

Study Of Directive Speech Acts In The God Of Small Things

Running Title: -Study Of Directive Speech Acts

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Abstract:-

The present research aims to study the employment of directive speech acts based on Searle's speech act theory by the characters in The God of Small Things. The study explores and analyses the frequently used directive speech acts in the selected novel. The main data of the present research are the utterances by the characters of the novel. The researcher studies directive speech acts employed by the characters. Descriptive Quantities Research method has been used in the present study. The researcher found that various directive speech acts such as command, permission, question and prohibition have been used in the novel. Total 72 utterances have been identified by the researcher, in terms of frequency Command has been the most frequent speech act (28) followed by request (17), question (12), permission (8), and prohibition (7). The use of specific speech acts highlights the importance of the character and its dominance or influence on the other characters of the novel. It also underscores the characteristics of typical Indian family institution in which the novel develops.

Keywords: -Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Directive Speech Acts, the God of Small Things

1. INTRODUCTION

Language has played a crucial role in the development of human civilization. We cannot isolate language from the very essence of human lives. Hence it attracts tremendous attention and study to understand its importance. People use language as a tool of communication and with its help people share their thoughts and feelings and perform strategic actions. Speaker performs actions through his utterances. These utterances should be studied in the light of its context. Some utterances may seem absurd if they are not studied with the context as single utterance may have various meanings in different situations. Stelmann (1982:279) points out:

Linguistic communication is more than merely saying something; it is saying something in a certain context, with certain intentions, and with the listener's recognition of what is said and of these intentions.¹

The strategic use of language in context helps speaker to perform speech acts. The study of implied meaning of an utterance in the given context and subsequent actions by the listener is part Pragmatics. The present research aims to study the type of speech acts performed by the characters of the selected novel.

2. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the one of the branches of linguistics that finds close connection with writings of some scholars of philosophy. The need of pragmatics was felt when language scholars found that in some situations there is no harmony between utterance and meanings of the sentences. G. Yule, (1996), defined communication as follows:

"Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said"²

The modern term 'Pragmatics' was proposed by Charles Morris (1938). He said that language works on two levels one is semantics and the other is pragmatics. Language is a sign system where each word is assigned to a particular object. Semantics studies the literal meaning of the words by referring to sign-object system of the language. On the other hand pragmatics studies the implied meaning of an utterance in the light of the context of the utterance. It studies what has been uttered, by whom and in what situation. This helps to listener to understand the intentions of the speaker. Pragmatics believes that an utterance functions in different ways based on felicity conditions and background information. This happens because of speaker employs language strategically in order to achieve his goal. Speech act theory, proposed by J. L. Austin, is considered the central essence of Pragmatics, which throws light on the employment of language with strategic purposes.

2.1 Speech Act

Pragmatics is the study of practical use of language where literal and implied meaning of an utterance. Pragmatics has many theories to offer but Speech Act theory has been discussed the most of all the pragmatic theories. The term Speech Act was used by a philosopher John Langshaw Austin for the first time in his lecture series, 'How to Do Things with Words'. Austin stated that we perform actions with words. Most of the utterance not only provide information but also perform an action. Each utterance is a communication act performed by the speaker. Austin termed such action as 'Speech Acts'. This perspective was far away from tradition concept of an utterance. The traditional concept of an utterance was of a statement serving information. In this case statement could have only two aspects one it could be true or it could be false statement. A statement like 'India is beautiful country' could only be truthful or false. According to Austin the statement could be more than true or false. It could be a compliment in certain situations but in some cases the statement can be sarcastic if the same statement spoken by a foreigner standing in slum area in India.

Austin said that speaker performs certain actions through utters. He categorized the utterance in two sections as 'Performative Utterance' and 'Constative Utterance'. Performative utterances are those utterances that perform certain actions. Such utterances make changes in the physical world around the speaker in some sense.

Ex.

- I pronounce you husband and Wife.
- I hereby sentence you life imprisonment.
- I promise to give you Rs. 1 lakh

The above utterances have to be uttered by specific person with certain capabilities. When a priest pronounces a couple to be husband and wife they get married. In the other example when a judge utters that 'I hereby sentence you life imprisonment', he is performing certain action which will put the culprit in jail for his lifetime. Such expressions are followed by some actions.

On the other hand Constative Utterances exhibit the traditional concept of an utterance of a statement. Such utterances can be a statement or assertions. These statement wither can be true or false. These utterances do not perform any actions.

Ex.

- Pune is a clean city.
- Today's temperature is 5 degree Celsius.

Both the above examples are constative utterances as they offer some information and do not perform any action. These statements can be true or false. If someone visits Pune he can validate the statement as true or false. Likewise in the other example what is the exact temperature of today can be proved as true or false. Performative utterances have some performative verbs in it which states the action being performed.

Utterances have two meanings one is literal meaning and the other is implied meaning. Implied meaning is also known as connoted meaning. Austin further explains that utterances have three different aspects or levels.

- Locutionary Act
- Illocutionary Act
- Perlocutionary Act

Locutionary acts are the simple and easy acts as they are not ambiguous acts. In Locutionary acts the utterance and the meaning of the utterance have perfect harmony. Such utterances are based on the literal meaning or dictionary meaning of the words. On the other hand Illocutionary act is more than a literal meaning of the words. Illocutionary acts have implied meanings which may differ to the dictionary meanings of the words used in utterance. Illocutionary acts are depended on context for their implied meaning. Background information it important for listener to understand the implied meaning. Perlocutionary acts are the actual acts that are performed which bring change in the listener's behaviour.

