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## A Study of Speech Acts Used in Baby Songs

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### ABSTRACT

Speech act theory is one the most important theories in linguistics in general and pragmatics in particular. The first part of the research is concerned with the theoretical background of speech acts while the second part is concerned with data analysis and conclusions then the references used in this research.

The current study deals with the theory of speech acts that has been proposed by Austin and developed by Searle. The study focuses on the use of speech acts through baby songs. It is an Analysis of macro and auxiliary speech acts which is presented by van djik. In this study, six famous baby songs are utilized to be the data of analysis and finally Grice maxims are tackled in this study.

**Key words:** pragmatics, speech act theory, macro speech acts, auxiliary speech acts and baby songs .

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## دراسة أفعال الكلام المستخدمة في اغاني الاطفال

امل صباح احمد

مديرة التربية في محافظة كركوك

ثانوية بريج السفلى المختلطة

### المستخلص

ان نظرية أفعال الكلام هي واحدة من اهم النظريات في علم اللغة بشكل عام و في علم اللغة التداولي بشكل خاص. يتناول الجزء الاول من البحث مفهوم نظرية أفعال الكلام و تقسيماته التي جاء بها سيرل ويتناول الجزء الثاني منه تحليل البيانات و النتائج التي توصل إليها البحث بالإضافة إلى المصادر المستخدمة في البحث.

تركز الدراسة على افعال الكلام التي جاء بها اوستن و طورها سيرل. تهتم الدراسة بأفعال الكلام المستخدمة في أغاني الاطفال و قد قسمت هذه الافعال الى أفعال رئيسية وهي ما جاء به سيرل و افعال ثانوية و هي التي قدمها فان دايك و تمت الإشارة أيضاً إلى المبادئ التي قدمها غرايس. يتناول البحث اكثر 6 اغاني مشهورة للاطفال و يحللها حسب النظرية المشار إليها.

**الكلمات الدالة:** علم اللغة التداولية، نظرية افعال الكلام، افعال الكلام الرئيسية، أفعال الكلام الثانوية واغاني الأطفال

### 1. SPEECH ACTS THEORY: OVERVIEW

Speech act theory is a great Pragmatic phenomenon is firstly introduced by Austin. Yule (2010) points out that speech act can be simply explained as an action which is achieved by a speaker through words. Thus, in an utterance like:

- **Ann: I will carry this baggage.**

**Liz: Leave it now. I will help you later.**

one can notice that Liz does not only mention these words, but she commits herself to achieve the act of helping for Ann and that what is meant by speech acts. Yule also explains that the speech acts are used to refer to certain actions as warning, stating, requesting, or declaring.

As a matter of fact, speech act theory is directed to portrait the role of words, the role of utterance in accordance to the speaker and listener behaviour in achieving the communication (Crystal, 2011).

Speech act theory, developed by Searle, expands upon Austin's taxonomy of speech" acts by introducing a new set of felicity conditions" Searle (1969) cited in Al Darraji .(2023)

Returning to an earlier point, Thomas(1995: 51) thinks of some terms with regard to speech act as he claims that speech act as a term has a tendency to imply a sense of illocutionary act, thus many terms are used to mean speech act as: illocutionary force and pragmatic force and sometimes only force. Griffiths(2006) illustrates that a speech act is simply a basic unit of linguistic interaction, like, tell, warn, decide an appointment, greet and so on. All these are forms of speech acts. Then Griffiths promotes that the study of speech act makes use of semantics as there are a lot of speech acts that their meaning must be understood. In other words, there are many speech acts as (request, warn, promise, thank, assert... etc). Actually, the understanding of their meaning is very important in order to be discriminated and well understood.

Concerning the interrelationship between speech act as a pragmatic unit and semantics, Bussmann (1999) claims that for anyone to be aware of the intended speech act, he firstly, must be aware of its meaning. In other words, communication cannot be successful without good interpretation of the meaning.

