
An Analysis of Speech Acts in The *Oliver Twist* Script

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Abstract

Language as a means of communication has an important role in delivering a message. Moreover, it is related to speech acts the speakers use. Each utterance has a different meaning to understand, and that is the job of the hearers and readers to interpret the meaning. Speech acts have three different distinct levels: locutionary (the actual words uttered), illocutionary (the force or intention behind the words), and perlocutionary (the effect of the illocution on the hearer). The researchers chose the “*Oliver Twist*” script as the data to analyse. Some of the scripts were taken and classified into the three levels of speech act: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. This research aimed to describe the three distinct levels of speech acts that are shown in the “*Oliver Twist*” script and to examine how speech acts are used in the “*Oliver Twist*” script. The researchers used a descriptive analysis technique in which the data were taken from some scripts which contain three distinct levels of speech acts. The researchers then identified the utterances and classified how they performed what the speaker meant. The result shows that some utterances have three distinct levels of speech act, such as *I want some more*, *You must be hungry*, *A polite boy*, *Can we start the game* and *Because he is a street child*. Since speech acts are essential to indicate what a speaker means, English learners should enrich themselves by understanding the function of speech acts and their distinct levels.

Keywords: language, levels of speech acts, descriptive analysis

Background

“Actions speak louder than words” is a well-known proverb. It means that everything will be more understandable when spoken but in clear speaking. That’s why speech act has an important role in understanding what someone speaks and means. Austin in Thomas (1995: 51), speech act refers to an utterance and the ‘total situation in which the utterance is issued’. People do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words in attempting to express themselves, but they perform actions via utterances. George Yule (1995: 47) states that actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts. They are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. The same words can be used to perform different speech acts, so different words can be used to perform the same speech act. There are different types of speech acts: representative, declarative, directive, expressive, and commissive acts. On any occasion, the actions performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts. They are the locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. One of the literary works which consist of encoding many different acts of utterances is a script. The writer chose the “*Oliver Twist*” script directed by Roman Polansky. That movie told about an orphan named Oliver Twist who had a hard life because of different social status. It took place in London when Industry Revolution happened. The “*Oliver Twist*” script was analysed to find out the three related acts (locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary).

Ita Watiningsih (2011), in *An Analysis of Directive Speech Acts Employed by the Main Character in the Movie "Oliver Twist (2005)"*, shows that there are four types of directive speech acts employed by the characters in the movie "Oliver Twist". They are advice, requests, commands, and questions. The results of findings are explained further in the data analysis, namely, politeness strategies employed in the directive speech acts. They are bald on-record, positive politeness, and negative politeness.

The researcher does not find an off-record strategy in this movie. Bald on-record strategy is commonly realised in the imperative form. In this strategy, the speaker has relative power toward the hearer. Negative politeness tends to be conventionally indirect since the speaker wants to show the difference. The speaker utters positive politeness in order to be accepted or preferred.

Finally, off-record tends to give hints to the hearer. In this analysis, the researcher explores verbal and non-verbal expressions. The verbal expression means that the speaker utters direct or indirect speech acts, explicit or implicit statements, in high, normal, or low intonation. The non-verbal expression is realized through body movements. The analysis also shows why the characters exploit directive speech acts in certain situations. They are to show that the speaker intends to take care of the hearer, to respect the hearer, to show anger expression, to show the hearer's duty, to show the emergency, to seek agreement, and to find the reasons for uttering certain expression.

Review Of Related Literature

Austin (1962), as cited in Ogbulago (2011: 69), describes the speech acts theory as an approach that explains the roles of utterances in shaping the attitudes of participants in interpersonal communication. Speech acts reveal the intentions of speakers and the effects the speaker's utterances and expressions have on the hearers. An act of assertion is carried out when a speaker utters a declarative sentence (which can be either true or false) and undertakes a particular responsibility or commitment to the hearer that a specific state of affairs, or situation, exists in the world (Hurford, 2007:261).

