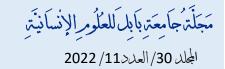# A Pragmatic Study of Speech Acts in Thoreau's *Inspiration*

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Abstract

This paper deals with identifying the speech act types in Henery David Thoreau's Inspiration. This study is basically qualitative as it tries to define the different categories of speech acts according to Searle's classification. representatives and declarative speech acts score the highest percentage of flouting i.e., 12 (44%). Expressive speech act signifies a considerable difference as it scores i.e., 2 (7%). For commissive speech acts, the level of its representation in Thoreau's Inspiration scores only one occurrence (3%). As each speech act score certain level of representation, directive speech acts could not be identified through Thoreau's Inspiration. The study tries to show one feature of Thoreau's poetry which is variety of speech act types that enables him to express abstract themes and conceptions. Whereas, the absences of directive speech acts indicate that the nature of themes and ideas expressed in Thoreau's Inspiration does not agree the nature of that speech act.

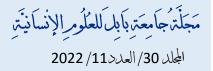Keywords: Searle; speech acts; commissive; declarative; expressive; assertive.

دراسة تداولية للأفعال الكلامية فِۡ قصيدة "الإلهام" لثوريا

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المستخلص

يتعامل هذا البحث مع تشخيص أنواع أفعال الكلام في قصيدة الالهام لهنري ديفيد ثوريا. تعد هذه الدراسة دراسة نوعية حيث أنها تحاول التثبت من كل أنواع أفعال الكلام الممكن ايجادها في القصيدة حسب تصنيف سيرل. سجل فعلا الكلام التوكيدي والتصريحي اعلى مستوى تمثيل يبلغ 12 (44%). بينما سجل الفعل الكلامي التعبيري فارقا محلوظا بمستوى تمثيل بلغ 2 (7%). اما بالنسبة لفعلي الكلام العمدي، فهو لم يسجل إلا تكرارا واحدا بنسبة تمثيل بلغت (3%). بينما سجل كل نوع من أفعال الكلام مستوى معينا من التمثيل، لا يوجد لفعل الكلام الإرشادي إذ إن غياب هذا الفعل يشير إلى أن طبيعة الأفكار التي وردت في قصيد الإلهام لثوريا التي لا تتوافق مع طبيعة فعل الكلام.

الكلمات الدالة: سيرل، أفعال الكلام، عمدي، تصريحي، تعبيري، توكيدي.

1. Introduction

The process of communication in everyday conversation is not a matter of linguistic knowledge only focusing on the grammatical structures and the words involved in speech production, but also attempting to perform actions via the words they utter. Such a phenomenon has been investigated in terms of the well-known theory entitled speech acts theory (henceforth, SAT). SAT explains how people can perform various actions via the words they utter. The British philosopher John Austin (1962) introduces this theory, therefore he is considered the founder of it.

When tracing the origin of the title Speech act, it has been estimated the translation of the German word "sprechackt" by Buhler (1934), represents the first step in the evolution journey of SAT. Linguists are not the only ones concerned with SAT but scholars from different disciplines are also interested in SAT [1,p726]. Psychologists, on one hand, have proposed that the speech act (henceforth SA) may be a prerequisite for the acquiring of language in general. literary critics, on the other hand, look at SAT as a useful tool for understanding the nature of literary genres. Philosophers apply SA notion to the status of ethical statements. While scholars of different disciplines function SAT to deal with aspects related to their field, linguists also see that those SAT notions are necessary to handle some problems in syntax, semantics, second language learning, and elsewhere. Speech acts (henceforth SAs) alongside presupposition and implicature are considered the core of pragmatics as a field [2,p226].
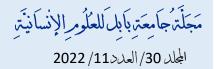
Austin is the pioneer of introducing SAT as a new approach for analyzing meaning. Austin presents a series of lectures that were published in a book entitled How to do things with words. Austin considers meaning as a relation between the intentions of the speaker or writer and the words and words which he utters. Such an idea represents the basis for the concept of acts. Austin (1962) mentions that when someone speaks, he is doing an act of some kind. It can be understood more clearly when the speaker utters a sentence, he exploits some linguistic conventions which he associates with his intentions to perform a certain linguistic act [3,p2]. People in everyday communication perform acts like apologizing, persuading, and suggesting, and these actions are performed with underlying communicative purposes. Thus, such actions are dependent on the intention of the speaker and what s/he wants to do with them rather than the literal meaning of the uttered words [4,p2].

