



## THE ROLE OF SPEECH ACTS IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

**Axmedova Gulbahor Abduvali qizi**

*National University of Uzbekistan*

*named after Mirzo Ulugbek*

*Faculty of Foreign Philology,*

*Foreign language and literature department*

**Annotation:** *This article examines the theory of speech acts, highlighting how language functions not only to convey literal meaning but also to perform actions in communication. It focuses on the distinctions between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts and analyzes how speaker intention and audience response shape the effectiveness of utterances. The study demonstrates that speech acts can simultaneously serve multiple functions, such as requesting, asserting, or advising, and emphasizes the importance of context in interpreting meaning. Overall, speech act theory provides a practical framework for understanding the dynamic interaction between language, intention, and social communication.*

**Key words:** *speech acts, locutionary act, illocutionary act, perlocutionary act, context, communication*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a medium for conveying information but also a powerful tool for performing actions in social interaction. The study of speech acts, introduced by the philosopher J.L. Austin, emphasizes that utterances can do more than state facts, they can request, promise, command, apologize, or influence others. Austin's framework distinguishes between locutionary acts (the act of saying something), illocutionary acts (the intended meaning or force of the utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect on the listener). Building on Austin's insights, later scholars, including John Searle, developed classifications of speech acts and explored their pragmatic functions. Understanding speech acts is essential for analyzing communication because it reveals how language operates not only through words but also through intention, context, and social norms. This article aims to provide an overview of speech act theory, illustrate its key concepts with examples, and highlight its relevance for both linguistics and practical communication.

### MAIN BODY

The study of speech acts provides a detailed understanding of how language functions in communication beyond merely conveying information. Speech act theory emphasizes that understanding language requires attention to both linguistic forms and the intentions behind them, highlighting the dynamic interaction between speakers and listeners in everyday communication.

For much of linguistic history and within the framework of positivist philosophy of language, language was primarily seen as a tool for making factual statements, while other

functions of language were largely overlooked. According to Austin, there is the assumption of philosophers that the purpose of a "statement" was solely to describe a state of affairs or assert a fact, which could then be judged as either true or false. Austin was among the first to systematically examine the broader uses of language beyond mere factual assertion.

J. L. Austin's work, particularly "How to Do Things with Words", shifted philosophical attention toward the non-declarative functions of language. His concepts of the "locutionary act," "illocutionary act," and "perlocutionary act" became central to the emerging field of speech act theory. Among these, the illocutionary act, in particular, is now widely recognized as a fundamental type of speech act.

In the field of linguistics, a speech act is defined as an utterance in terms of the speaker's intention and the impact it produces on the listener. In other words, a speech act is a deliberate action performed according to the norms established in society. Speech acts can therefore be examined at three levels:

- a locutionary act involves the execution of a grammatically correct utterance, constituting a speech act in itself;
- an illocutionary act involves performing an action in the process of saying something;
- a perlocutionary act focuses on the potential effects or responses that the utterance may produce in the listener.

At the first level, a locutionary act can carry a neutral intonation. At the second level, the speaker's intention is added, while the third level considers the outcome or effect of the speech act.

For example, "You should finish your homework before dinner." At the locutionary level, the speaker simply utters a grammatically correct and meaningful sentence, conveying the literal idea that the listener is expected to complete their homework prior to dinner. The illocutionary act represents the speaker's intention in making this statement; in this case, the speaker is advising or instructing the listener, performing an action in saying the sentence. The perlocutionary act, finally, refers to the effect of the utterance on the listener. The listener might respond by beginning their homework immediately, feeling pressured, or even expressing reluctance, and these reactions constitute the perlocutionary effects. This example demonstrates how a single utterance can simultaneously operate on multiple levels, highlighting the complex interaction between literal meaning, speaker intention, and listener response in communication.

In pragmalinguistics, speech acts are generally categorized according to their illocutive and communicative intentions because of the issue of clear classification.

The concept of illocutionary acts was brought into linguistics by philosopher John L. Austin, who explored the different dimensions of speech acts. In his framework, the locutionary act refers to what is literally said, the illocutionary act captures what is intended, and the perlocutionary act represents the effect produced by the utterance. For instance, when someone asks, "Could you close the window?" At the locutionary level, the speaker literally asks whether the listener is able to close the window. The illocutionary act reflects the speaker's intended meaning, it functions as a request for the listener to actually close the window. Finally, the perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance on the listener,

for instance, the listener may close the window, express reluctance, or ignore the request. This example demonstrates how a single sentence involves multiple layers of communication, highlighting the distinction between the literal wording, the speaker's intention, and the response elicited from the listener. One way to differentiate between an illocutionary act (e.g., a declaration, command, or promise) and a perlocutionary act (e.g., an attempt to insult or persuade) is to consider the outcome inherent in the utterance. In an illocutionary act, saying "I command," or "I promise" completes the act itself, regardless of whether the listener accepts it. In contrast, a perlocutionary act depends on the listener's reaction, an insult or attempt at persuasion only occurs if the listener perceives it as such.