As cited in Ogbulago (2011: 71), there are five types of speech acts: representative, declarative, directive, expressive and commissive. For levels of speech acts, emphasis is on the different stages of interaction between the speaker and the listener through the use of speech acts. Three distinct levels are usually observed; locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

(Based on Yule (1996: 48), the action performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts. They are:

1. locutionary act is the basic act of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression.

As cited in Ogbulago (2011: 71), these are observed as the processes of producing grammatical and meaningful utterances which can be recognised by the hearer. The example from Austin, I might say: *It's hot in here!* The utterance means that the speaker really feels hot at that place, and it is just to express the real condition.

2. Illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance.

As cited in Ogbulago (2011: 71), it is the force behind the utterances. Indeed, the speaker performs these acts to achieve the purpose of communication as a statement, a question, a command, an invitation, a threat, a request, an apology, etc. It is possible, for instance, to use a sentence that has the structure of a statement for the purpose of a warning. The example from Austin, I might say: *It's hot in here!* The utterance means that the speaker wants some fresh air. It indicates that the speaker gets a problem with the hot condition and wants to solve it by having some fresh air. Another example: You will lose all your deposits – (from a financial adviser to a client). This sentence may be a warning or a piece of advice. Therefore, it is possible to use identical utterance types for different tokens based on the speaker's intentions and the context.

3. Perlocutionary act is creating an utterance with a function without intending it to have an effect.

As cited in Ogbulago (2011: 72), these are the effect of the speaker's utterance on the behaviour of the hearer. They are the acts performed by the hearer as a result of the speaker's utterances. It is assumed, for instance, that the hearer will respond to a question of the speaker in a specific way or behave in accordance with the demands of the context. It should be noted that the illocutionary force is the intended effect of an utterance on the hearer from the speaker's point of view. The perlocutionary effect is the actual effect of the speaker's utterance on the action, behavior, attitude, or belief of the hearer. Maximum communication is achieved when there is illocutionary uptake. This situation arises when the listener understands the intended effect of the speaker. This demand is at the core of semantics since meaning must be shared. The example from Austin, I might say: *It's hot in here!* The speaker might be that someone opens the window because he or she feels hot and needs the action so that the hearer will perform the result of the speaker's utterance.

Method

The data in this writing were taken from the "Oliver Twist" script directed by Roman Polansky. This script was used as the data source because it is about the difference of social status in which it will have different utterances due to the social status. The method used in collecting the data was the documentation method, in which the activities mostly include reading and note-taking of the data from the script. The method used in analysing the data was qualitative descriptive. The analysis only focused on several scripts with representative values based on the types of speech acts and the use of speech acts. Those are classified based on speech act theory in terms of three types of speech act; locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary.

Findings and Discussion

The data used to analyse types of speech act in this writing was taken from the "Oliver Twist" script. The data analysed only the representative data of level of speech act found in the script of Oliver Twist. This analysis includes the level of a speech act; locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary.

1. Locutionary Act

- a) *OLIVER: Mr. Bumble, sir, I want some more.*

Oliver holds out his bowl. (Scene 1)

It happens when Olivier and the Orphans are pretending to eat and Mr. Bumble is stirring the food. Oliver stands up and walks towards Bumble slowly. All of the other Orphans who are eating stop and stare at Oliver as he walks up to Bumble. The utterance shows that Oliver is really hungry.

- b) *FAGIN: You must be hungry, my dear. (Scene 3)*

The utterance shows that the speaker (Fagin) knows that Oliver looks very hungry and offers him some meals.

- c) *FAGIN: A polite boy! (chuckles, aside) I could use him well. (Scene 3)*

The utterance seems that the speaker (Fagin) gives a compliment to Oliver that he's a polite boy.

d) *DODGER: Fagin, can we start the game?*

OLIVER: (Confused) What game?

FAGIN: (Boldly) We will show you, then you can join in. (Scene 3)

Oliver is confused with the utterance of 'game'. He thinks that he will play a game like what children like to do.

e) *GRIMWIG: Why? Because he is a street child. A thief. He's from the trash, and that's where he belongs, it's just like keeping an apple core.*

MRS. BEDWIN continues talking to OLIVER.