By 1969, John Searle further developed Austin's version of SAT. Searle states that the speech act involves an element of intentionality which is a property of the mind. Such mental property is responsible for making an object of certain meaning in the world. Thus the speaker who gives a promise intends to make him/herself forced to do the future act [5,p102].

This study tries to answer the following question:
1. What category of speech acts is more frequently used in Thoreau's Inspiration?
2. What individual speech acts are more often used in Thoreau's Inspiration?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Components of the Speech Act

Austin theory starts with introducing a distinction of utterances into performative and constative and such distinction will be discussed in. Out of such a distinction, Austin concludes that a clear distinction could not be made between constatives and performatives as the utterances for describing, stating, or asserting are themselves acts performed in saying something [4,p64]. Therefore, he chooses to direct his efforts to analyze the acts into their logical components: the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary act [6,p8]. The first component is the locutionary act which is "the utterance of certain words in a certain construction and the utterance of them with a certain 'meaning". This means that locutionary acts convey their own literal or propositional meaning without any connection to the context. An example of a locution is that of a speaker telling another "Shoot her!" meaning by shoot 'shoot' and referring by her to 'her' [7,p55]. The locutionary act is also broken down into three acts: the phatic act, which refers to the act of producing mere noises or sounds; the phonetic act which indicates the act of producing sounds that are recognizable as words from a certain vocabulary and grammar; and the rhetoric act which conveys the act of using words to convey meanings.

The second element of the SA is the illocutionary act which refers to the act performed in saying the locution. This means that the illocutionary act represents the intended meaning by the speaker or as Austin laid it down "what was done". An utterance like "Is there any salt?" on the dinner table. Though it appears to be apprehended as a form of a question, it is actually functioned as a request to have some salt and such meaning could not be realized without depending on the context [4,p62].

Besides the previously mentioned components of the SA, a third one is referred to as the perlocutionary act. The perlocutionary act refers to the act by which the speaker elicits a certain response from the hearer, or in making an effect on the hearer, or in another word, the consequence of an illocutionary force, on the interlocutor. As an example, a speaker, through an utterance, may want the hearer to be convinced, persuaded, delighted, etc [6,p9].

Understanding the relationship between the components of SAs is a crucial issue to determine the identity of a SA. So that to achieve such an objective, there are two types of reading: aggregative and organic readings. According to the aggregative one, the SA is a sum of conceptually detachable components, i.e., the four-components of the SA (locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, and context) are independently intelligible components as each of them can be specified independently from the other. This makes eliciting locutionary meaning of a certain utterance is possible without any need to understand the illocutionary one of the utterance or the perlocutionary effect of the utterance and even the context where it is performed [8,p2].

The organic reading, on the other hand, proposes that each SA is a unity whose discernible components hang together conceptually: they are not independently intelligible. This makes specifying the sense and reference of an utterance an impossible task without understanding the function that the words playing within total SA in the speech act situation. Bronzo believes that organic could be the possible reading to

comprehend each SA situation and he provides in this respect Austin's conception of truth. Although truth, to many contemporary approaches, is a property of semantic entities which are the "truth- bearer" this makes them independently intelligible. But Austin believes that truth is a property of complete SAs performed in determinate SAs situations [Ibid].

The major difference between Austin's and Searle's SA classifications lies in assigning the illocutionary force of any utterance. So, according to Austin, assigning it depends on the speaker's intention whereas according to Searle, it is a product of the listener's interpretation [9,p22].

2.2. Searle Classifications of Speech Acts

Searle presents the most influential classifications of speech acts in pragmatics. He (ibid) explains the basic categories of illocutionary acts categorized on the basis of 'direction of fit' and what they express [10,p12-15].

1. Representatives: The point or goal of this class of speech acts is to "commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition" Representatives have a word-to-word direction of fit, i.e. the speaker fits his words to the world to express a belief through the established proposition. This class includes verbs such as assert, complain, state, affirm, report, conclude, etc.

