

## UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY AND CLASSIFICATIONS OF SPEECH ACTS IN HUMAN COMMUNICATION

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### Abstract

The theory of speech acts highlights how language is not merely a means of conveying information but also a form of action. As human beings constantly engage in communication to establish and maintain relationships, language plays a pivotal role. This paper explores the concept of speech acts, as introduced by philosophers like J.L. Austin and J.R. Searle, and delves into their different types and classifications. The study focuses on three fundamental components of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. It also discusses several approaches to classifying speech acts, offering a comprehensive understanding of how language functions as both a communicative and performative tool.

### Аннотация

Теория речевых актов подчеркивает, что язык — это не просто средство передачи информации, но и форма действия. Поскольку люди постоянно общаются для установления и поддержания отношений, язык играет ключевую роль. В данной статье рассматривается понятие речевых актов, введенное такими философами, как Дж.Л. Остин и Дж.Р. Сёрль, а также исследуются их типы и классификации. В исследовании акцентируется внимание на трёх основных компонентах речевых актов: локуционном, иллокуционном и перлокуционном актах. Также обсуждаются различные подходы к классификации речевых актов, что позволяет получить всестороннее понимание того, как язык функционирует как средство коммуникации и как инструмент действия.

### Annotatsiya

Nutq aktlari nazariyasi til faqatgina axborot uzatish vositasi emas, balki harakat shakli ekanini ta'kidlaydi. Insonlar doimiy ravishda muloqotda bo'lib, munosabatlar o'rnatish va ularni qo'llab-quvvatlashga intilganlari sababli, til muhim rol o'ynaydi. Ushbu maqola J.L. Ostin va J.R. Sirl kabi faylasuflar tomonidan ilgari surilgan nutq aktlari tushunchasini o'rganadi va ularning turlari

hamda tasniflariga to'xtaladi. Tadqiqot nutq aktlarining uchta asosiy komponenti – lokutsion, illokutsion va perlokutsion aktlarga e'tibor qaratadi. Shuningdek, nutq aktlarini tasniflashga oid bir nechta yondashuvlar ko'rib chiqiladi va tilning muloqot vositasi bo'lishi bilan birga, amaliy harakat vositasi sifatida qanday ishlashini chuqur tushunishga yordam beradi.

### **Keywords**

Speech Act Theory, Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, Perlocutionary Act, Pragmatics, Language and Action, Communicative Function, Linguistic Philosophy, Classification, Directive Speech Acts, Expressive Speech Acts, Commissive Speech Acts, Representative Speech Acts, Declarative Speech Acts.

### **Ключевые слова**

Теория речевых актов, Локуционный акт, Иллокуционный акт, Перлокуционный акт, Прагматика, Язык и действие, Коммуникативная функция, Философия языка, Классификация, Директивные акты, Экспрессивные акты, Комиссивные акты, Репрезентативные акты, Декларативные акты.

### **Kalit so'zlar**

Nutq aktlari nazariyasi, Lokutsion akt, Illokutsion akt, Perlokutsion akt, Pragmatika, Til va harakat, Kommunikativ funksiyalar, Til falsafasi, Tasniflash, Buyruq aktlari, Ifodali aktlar, Majburiyat aktlari, Vakillik aktlari, Deklarativ aktlar.

### **Introduction**

Human beings, as inherently social creatures, depend on communication to interact with their environment and with others. Language is central to this interaction, enabling the transmission of ideas, thoughts, and emotions. According to Wardhaugh (in Badulu, 2009), language is a system of vocal symbols used for human communication. When people convey information through speeches or utterances, they perform more than just a verbal act – they perform an action. This realization gave rise to the theory of speech acts, a concept developed by Austin (1962) and furthered by Searle (1969). Speech act theory asserts that language is used to perform actions such as requesting, apologizing, and promising. This paper aims to explore the theory in depth, its main tenets, and different approaches to its classification.

### **Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach through document analysis. It reviews and synthesizes relevant literature on speech act theory, including works by Austin, Searle, Yule, and Levinson. The focus is on theoretical perspectives,

definitions, examples, and classifications to provide a coherent understanding of the subject.

