

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: SPEECH ACT THEORY AND ITS TYPES

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ABSTRACT

The article is concerned with the study of one of the approaches to discourse analysis: Speech Act Theory. Discourse analysis has provided models and methods of engaging issues that emanate from disciplines such as education, cultural studies, communication and so. The study focuses on Speech Act Theory and its types: Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary.

Previous researches and studies in this area of investigation have been gathered and analyzed. Several points of the issue have been taken into consideration and concluded that Speech Act Theory is one of the main approaches in discourse analysis.

KEY WORDS: Discourse, Discourse analysis, Speech Act Theory, Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis is usually defined as a broad field which can include the theories and methods of linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology. When it comes to define what discourse analysis is, it is important to point out the background of this theory. In simple terms, Discourse analysis uses the language presented in a corpus or body of data to draw meaning. This body of data could include a set of interviews or focus group discussion transcripts. While some forms of discourse analysis centre in on the specifics of language (such as sounds or grammar), other forms focus on *how* this language is used to achieve its aims

The theory of discourse analysis was in the centre of several researchers during the 1960s and early 1970s, paying also attention to linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, psychology and sociology during in the process of analysis. Some of the scholars and the works that either gave birth to, or helped in the development of discourse analysis include the following: J.L. Austin whose *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) introduced the popular social theory and speech act theory. Dell Hymes (1964) provided a sociological perspective with the study of speech. The linguistic Philosopher, M.A.K. Halliday greatly influenced the linguistic properties of discourses and in the 1970s he provided sufficient framework for the consideration of the functional approach to language.

Briefly, it can said that approach to discourse can be defined in different ways, so below is an attempt to provide a more systematic insight into one of the approaches to discourse.

SPEECH ACT THEORY

The term discourse analysis has been investigated in a variety of academic disciplines and approaches to describe what they do, how they do or both. This illustrates that the analysis of discourse has been done under the circumstances of different methods and approaches. Schiffrin in her *Approaches to Discourse* (1994) discusses and compares some of the different approaches to the linguistic analysis of discourse: speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and variation analysis. This part of the work, therefore, summarizes the approaches to linguistic analysis of discourse identified by Schiffrin.

The Speech Act Theory was first formulated by the philosopher John Austin (1962) and was later developed and presented more systematically by another philosopher John Searle (1969, 1975). The theory proceeds from the assumption that language is used to perform actions hence its main concern is on how meaning and action are related to language. John Austin and John Searle believe that language is not just used to describe the world, but to perform a range of other actions that can be indicated in the performance of the utterance

itself.¹ For example, 'I promise to come on time' and 'I want to inform that the meeting is 9.00' perform the functions of promising and informing respectively. However, an utterance may perform more than one act at a time as in: 'Can you open the door?' which can be understood as both a question and a request. But one can hardly understand the utterance as a question to test the physical ability of the hearer but as a request to perform the action requested.

TYPES OF SPEECH ACTS

There are three types of acts in the speech acts, they are locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Locutionary. According to Austin, Locutionary speech act is roughly equivalent to uttering certain utterance with certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to meaning in traditional sense.² Cutting states that locutionary is what is said.

The example of the locutionary speech act can be seen in the following sentences:

A. the baby is crying

B. the sky is blue

2. Illocutionary. Yule pointed out that the illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance, such as promising, apologizing, offering. This act is also called the act of doing something in saying something. The most significant level of action in a speech act is the illocutionary act because the force, which has been desired by the speakers, determines this act.³

For example: A. I promise you to come on time

B. Could you have a tea or coffee?

3. Perlocutionary. Hymes states that perlocutionary act is the act that is carried out by a speaker when making an utterance causes in certain effect on the hearer and others. Perlocutionary act is also the act offering someone. Perlocutionary act refers to the effect the utterance has on the thoughts or actions of the other person.

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For example: A. He persuaded me to attend at the party

B. I strongly advise to read this book

CONCLUSION

We have tried in this article to discuss one of the approaches to discourse analysis: Speech Act Theory and its types. We attempted to define the concept of discourse, Speech Act Theory and its types: Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary with examples. As we noted in the introductory part of the article, Discourse Analysis is a vast discipline and insights from it have been used in solving problems that originate from so many other disciplines and domains of study.

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¹ Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. London: Oxford University Press

² Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. London: Oxford University Press

³ Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁴ Hymes, D. 1974. *Foundations of Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia