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## ROLE OF INDIRECT SPEECH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

Prior to Austin, the structural or formal aspect of language was the focal point of linguists. The use of language and its significance was somehow ignored. It was J.L. Austin who diverted the attention of philosophers, linguists etc. from its structural point of view to the functional perspective. Linguistics is 'a scientific study of language' and Pragmatics is the study of language in use. The central concept of Pragmatics is the Speech Act Theory. The emergence of Speech Act theory lies in the assertion of J.L. Austin, who claimed that the speaker does actions with words. The book, *How to Do Things with Words* proves to be a landmark in the emergence of pragmatics. The core of the Speech Act Theory is the notion that the speaker performs actions via words. Performing actions with words is called Speech Acts. Various actions are performed via words such as requesting, asking, ordering, suggesting, promising, complaining and so on. Austin's Speech Act Theory was further expanded by Searle who divided Speech Acts into Direct and Indirect Speech Acts.

**KEYWORDS:** Indirect Speech, Novels, functional perspective, Speech Act theory

### INTRODUCTION

The present study provides introduction and background to the research that will begin in the third study. This study begins with the fundamental notion of 'Pragmatics' and its development till date. 'The Speech Act Theory' introduced by J.L. Austin and expanded by J.Searle will be discussed in detail. Direct and Indirect Speech Acts will be the major focus. Various

conversational principles will be explained. Relevant terms like Sentence and Utterance, Context, Deixis, Implicature, Presuppositions, Turn taking and Adjacency pairs, Cohesion and Coherence etc. will be introduced briefly. Some significant issues related with the present research such as immigration, identity, Diaspora, code mixing and code switching, multiculturalism etc. will be explicated. Thus, an attempt will be made to build a theoretical background to the present research.

### **PRAGMATICS: ITS DEVELOPMENT**

The first Pragmatic approach to Linguistics is evident in the late sixties and early seventies in the works of Ross, Lakoff and others. In the theory of sense and reference which was introduced by Frege in his article 'Funktion and Begriff' (1891) and extended in his work 'Ubersinn and Bedeutung' (1892) the seeds of Pragmatics can be traced.

Charles William Morris (1903), in his writing on the General Theory of signs explains syntactic, semantic and pragmatic relations of linguistics and non-linguistic signs. He asserts that language may be governed by syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules. Morris attempted to define Pragmatics as,

....the study of the relation of signs to interpreters

(1938:6).

It was Bloomfield who related Linguistics with phonetics, phonemes and moreover morphophonemics. In the later 1950s, Chomsky posed the importance of Syntax in language study. But he too neglected 'meaning'. In the earlier 1960s, Katz and his collaborators attempted to include meaning in a formal linguistic theory. Lakoff tried to establish a link of Syntax with the study of language use. Though, Linguistics was dominated by American scholars, independent thinkers like Firth, who insisted on the situational study of meaning and Halliday who propounded comprehensive social Theory of language are equally important. Apart from Ross and Lakoff, the more lasting influences on modern Pragmatics owes to Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975) and Leech (1983).

Reconsidering Chomsky, it was he who spoke about the importance of semantics in language study. Gradually, his successors were unable to exclude the fact that meaning varies according to

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its context. Thus, semantics gave way to Pragmatics. J.L .Austin (1911- 1960) introduced the Speech Act Theory and Searle expanded it. He proposed conditions for producing felicitous utterance. He categorized the Speech Acts in to five major classes and it was he who divided Speech Acts in to Direct & Indirect Speech Acts. H.P. Grice introduced in detail the cooperative principle.

According to Leech (1983:04) “Grammar and Pragmatics are complementary domains within linguistics”. Language cannot be understood without studying these domains and the interaction between them. Pragmatics also can be distinguished from other interdisciplinary fields of investigation such as neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. Each of these fields has its own limitation. They are bound to certain aspects of human life, whereas Pragmatics is concerned with the full complexity of linguistic behaviour.

Language cannot be understood thoroughly by ignoring Pragmatics that deals with use of language in communication. Jacob Mey describes the emergence of Pragmatics as,

... a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular syntax) to the paradigm of the language user.

(2001:04)

Unlike structuralism, the main focus of Pragmatics is the process of language production and its producers not in the end product language. The seeds of the definition of Pragmatics can be found in Chomsky’s famous terms, ‘performance’ that is the way the utterer uses language and ‘competence’ that is related with the utterer’s knowledge of the language and its rules. Grammar and Pragmatics can be well distinguished in the words of Katz, who says,

Grammars are theories about the structure of sentence types ... Pragmatic theories in contrast ... Explicate the reasoning of speakers and hearers.

(1977: 19)

Levinson stresses on the importance of context and considers Pragmatics as,

... the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language.

(1983:09)

Context is essential to reach to the exact meaning of the utterance. Pragmatics operates when the utterance imply something more or different than what is said. Considering all the various views stated above, Mey defines Pragmatics in these words:

Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society.

(2001:06)

Regarding the importance of Pragmatics, Mey asserts,

Pragmatics is needed if we want a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behaviour.

(2001:12)

‘Context’ plays a vital role in determining the illocutionary force of the utterance. Context is the most important pragmatic concept. Pragmatics explains how the interpretation varies in different contexts. Any utterance is meaningless if not placed in its human context. As per the opinion of Bilmes, the context is the social setting in which the Speech event takes place. Thus, the chief task of Pragmatics is to explain the illocutionary force of certain utterance and its consequence in the given situation of context. Studying only the structure of language would be incomplete without the consideration of language used by human beings in a particular context. It is worth noting that language is important because it is applied by interlocutors as a means of communication. There may be varieties of utterance with varieties of interpretations which can be understood only with the help of Pragmatics. The dictionary meaning of Pragmatics is – the study of the way in which language is used to express what somebody really means in particular situations, especially when the actual words used may appear to mean something different

(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: 2005:1182 ). Hence, a real base of Pragmatics is practical and not theoretical.

## **SPEECH ACTS**

Along with our physical and mental activities we also perform 'linguistic activities', such as, asking, stating, requesting, ordering, promising etc. These linguistic activities are 'Speech Acts'.

Prior to Austin (1911-1960) language was considered simply as a combination of 'sound and meaning' or 'set of correct sentences'. Language was studied through the glass of a scientist and not of a humanist. The structural or formal point of view was the focal point in language study. The basic purpose of language, that it is used for communication was somehow ignored. A linguistic act is included in each and every linguistic communication.

It was J.L. Austin who diverted the approach of philosophers towards language from the structural point of view to the functional view point. He asserted that language is used for performing Actions. Austin (1962) defined Speech Acts as, "the act of uttering a certain sentence in a given context for determined purpose, i.e. an act of communication." Some other definitions of Speech Acts are: ...

Speaking a language is performing speech acts, as making statements giving commands, asking questions, making promises and so on...

(Searle 1969:16)

Speech acts are actions performed via utterances.

(Yul G. 1996:47)

Utterances are speech acts.

(Thorat A. 2002:25)

A sentence is studied by grammarians from grammatical point of view. The rules of Syntax and Semantics can be studied on the basis of a sentence. For grammarians the structure of sentence is more important than its function. Any example can be cited to explain a certain type of sentence

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by grammarians. To explain the SVO (subject, verb, and object) structure of declarative sentence in general the following example may be cited,

I write a thesis.

S+V+O

Though, the above sentence satisfies the essential rules of assertive sentence, yet practically, it bears little communicative value. In day to day life, we do not utter any sentence simply to follow the grammatical rules but we mean something while uttering it. A sentence is 'context free', whereas an utterance is 'context bound'. Without the knowledge of context one cannot identify what the utterance mean. An utterance is used for communicative purpose. An utterance is not the exposition of grammatical rules but it is the exposition of intended meaning. The degree of intended meaning varies in different context or situations. Therefore, in the words of NozarNiazi,

... an utterance is a unit of communication whose significance or value is established by its contextual situation...

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... an utterance is a unit of communication whose significance or value is established by its contextual situation... (2004:13)

Thus, an utterance, "Its three o'clock." will have different value and significance depending upon speaker, hearer and situation. If the utterer is a friend, it will cause an immediate reaction of the other friends who have planned to go for watching afternoon movie. If the utterer is an invigilator, the students appearing in the exam will be alerted of time to hear the same utterance.

### **AUSTIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO SPEECH ACT THEORY**

Right from ancient philosophers such as Plato, St. Augustine till modern philosophers, such as, Russel, Wittgenstein, Carnap Ryle, Quine, Strawson an attempt was being made to link logic with language. It was their strict dogmatic notion that language is a matter of logic i.e. only that language is correct which uses logic. The other uses of language were considered metaphysical, emotional or simply bad. Thus, logic was considered most essential to language. On the other hand, J.L. Austin the 'father of the Speech Act Theory' lays emphasis on the study of the way the people use language for communication. J. L. Austin's 'William James lectures', delivered at Harvard in 1955, were posthumously published under the title *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). It is the study of the way people use language for communication. The central focus of the study is language user's linguistic knowledge of the world. In the words of J. Lyons,

It is a theory of saying as doing within the frame work of social institutions and conversations.

(1981:175)

The grammarians and philosophers insisted that 'a statement (of fact) ought to be verifiable'. As a consequence, many statements were considered pseudo-statements. Obviously as KANT first argued many grammatically well written statements were shown to be strictly nonsense, and the discovery of such types of sentences went on. Austin observed that some verbs merely describe facts or situations. They were used to produce true or false 'statements' about certain situations. Austin called such stating (describing) verbs as 'constatives'. The institutionalised Speech Act verbs such as 'to baptize', 'to sentence', 'to dub' etc. seem to perform some act rather than merely describing facts or producing true or false statements. Austin called 'per formatives' to such types of verbs. In the philosophy of language it was indeed a novel idea to consider the