Searle notes that this category contains most of Austin's expositives and verdictives, as they denote the same illocutionary point but different illocutionary forces. The simplest test for representatives is that they can be verified as true or false. In other words, they indicate what the speaker believes to be the case or not, as in the examples:

a. The earth is round.   b. Milton wrote religious poems.

2. Directives: The illocutionary point is to direct the hearer towards doing (or not doing) something; therefore, they designate a world-to-words direction of fit. The speaker wishes or wants the hearer to do (or not to do) something. Directives include verbs such as; ask, order, request, demand, advice, warn, etc. The speaker uses the following utterances to get someone else to do something:

a. Give me some water.

b. Don't touch that loose wire.

3. Commissives: They are speech acts in which the speaker is committed to some future course of action. The promiser attempts to make the world fit his words. The issuer of a promise intends to do something by uttering his words. Verbs denoting commissives are as such; promise, vow, commit, threaten, pledge, etc. In the following utterances, the speaker commits himself to a certain course of action:

a. I will be here tomorrow.   b. We will not do it again.

4. Expressives: Expressives are speech acts that express "the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content." In other words, they express the speaker's psychological state: pleasure, pain, like, dislike or sorrow, as clearly shown in the examples: a. I am so sorry. b. Congratulations!

They have no direction of fit in which a wide range of feelings and attitudes can be expressed through the propositional content. This class comprises verbs such as apologize, thank, congratulate, welcome …. etc.

5. Declarations: This class of illocutions brings into existence the state described in the proposition. They have both a words-to-world and a world-to-words direction of fit; therefore, they change the world via their utterance. There is no psychological state expressed by declaration. Verbs denoting declarations are: quit, nominate, appoint, declare, name …etc.

a. Judge: We find Joe guilty.

b. Priest: I now pronounce you husband and wife.

The assumption underlying those classification systems (Austin's and Searle's) is that they are all based on the correlation between form (of the verb) and function (of speech act). This means that a sentence type is first specified and then a speech act is assigned to it [11,p214].

2.3 Henery David Thoreau

Henery David Thoreau (1817-1862) is an American philosopher and poet and the writer of one of the most outstanding masterpieces in American literature, *Walden*. He was interested in classical Greek and Roman philosophy, ranging from the pre-Socratics through the Hellenistic schools. Cambridge Platonists like Emerson, Coleridge, and the German Idealists effects Thoreau's philosophy. Thoreau provides many philosophical contributions that includes an epistemology of embodied perception and a non-dualistic account of mental and material life. As a writer, Thoreau published only two books and many shorter essays. Although Thoreau thought of himself primarily as a poet during his early years, he wrote one of the flaming essays "Civil Disobedience," have influenced, among others, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King [12,p36].

3. Method
3.1. Procedures of Analysis

The method that is used to identify is qualitative to define the categories of speech act in Thoreau's *Inspiration*. Identifying each speech type is not something possible without listing the linguistic forms the that can imply certain speech act other than the other firstly. The second step in analysis of the selected texts includes counting the occurrences and percentage for each speech act type. Of course, the need for the last procedure in the process of analysis is merely to assist the quality of speech act that can be identified in the selected text as the obtained statics is descriptive. The last procedure in analysis of *Inspiration* is to compare the obtained results for each speech act type in order to defined the defining speech act of the selected text.

4. Results and Discussion

The goal of the current study is to categorize each speech acts that can be recognized in Thoreau's *Inspiration* and to count their occurrences. Each stanza of poem is examined by the researcher in order to identify every instance of each speaking act. The analysis's findings are shown in the table below.

Table1. Numbers and Frequency of Speech Act Types in Thoreau's Inspiration

No	Speech Act Category	Occurrence	Frequency of Speech Act %
1	Assertive	12	44
	Declarative	12	44
3	Commissive	1	3
4	Expressive	2	7
5	Directive	0	0
	Total	27	

This table illustrates that the total number of floutings of conversational maxims in both poems is 83. Maxim of quality scores the highest percentage of floutings with a total number of 33 (39.7%). Then follows the maxim of relevance with total number of occurrences, 14 (22.9%). Finally, the maxims of quantity and manner scores the lowest level of occurrence with and 12 (14%) and 10 (12%).