For example:

Teacher: You came late to college. (1) You will get punishment. (2)

Student: My father is the Trusty of college. (3)

Teacher: Ok! Don't come late again; go to your class. (4)

In the above example we have a piece of a dialogue. The first utterance of the teacher is an example of direct speech act where teacher has very clear intentions and his intentions can be seen in his utterance. There is no implied meaning in the utterance. Teacher informs the student that he has come late to college. Which is either true or false statement. In the second utterance teacher uses his authority and informs the student that he will get punishment. The student's reply to teacher is an example Locutionary level of indirect speech act. Instead of asking for forgiveness student answers seems to be irrelevant. Here student wishes to imply to teacher that his father is the trusty of the school and he will complain his father about the teacher. Student indirectly warns the teacher of the consequences of punishing the student. Student's utterance has an intention to bring about some change in the teacher's approach towards the student and student gets successful in conveying the same to the teacher. Teacher's answer 'Ok! Don't come late again; go to your class (4)' is the perlocutionary level of the speech act. Here we can see a change in the approach towards the student. Earlier teacher was talking about punishment, but later he forgives the student and asks him to go to class. This change in teacher's behaviour is the result of speech act performed by the student. This is an example how speaker employs speech acts to perform various action through words.

This Speech Act theory was further explained by John Searle who helped us to understand the three aspects of language use such as Utterance, Meaning and the Actions.

'Speaking a language is engaging in a rule governed form of behaviour' (Searle 1969:16)³

Searle stated five classes of Speech Acts in Levinson (1983: 240). These classes stated by Searle explain the actual way of performing speech acts. These classes can be explained as follows:

- 1. Assertive:** This act is all about assumption of a speaker which is asserted through his utterances. These assumptions can be truthful or false.
 - i) America is bigger than India.
 - ii) This college is good.
- 2. Expressive:** Expressive act talks about the feeling and emotions of speaker for listener. Praising, Complaining or criticizing are the ways of expressive acts.
 - i) Wish you many happy returns of the day.
 - ii) We are grateful to the company.
- 3. Directives:** Directive acts are actually directions, requests, orders, suggestions, questions or commands given by the speaker to listeners to perform something. These acts are like perlocutionary acts.
 - i) Please give me your phone number.
 - ii) Clean the floor now.
- 4. Commissive:** Commissive acts are promises to made some one or taking oath by which the speaker will be obliged to his oath or promise. This commitment for the future actions of a speaker is commissive act.
 - i) I will pay you money.
 - ii) I take oath to sacrifice my life for my country.
- 5. Declaratives:** These utterances bring about some change in the world through their utterances. A Speaker declares something which is followed by all.
 - i) I pronounce you husband and wife.
 - ii) I sentence you life imprisonment.

Directive speech acts in The God of Small Things have been kept at the center of the present study for three reasons. First, directive speech acts is very common in use in day to day conversation. Second, it underscores the connection and bond between speaker and the listener. Third, directive speech acts are employed to get the things done leaving and impact on the listener.

Method

In the present study descriptive quantitative method has been employed. The study aims studying the frequency of each speech act that falls under directive speech act in the novel The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy. Following formula (where, P: Percentage of utterances, F: Frequency of utterances, N: Total number of descriptive speech acts) has been used to get the percentage of directive speech acts used in the selected work.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Direct speech acts are considered to be most common speech acts with strategic use. Hence the researcher has focused on the use of Indirect Speech acts in the selected novel.

Result and Analysis

The data has been collected from the selected text and carefully analysed. The researcher specifically identified Directive Speech Acts in the novel *The God of Small Things*, and it was found that significant use of directive speech acts have been made. Employment of directive speech acts exhibit the power and the influence of a speaker. Total 72 different types of directive speech acts were identified used with different references and meanings. The detail summary of the directive speech act can be presented as follows:

This result was supported by the result of Oktoberia's research (2007)

Sr. No	Directive Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Command	28	38.89
2	Request	17	23.61
3	Permission	8	11.11
4	Prohibition	7	9.72
5	Question	12	16.67
Total		82	100

Table – 1

The frequency of different types of directive speech can be seen in the above table. The directive speech act was employed in the form of question, command, Permission, prohibition and request. The command form of directive speech acts was the most frequent which occurred 38.89% times, whereas the prohibition form of directive speech act was the least occurring one i.e. 9.72%.

Discussion

The research aimed at studying the frequency of directive speech acts and its purpose in the selected work. In the light of result and analysis it has been revealed that command form has been the most frequent directive speech act. The form had been employed to get listener to do something as per the expectation of the speaker. The command form of the speech act has been employed by the characters that enjoy dominant position in the family and society. The minor and weak characters took help of the request form of direct speech act. It can be concluded that different directive speech acts were used in the novel; command has been the most frequent. This helps us to understand the development of the characters and strategic use of the directive speech acts. The use of command by elder characters also underscores the influence of elderly family members in the novel. Further research can be taken up to study the role of directive speech acts in the development and influence of the male characters in the novel.

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