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issuance of the utterance as the performance of an action. It became clear that uttering is not merely saying something but performing something (action). We do something with words when we utter them. Some other kinds that Austin suggests for per formatives are such as contractual ('I bet'), declaratory ('I declare') or operative (used by lawyers). After explaining the notion, that is, to say something is to do something, Austin suggested some conditions to consider performance to be 'felicitous' (successful). He called these conditions as felicity conditions. They are:

1. 'There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect ...'(P:26)
2. The procedure must be executed by all participants both i) correctly and ii) completely (P:15)
3. Having certain thoughts or feelings or intentions (P: 15)

According to Austin utterances which fulfil felicity conditions are called felicitous and those which do not fulfil those conditions are called infelicitous (or unhappy). Austin says that if the feelings, thoughts and intentions do not conform to the utterance (per formative) or no accepted procedure followed, or the procedure was falsely or incompletely executed then such type of utterance should not be defined as per formative utterance. For example, praising or sympathizing with others only superficially and not whole heartedly or saying something exactly opposite to what one does not believe or think, like to flatter somebody and even the utterance of promising, betting or declaring something, when one does not intend to do so. For instance, If A and B are friends and A tells B, "Pay the fine of 100 Rs. for not attending the class" then this utterance will not be considered felicitous as A is not the teacher or authorised person. In this case first condition will not be fulfilled. Similarly, if A is the authorized speaker but B is not his student then again it will be infelicitous as the act will not fulfil the second condition (due to only one sided communication). In the same manner if a thief tells a man, "If you give me your money, I will count it for you", obviously his intention behind this utterance is not sincere and his only purpose is to steal the money. The act will be infelicitous as it violets the third condition.

## SEARLE'S CONTRIBUTION

Searle, being Austin's follower, too emphasizes that 'speaking a language is performing Speech Acts'. According to him,

Speaking a language is engaging in a rule governed form of behaviour

(Searle 1969:16)

Searle introduces the principle of expressibility, that is the principle that whatever can be meant can be said. Asking and responding correspond to each other generally. However, the principle of expressibility does not imply the possibility of finding or inventing the exact form of expression to produce the intended effect/s in hearer/s. This principle does not imply that whatever can be said will be always understood or recognized by others. Speech Act, the basic unit of communication, includes the connection between the notions of Speech Acts, what the speaker means, what the uttered sentence means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are.

According to Searle a speaker performs minimum three kinds of acts;

- a. Uttering words (morphemes, sentences) = performing utterance Act.
- b. Referring and predicating = performing propositional acts
- c. Stating, questioning, commanding, promising etc. = performing illocutionary acts.

Along with these acts Searle adds Austin's notion of perlocutionary act that is,

"...the notion of the consequences or effects such acts has on the actions, thoughts or beliefs etc.  
of hearers".

Searle made a distinction between two major types of rules to which he calls constitutive and regulative rules. Regulative rules, according to Searle, regulate a pre-existing activity, whereas constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) an 'activity' which exists due to these rules, for e.g. the activity of playing football is constituted by acting in accordance with these (constitutive) rules. Football and the rules of playing football cannot be separated. Regulative

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rules can be ‘paraphrased’ as imperatives, having the form of ‘Do x’ or ‘If Y do X’. Along with this form the constitutive rule also has the form ‘X counts as Y’. For e.g. in the case of ‘chess’ game, constitutive rules constitute or make up the game of chess that is the existence of game becomes impossible without these constitutive rules. “Regulative rules, by contrast regulate the behaviour of the players in the game”. Any changes in regulative rule do not change the nature of the game itself. ‘Chess’ can be played as per the constitutive rules; however the way the game is played by each player differs than each other. This handling of the game is dealt with regulative rules. Similarly, regarding Speech Acts, if the example of promise is taken, the constitutive rules deal with the definition of ‘promise’ that is in the words of Searle, “promise is uttered and accepted as creating an obligation from the promise to promise,” whereas regulative rules deal with ‘how are promises dealt with in an actual social context’. Promises should not be repeated and made about those things or events that are surely going to take place in the future. These are regulative rules that regulate the behaviour of promise and promise.

## **CONCLUSION**

The novelists of the selected novels are immigrant hence, a comparison between India and other countries will certainly come out in the light of the present study. The comparison and contrast between Indians, NRIs and the English will be inherently brought forward in the process of the analysis. Thus, an implicit comparison of cultural, social, political etc. difference between India and other countries will be made wherever observed. However, the present study has certain limitations. The focal point of the study is limited to Indirect Speech Acts found only in the selected novels, Therefore, Direct Speech Acts, Five major speech acts, the constituents of speech acts, conversational principles etc. will be paid only occasional attention as per their relevance and significance. Indirect Speech Acts found in various forms such as questions, figures of speech, illocutionary forces, emphatic statements, circumlocution hedging and denial etc. will be analysed in detail. The present study does not include the comparison between the works of Immigrant writers and the works of Indian writers in English or that of English writers. It has to be noted that excess use of Indirect Speech Acts will lead to ambiguity and obscurity in life. The simplicity of language may be lost due to its extreme use.

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