



## **J. L. AUSTINS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO SPEECH ACT THEORY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Semantics and Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies the meaning communicated through language. Pragmatics studies the process by which native users of a language use native language. Semantics studies the meaning of a sentence and pragmatics studies the meaning in the context sentence is made. Pragmatics is the newer area of language study in linguists. The important development in the pragmatics is the origin of speech act theory. J. L. Austin is the originator of the Speech act theory. According to J. L. Austin all utterances are some type of speech act. People not only produce utterances to convey their feelings but also perform actions in between their speech. Even a simple utterance such as 'Violets are blue' might be regarded as a special type of act namely the act of making a statement. This overall approach to language study is known as 'speech act theory'. This speech act theory argues that when we use language we perform certain actions.*

#### **SPEECH ACT THEORY:-**

Speech act theory is originally invented and developed by the J.L Austin in the 1930s. He propounded it in a series of lectures that he gave at Harvard in 1955. These were published posthumously under the title 'How to do things with Words' in 1962. This approach is later developed by the J.R Searle. Austin derived his speech act theory from the basic notion that language is used to perform actions.

J. L. Austin defines speech act as follows,



*'the act of uttering a certain sentence in a given context for a determined purpose i. e. an act of communication.*

G. Yule defines speech act as follows,

*'Speech act are actions performed via utterances'*

Searle defines speech act as follows,

*'speaking a language is performing speech act , act such as making statements, giving commands, making promise and so on'.*

From the above definitions, we can conclude that an utterance is a speech act . When a speaker under appropriate circumstances produces an utterance depending on the context in which the utterance is used. The speaker can perform actions such as stating a fact or opinion, confirming or denying something, making a prediction a promise, a request and offer, issuing an order. People use language not to play with words but with certain intentions and purpose in mind. When people use language they perform actions with their words.

### **Cultural Specific Speech Act:-**

Many speech acts are cultural specific speech act. People from different cultural background apply different modes of greetings. It includes making statements, asking questions and issuing commands. In many cultures people greet by inquiring about persons health. Thus people from different cultures use different linguistics conventions for the performance of speech act.

### **J. L. Austins Speech Act Theory:-**

The Oxford Philosopher J. L Austin was the originator of the term 'Speech Act Theory'. He developed his theory from the basic notion that language is used to perform actions. Speech act theory is a theory of language use. Which is basically concerned with, how people use language for the purpose of communication. It studies the linguistic knowledge of language users. It also studies the user's knowledge about the world and relation between interlocutors.

Austin propounded his theory of speech act in a set of lectures published as 'How to do things with words'. Austin noticed that many sentences have the same structure as statements such as 'I name this boy Sachin lacked the truth value which is an essential property of statements. This type of sentences did not report anything and neither true or false and when



uttered under particular circumstances they would perform certain actions. He named these sentences Performatives.

Constatives only inform. These types of sentences are called constatives. Further Austin says that performatives would perform actions only if they fulfill certain conditions he named these conditions as 'Felicity conditions'. Utterances which will fulfill felicity conditions are called felicitous and those which fail to fulfill are called infelicitous

Eventually Austin came up with the idea that in producing an utterance speaker performs three act simultaneously.

### 1] Locutionary Speech Act:-

### 2] Illocutionary Speech Act:-

### 3] Perlocutionary Speech Act:-

#### 1] Locutionary Speech Act:-

The locutionary speech act is the act of uttering a certain sentence of a language with a definite 'sense' and 'reference'

#### 2] Illocutionary Speech Act:-

The illocutionary speech act is the speech act performed in uttering a sentence in a context.

#### 3] Perlocutionary Speech Act:-

Perlocutionary speech act is the causing of a change or creating an effect in the mind of the hearer as a result of producing an utterance.

At the end of 'How to do things with words' Austin proposes a classification of speech act into five general classes these are as follows.

#### 1] Verdictives Speech Act: -

Verdictives are typified by the giving of a verdict by a judge, arbitrator, umpire. When a Judge declares an accused guilty, he uses a Verdictive Speech Act.



## 2] Commisives Speech Act :

Commissives Speech Act is typified by promising or otherwise undertaking and they commit the speaker to a course of future action. When somebody says I hereby bequeath. He uses the Commissive Speech Act.

## 3] Exercitives Speech Act:-

Exercitives Speech Act is the exercising of powers, right or influence. When, the Priest pronounce a man and woman as a husband and wife. He uses the Exercitive Speech Act.

## 4] Behabitives Speech Act:

Behabitives Speech Act is a miscellaneous group having to do with attitudes and social behavior such as apologizing, congratulating, and commanding.

## 5] Expositives Speech Act:

Expositives Speech Act means the use of fit words into the course of an argument of conversation. In this way, J. L. Austin argued about speech act theory in his book entitled 'How to do things with words' and propounded his theory of Speech Act .

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