropologists suggest that to conduct social interactions speech is the only way of how people use language (Chaika, 1982: 71).

John Austin initiated this theory in 1962. John Searle in 1969 later developed it. In social and interpersonal communication this theory plays a vital role. Austin proposed that utterance can be divided into two types i.e. constative and performative. Constative utterance explains the scenario as it is where as performative shows how language conducts an action. Leech (1983) stated three distinct levels of acts that are included in utterances, i.e., locutionary, illocutionary, and per locutionary act.

The basic and foremost act of utterances or a meaning which it has in linguistic expression is called locutionary act Yule (1996: 48). Locutionary act always have a sentence which has some linguistic meaning and a grammatical structure. It is act of saying something. In a sentence e.g. "A says to B that C". In this act 'A' is for speaker 'B' is for the hearer and 'C' are some words spoken with a certain frame of sense and reference.

Act of doing something is called illocutionary act. If speaker say some word it does not only mean to say something but its intension is to ask someone to do certain thing Speakers use locutions to perform an illocutionary act. These utterances include statements, confirming acts, predictions, promises, requests, etc. It is difficult to identify illocutionary act than locutionary act because requires knowing about speaker, the one he is talking to, when is the utterance performed and where did the utterance takes place.

We can see "in saying A, B asserts that C" 'B' is for the speaker, 'A' are the words delivered with some sort of sense and 'C' is the meaning of the words spoken. Communicative force of an utterance is involved in illocutionary act Yule (1996). Most of the people do not say something just to produce an utterance with no purpose instead there is some function in their minds before uttering the words.

The specific act of speech uttered by a speaker in order to affect the listener is called per locutionary act. A listener is potentially affected by the utterance that is uttered. The utterance that is created by the speaker may be effective or ineffective. Per locution is basically listener behavioral response to utterance, It is not necessary that response is only physical or verbal; it can be emotional as well as mental response. Example: someone says "The room is so hot". To facilitate the one who has stated this statement we automatically switch on the air conditioner to make them feel that what they said we completely understand that.

It creates an impact on the hearer. Per locution of the utterance is formulated by Leech, by saying A, B convinces C that D 'B' is for the speaker, 'C' is for the hearer, 'A' are the words spoken with some function in their mind, 'D' is the meaning of an words spoken. People do not utter some utterances with some specific function without intending it to have an effect Yule (1996: 48).

Searle in 1996 along with many other linguists extracted the fundamental elements of Austin's speech acts which became Speech Act Theory. Searle introduced an 'indirect speech act', which is particularly meant to be an indirect 'illocutionary' act. Searle differentiated between direct and indirect speech acts, the explanation is as following:

The propositional content like ‘what is said’ carries one illocutionary aspect is called direct speech. If the speaker says to someone ‘Please walk the dog’ by this statement it can be assumed that the one who is listening (hearer) must put on a pair of shoes, put a chain to the dog, step out of the house and walk down the street. Speaker is making a direct request in this statement. Speaker is trying to make thing simple for the hearer just by using a direct speech. Direct speech acts always connects the literal meaning and the conventional meaning with respect to the words uttered to perform a certain function.

The act that is not performed in the direct sense instead they are performed by means of others is called indirect speech act. Speaker communicates more than what they really want to say Searle (1979:60). Lets suppose if the speaker says, ‘The dog is whining,’ by this statement it means that the one who is listening (hearer) must put on a pair of shoes, put a chain to the dog, step out of the house, and walk down the street, an indirect request is made by the speaker. The literal meaning and the conventional meaning are different in indirect speeches. Whereas direct speech acts are used in everyday language.

Research Methodology:

To accomplish the research on speech act analysis at illocutionary level of short story “Button, Button” a qualitative method of research is kept in mind. To analyze the illocutionary level of speech act theory sampling technique has been put into observation by the researcher. Keeping in mind the level and dimension of the study data has been sampled. After analyzing the data by keeping in mind the illocutionary level of speech act theory results are drawn.

Data Analysis:

Speech acts theory has been kept in mind while examining the story Button, Button. The story moves around varieties of speech acts. It has a so many utterances having direct and indirect speech acts. The classification of illocutionary acts is based on different criteria illustrated bellow.

Diction of speech acts:

Button, Button has various forms of speech acts used by different characters during their conversation and arguments about the box having a button attached to a gadget. In this perspective analysis is having the following assumptions.