BEDWIN: You know, you look a bit like that woman, and from the other angle you look like --- Never mind (Scene 5)

The utterances 'a street child, the thief, from the trash, keeping an apple core' show that the speaker (Grim wig) says what he knows about Oliver because of his first appearance.

2. Illocutionary Act

a) *OLIVER: Mr. Bumble, sir, I want some more. (Scene 1)*

The utterance shows that the speaker (Oliver) wants the hearer to give him more food.

b) *FAGIN: You must be hungry, my dear.*

OLIVER: (innocently) Oh, yes, sir.

FAGIN gives OLIVER a sausage on a plate with a fork. (Scene 3)

The utterance shows that the speaker (Fagin) asks Oliver to have some meals, and Oliver can eat.

c) *OLIVER: Thank you, sir.*

FAGIN: A polite boy! (chuckles, aside) I could use him well.... (Scene 3)

Fagin's utterance indicates that it is not his real feeling to Oliver. He sees that Oliver is a simple child in which he can take advantage of Oliver.

d) *DODGER: Fagin, can we start the game?*

OLIVER: (Confused) What game?

FAGIN: (Boldly) We will show you, then you can join in. (Scene 3)

Those utterances are connotative, which is not the meaning of game in reality.

e) *GRIMWIG: Why? Because he is a street child. A thief. He's from the trash, and that's where he belongs, it's just like keeping an apple core.*

MRS. BEDWIN continues talking to OLIVER.

BEDWIN: You know, you look a bit like that woman, and from the other angle you look like - -- Never mind (Scene 5)

The hearer (Mrs Bedwin) knows what Grimwig means that he doesn't want to take care of Oliver. Surprisingly, Mrs. Bedwin ignores what Grimwig expects by saying 'never mind'.

3. Perlocutionary Act

- a) *OLIVER: Mr. Bumble, sir, I want some more. (Scene 1)*

The hearer (Mr. Bumble) understands what Oliver wants. He knows that Oliver wants to eat. Because of the limited money he has, he answers that there is no food for Oliver and the orphans.

- b) *FAGIN: You must be hungry, my dear.*

OLIVER: (innocently) Oh, yes, sir.

FAGIN gives OLIVER a sausage on a plate with a fork. (Scene 3)

The hearer (Oliver) answers 'yes' to Fagin because he knows Fagin will give him some meals.

- c) *OLIVER: Thank you, sir.*

FAGIN: A polite boy! (chuckles, aside) I could use him well.... (Scene 3)

Looking at Fagin, actually, Fagin is not admiring Oliver, but Oliver thinks positively by showing his gratitude.

- d) *DODGER: Fagin, can we start the game?*

OLIVER: (Confused) What game?

FAGIN: (Boldly) We will show you, then you can join in. (Scene 3)

The first hearer (Oliver) is confused with the utterance 'game', but Fagin knows it so Fagin can answer Dogder's utterance directly. Although it is not what Dogder expects, Dogder can understand what Fagin wants to do.

- e) *GRIMWIG: Why? Because he is a street child. A thief. He's from the trash, and that's where he belongs, it's just like keeping an apple core.*

MRS. BEDWIN continues talking to OLIVER.

BEDWIN: You know, you look a bit like that woman, and from the other angle you look like --- Nevermind



GRIMWIG: Are you sure this is a good idea?

BROWNLOW: Of course, Oliver's no thief.

MRS. BEDWIN: Come, Oliver. Let's get you dressed. (Scene 5)

The utterances show that Brownlow does not agree that Oliver is called a thief. He says that Oliver is not a thief, and he believes in Oliver to do what he asks.

Based on the analysis and discussion, there is a conclusion for the problem. The three distinct levels of speech acts were found in the "Oliver Twist" script. The utterance of *I want some more*, *You must be hungry*, *A polite boy*, *Can we start the game* and *Because he is a street child* show the results that those utterances have three distinct levels of speech act. The utterances were also uttered in

connotative words (not in real meaning), but almost the next script has the answer of the utterance that the hearer should understand.

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