Table2. Numbers and Frequency of the most identified Speech Act Types in Thoreau's Inspiration

No	Speech Act Category	Occurrence	Frequency of Speech Act %
1	Assertive	12	44
2	Declarative	12	44

Table two introduce the most identified categories of speech acts as they score the highest level of representation in the poem. The reason for such high level of representation for these two categories may be ascribed to the poet's attempt to create his special world in which he can experience his transcendental emotion due to the nature of these two categories of speech acts which implies a dual relationship between the world and word.

Declarative is one of the defining speech act in Thoreau's *Inspiration*. This type of speech act involves creating a state or proposition that establish a relationship of two-way word to world and world to word as the following example:
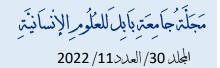Example (1)
The work we choose should be our own,
God should be our alone.

In these two lines discusses the relationship between the man and the God or the absolute. As the poet urges his addressee to be responsible for his choices and not be justified as God's choices. But this relationship pertains another possibility which is humans need for God's assistance as an implied proposition which did not mean taking away man's freewill.

The second defining speech act is assertive speech act in which the speaker tries to commit himself to the truth of certain belief or proposition. Thus, this type of speech act involves one direct relationship which is word-to-world as in the following example:

Example (2).
But now there comes unsought, unseen,
Some clear divine electuary,
And I, who had but sensual been,
Grow sensible, and as God is, am wary.

The poet in this example discusses the existence some divine power the overwhelm the speaker. So, he tries to commit himself to the existence of such a power. Of course, the existence of this power could not be perceived by the reader of these lines more than the speaker's claim of the existence of this power.

Although it shows a low level of representation with only one occurrence but commissive is still identified through Thoreau's *Inspiration.*in Commissive speech act, the speaker make him/herself as responsible for to some future course of action by trying to fit his/her word to worlds as in the following utterance:
Example (3)
With faith superior to hope,
More anxious to keep back than forward
Then will the verse forever wear--
Time cannot bend the line which Godhath writ.

In the previous example, the speaker tries to commit himself to a belief that will come to be true in future as he assures the immortality of verse that is written by God.

The fourth speech act that is identified throughout Thoreau's Inspiration is expressive speech act. The objective to use this type of speech act is to express feeling and emotion that could establish an emotional union with the reader. Therefore, the low level of representation for this category can explain that the poet is not interested in expressing what occupies his mind. Instead of that, the poet tries to create an atmosphere that is full of beliefs and propositions that represents the special world of the poet which he lives in and such a world involves not much space for emotions and feelings as the case with the beliefs that the poet intends to verify. So, the poet express his feeling in two utterances in the poem in order to provide some therapeutic effects on the mind of his readers as in the following example:
Example (4)
I will not doubt the love untold
Which not my worth nor want hasbought,
Which wooed me young, and woos meold,
And to this evening hath me brought.
In this example the poet provides a group of feeling 'love', 'doubt', 'worry' which reveals poet's evaluation to some abstract ideas.

5. Conclusions

This study tries to explore all categories of speech act that are classified by Searle in Thoreau's *Inspiration*. The analysis of Thoreau's *Inspiration* reveals that the text of the poem involves four types of speech act of Searle's classification which they are: assertive, declarative, commissive, and expressive. As for directive, the absence of this

type can be attributed to the incompatibility of the nature of speech act and the nature of the poem.

27 occurrences for the four identified types of speech are counted through the poem. The lead in terms of the number of occurrences is the share of representatives and declarative as they score i.e.,12 (44%) and 12 (44%) respectively. Expressives and commissives are also identified but with low level of representation that is about 2 (7%) and 1 (3%) respectively. The study concludes that Thoreau's Inspiration is characterized by variety of speech act s types. Thus, the variety of speech act types endows Inspiration with a sophisticated style.

Both representatives and declaratives are functioned to create an atmosphere that makes the reader to live the experience that the poet experiences as tries a great deal of transcendental emotions which drive him to transcendence this materialistic world.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
There are no conflicts of interest

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