Although many define an illocutionary act by listing examples of speech acts, such as stating, questioning, commanding, or promising, this approach does not clearly identify the defining characteristics of illocutionary act. Austin emphasized that the illocutionary act should be understood in contrast to other types of acts, it is an act performed in saying something, distinct from a locutionary act, which is simply the act of saying, and from a perlocutionary act, which is the effect produced by saying. However, Austin eventually moved away from relying solely on the "in saying / by saying" distinction.

If we consider illocutionary force as an aspect of meaning, the intended force of some utterances is not always immediately clear. For instance, when someone says, "The music is really loud tonight," several illocutionary acts could be involved. The speaker might simply be describing the volume of the music, in which case the illocutionary force is that of description. Alternatively, the speaker could be criticizing the person responsible for playing the music, or it could be intended as a request for someone to turn the music down. These intentions may overlap, by stating that the music is too loud, the speaker may simultaneously signal disapproval. Such an act, where one illocutionary intention is performed indirectly through another, is an example of an indirect speech act.

Moreover, various classifications of speech acts appear in scientific literature. John Searl classified them groups in following way:

-assertives, which commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition (e.g., "I believe...");  
-directives, which aim to make the addressee perform an action (e.g., "I command you...");

-commissives, which commit the speaker to a future action (e.g., "I promise...");

-expressives, which convey the speaker's attitude or emotions about the situation (e.g., "Thank you");

-declaratives, which solve particular issues (e.g., "You are fired"). N.I.

Farmanovskaya proposes a sevenfold classification of speech acts: representatives - posts or messages, commissives - requirements, directives - orders, requests - questions, declaratives - advertisements, contactives - forms of speech etiquette.

Together with this, other scholars classify speech acts differently based on various criteria:

-According to the speaker's intention, a speech act may be direct or indirect;

-Based on the informational content, they can be informative or uninformative;



-Considering relations between speakers, speech acts may be status-marked (commanding, requesting, praying) or status-neutral (reporting, describing);

-According to social communication, Dj. Lich identifies four types: competitive acts (demands, orders), acts for festive occasions (apologies, congratulations), cooperative acts (messages, instructions), and acts emerging from conflict (threats, harassment).

S. Krekel groups speech acts according to three features: orientation toward the speaker or listener, orientation to cognitive or imperative function, and orientation in time (present, past, or future). Across classifications, two elements are commonly emphasized, the communicative intention and the relationship or attitude between speakers. Differences in classification largely reflect the focus of specific research studies.

While making a statement may be considered the standard function of language, words can serve many other purposes. We can make requests, ask questions, issue commands, make promises, express gratitude, apologize, and more. In fact, most speech acts involve the simultaneous performance of multiple acts, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention - the act of uttering something, the act performed in saying it (such as requesting or promising), and the intended effect on the audience.

The theory of speech acts is both descriptive and explanatory. It seeks to classify systematically the various types of speech acts and to account for the conditions under which they succeed or fail. A key challenge is that the relationship between linguistic form and illocutionary force is often indirect. For instance, the sentence "The room looks like a disaster zone" might be used nonliterally to indicate that a room is extremely messy and, indirectly, to request or suggest that someone clean it. Even when the sentence is used literally, say to describe a room after a party, the meaning of the utterance is not entirely determined by its linguistic content, for instance, the word "room" does not specify which room is being referred to. A central task for speech act theory, therefore, is to explain how speakers can achieve their intended goals despite the fact that literal linguistic meaning often underdetermines communicative use. Conclusion. All in all, speech acts are communicative acts. To communicate is to convey a certain attitude, and the type of speech act corresponds to the attitude expressed. For example, a statement conveys belief, a request expresses desire, and an apology communicates regret. A speech act is successful when the audience correctly identifies the attitude intended by the speaker.

### **THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:**

1. Austin J. L. How to Do Things with Words. - Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962. – P. 102
2. Maslova Y. A. Introduction into pragmalinguistics. - M., 2008. – P.14.
3. Searle, J. R. Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. - P.54
4. Vendler, Z. Linguistics in Philosophy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.- 1967.
5. Wittgenstein L. Philosophical Investigations. Oxford: Blackwell. – 1953.