## Results

1. *The Theory of Speech Acts* Austin (1962) introduced the idea that to speak is to act. His work emphasized that language is not only about stating facts but also about performing actions. A speech act involves the performance of actions via utterances. These actions are categorized into three types: locutionary acts (utterance with meaning), illocutionary acts (performing an intended function), and perlocutionary acts (effects on the listener).

2. *The Main Tenets of Speech Acts* Locutionary acts refer to the actual utterance and its literal meaning. Illocutionary acts go a step further by focusing on the speaker's intention, such as making a request or an offer. Perlocutionary acts involve the effects on the hearer, such as persuading or scaring them. For instance, the statement "It's cold here" may function as a mere observation (locutionary), a request to close a window (illocutionary), and might cause someone to feel cold and take action (perlocutionary).

3. *Different Approaches to Classification* Several scholars have proposed classification systems for speech acts:

**Austin (1962)** initially proposed five categories: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives.

**Searle (1969)** later simplified this into five categories:

*Declarations:* Utterances that change the world (e.g., "I now pronounce you husband and wife").

*Representatives:* Assertions or statements about the world (e.g., "The Earth is round").

*Expressives:* Statements that express the speaker's feelings (e.g., "I'm sorry for your loss").

*Directives:* Attempts to get the hearer to do something (e.g., "Please close the door").

*Commissives:* Commitments to a future action (e.g., "I promise to help you").

**Other theorists**, such as Buhler (1934), Britton (1970), and Allan (1994), offered additional frameworks focusing on expressive, conative, and representational functions.

## Discussion

The theory of speech acts provides a robust framework for understanding how language functions beyond mere transmission of information. Austin and Searle's

work laid the foundation for modern pragmatics, revealing the multiple layers of meaning in every utterance. Context, speaker intention, and listener interpretation are crucial in determining the speech act performed. The examples provided show that even simple utterances can perform complex functions depending on the circumstances. The classifications help linguists and language practitioners analyze the nuances of everyday communication.

**1. The Role of Context in Interpreting Speech Acts** Speech acts are not produced or interpreted in isolation. Context plays a significant role in determining the meaning and function of an utterance. Factors such as the relationship between the speaker and listener, cultural norms, social settings, and previous discourse all influence how a speech act is understood. For instance, the phrase "Can you open the window?" might be interpreted as a genuine question about capability in a literal sense, but in most social contexts, it functions as a polite request.

Pragmatic competence, the ability to understand language use in context, is crucial for interpreting speech acts correctly. Misunderstandings may arise if interlocutors fail to consider the surrounding context or cultural conventions. For example, what constitutes a polite request in one culture might be seen as too direct or even rude in another. Thus, understanding context is essential for successful communication, especially in cross-cultural settings.

**2. Speech Acts in Digital Communication** With the rise of digital communication platforms like emails, text messages, and social media, the way people perform and interpret speech acts has evolved. Unlike face-to-face interactions, digital communication often lacks paralinguistic cues such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures. This can lead to ambiguity in interpreting the speaker's intent.

Despite these challenges, users have adapted by using emojis, punctuation, formatting, and timing to convey tone and intention. For example, a message saying "Thanks." can be interpreted differently than "Thanks! (with smile)" depending on the context and the relationship between the sender and recipient.

Moreover, speech acts in digital communication often blur the boundaries between different categories. A single tweet or comment can function simultaneously as an expressive, directive, and commissive act. Understanding how speech acts operate in digital spaces is increasingly important for analyzing online interactions and designing user-friendly communication technologies.

## Conclusion

Speech act theory illustrates that speaking is doing. Language is more than a medium of expression; it is a tool for action. By understanding locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and by applying various classification

models, one can gain deeper insight into human communication. This understanding is critical in linguistics, communication studies, and language teaching, offering practical applications in interpreting and producing meaningful utterances.

Context and medium also play a critical role in interpreting speech acts. As communication continues to evolve, especially in digital environments, the theory of speech acts remains a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of human interaction.

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