Declarative:

While narrating an event and the dialogues performed between the conversers are in declarative from which the statement is build. What is going on, what has happened or what the situation is all about always depicts a declarative statements. Declarative speech act is central one which describes the entire proceedings.

s.no	<u>Diction of speech</u>	<u>Speech performed in story</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
1.	Commissive speech When the illocutionary act is satisfied, the world is	Steward uttered “that is the proposition” it is indicative of	Through subsequent speech act the speaker is

	<p>transformed to fit the propositional content.</p> <p>Commissive express, an intention, making the world fit the words and counting as a commitment for the speaker to keep in action in future, for example: offering, inviting, vowing, and promising</p>	<p>his offer and plan.</p>	<p>stating his or her future plan, promise or indicating threat. The scrutiny of the data underlines the fact that this speech act is also included by the author in the text. The insurance agent gives them a very attractive offer in the form of money which was not appreciated but genuine in its form.</p>
2.	<p>Representative speech</p> <p>Representative speech acts involves the values in it. The speech can be true or false. This speech can express the true proposition proposed by the speaker i.e. reporting, instructing, concluding, etc</p>	<p>“it was a sale pitch”.</p> <p>“If you push the button, someone in the world you don’t know will die .in return you will receive a payment of 50,000 dollars”.</p> <p>“Nonetheless, that is the proposition”.</p>	<p>Steward came about Norma straight-away knew and believed that it was a sale strategy.</p> <p>Steward stated the fact while putting his offer. He was basically trying to indulge their attention in the offer.</p> <p>“Nonetheless, that is the proposition”. After hesitation he marked his words with such proposition.</p>

3.	<p>Expressive speech</p> <p>Expressive speech expresses the inner state of the speaker. The expression can be polite one. When we greet someone, thank someone or congratulates some one these are all polite expression. Where as blaming and accusing some one is totally opposite to that politeness</p>	<p>When Norma was persuading Arthur, he enquired “Murder someone?”</p> <p>Norma was feeling disgusted when she said, “Murder”?</p> <p>When her husband was not at all getting ready to accept that immoral offer she uttered in her inner “well, she gestured vaguely...” when Arthur was disappointed by the Norma’s reaction “stared at her in dismay” non-verbal emotion was involved in it.</p>	<p>This speech shows Arthurs surprised emotion.</p> <p>Disgusted emotion of Norma is observed through her expressions.</p> <p>Non-verbal from Norma and Arthur.</p>
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Classification of speech:

As we have discussed above that the speech act can be classified as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act. Below are some of the speech delivered in the story is classified on these specific figures of classification.

S.No	Speech acts	Levels of speech acts
1.	Norma out of disgust and aggression Challenged Steward of “Monetarily” values in an act.	<p>At illocutionary level we can clearly see her greedy nature for the money.</p> <p>At locutionary level we can think that as she was in need of money that’s why she was behaving like this.</p> <p>At perlocutionary level it is the outcome of the proposition given by that insurance agent.</p>
2.	“What does that means” Arthur replied at Steward’s proposal.	At illocutionary level we can see that he was not greedy for the money and don’t want to be trapped in this stupid proposal as he was well

		aware of the consequence.
3.	“Stared at her in dismay”. When Arthur was disappointed by the attitude of Norma.	At illocutionary level it may be suggested that as Arthur was happy with the life style he was living in and Norma for the greed of money wanted to avail this opportunity, Arthur was not very happy with Norma’s behavior he was watching her in disgusted manner.
4.	When steward uttered “All we guarantee is that you don’t know them”	At Illocutionary it can be seen that some people are so selfish that they are least bothered about the consequences of the offers they are providing to others. They just think about themselves.
5.	Norma interrupts her husband during conversation easily.	At illocutionary level we can see that the love and affection they both share is no doubt out of boundaries. They never think before talking to each other because they both know that there is a good level of frankness between them.

Conclusion:

Keeping in view the data analysis of the short story “Button Button”, we can conclude that four illocutionary acts are recognized from the characters speeches during their conversation in the story. They are representative, declarative, commissive, and expressive. Illocutionary act among the characters which are performed in various kinds. Representative is expressed in the form of supporting, disagreeing, explaining, compelling, predicting and warning. Commissive is expressed in the form of promising, offering, and threatening. Expressive is the illocutionary act performed by the characters which have the most diverse form. They are supporting, arguing, predicting, disagreeing, opposing, explaining, warning and compelling. Illocutionary acts used in story are based on the conditions during certain situations. Declarative act needs unique and central one which describes the entire proceedings.

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