It is worthy mentioning that there are three subdivisions with regard to speech acts and these elements are :

1. *Locutionary act*: it is simply the utterance it self. The utterance meaning and reference. It is the literal presence of the words. In other words, it is refer to the words themselves.
2. *Illocutionary act*: it is the act that is actually achieved by the speaker through the utterance. It is the intended action in the suitable situation. Thus if someone says:

**- I warn you of that yard, it is full with insects.**

The speaker here produces the act of warning and that is simply what is meant by illocutionary act. It is the purpose of the utterance.

3. *Perlocutionary act*: it is the effect of the utterance. It is the strength of the utterance which leads the hearer to interact with a speech act. Thus in advertising for example:

**- This detergent is the best choice for your clothes.**

The effect of this utterance is that the hearer must be persuaded in order to buy this detergent (Cruse, 2006:167).

## **2 .SEARLE'S CLASSIFICATION**

As cited in Huang (2007:105) Searle presents an accurate classification of speech acts and he explains them on the part of speaker – hearer consideration as follows:

**1.Representatives (assertive)** are those speech acts which require the speaker to tell the truth and they are truth-value. Assertives deal with the speaker's belief and his style of telling the truth for people. This category includes many verbs that convey the sense of assertion as (claim, assert, conclude, state, illustrate.. etc). In this category also the speaker draws a line between the world and his words so he must tell the truth or the real situations in the world.

**- The children like eating sweets, but they are bad for their health.**

The above example shows the reality of the bad impact of sweets for children even if they like it. They are unhealthy food for them.

**2. Directives**, as their name suggests, directive speech act is that act which presented by the speaker and it implies an attempt to get the hearer to do the action. Thus they are directed by the speaker to the hearer. Warning, requesting, command and advising all are forms of directives.

**- Switch it off.**

**- Don't share your shaving bag with others.**

**- Could you hand me those cards?**

**- Be careful when you receive links.**

**3. Comissives** any speech act that commits the speaker to do the act is labeled within this category. Comissives, in fact, imply a sense of commission for doing a future act by the speaker. The speech act of promising is the most famous one in this category. Note the following example:

**- I promise that I will visit you next week.**

The speaker commits himself to the action of visiting next week.

*offering, refusing,* and threatening are also labeled as speech acts in this category.

**- Shall I make you a cup of coffee.**

**4. Expressives** ,these types of speech acts are concerned with psychological attitudes of the speaker as they allow speakers to express their feelings if the are happy, sad, love, hate...*etc.*

**- I am so happy to tell you that I win the race.**

**- Wow it is really a very beautiful dress.**

5. **Declaratives**, refer to the speech acts that carry the sense of changing from one state to another. Declaring war, joining a new job, starting a new year in a study and any change of affairs (ibid:107).

### **3. AUXILIARY SPEECH ACTS**

As stated previously that Searle (1969) divides speech acts into five categories and they are called as (Macro) speech acts in order to be distinguished from the second type which is auxiliary speech acts. As a matter of fact, these speech acts can not stand by themselves. They, in fact, depend on or relate to those ones presented by Searle in this sense they are called 'auxiliary.' These speech acts are named as auxiliary because of their role which is not crucial to imply the major communicative message, as the major Speech acts of Searle.

Van Dijk (1977) puts in the consideration eight auxiliary speech acts and he names them as: "justification, explanation, addition, conclusion, contradiction, explication, correction and condition."

#### **3.1 Justifying**

Language users sometimes deal with different expressions and they use one sentence to be like a motivation for the other. They use one sentence to be the crucial cause for achieving the other. The following sentences are examples of justifying speech act:

**- I am so depressed. Let's go camping.**

**- She is very weak. You must see a doctor.**

**- Could I have your car. My car is broken.**

The first speech act ( I am so depressed) is the reason for the next(Let's go camping). The second example (she is very weak) is the reason for the next which is seeing a doctor. And finally the speaker tries to borrow the car because his car is broken.

#### **3.2 Explaining**

It simply means that one speech act implies an explanation for another. Thus the next speech explains the former. This speech act is found to ease the understanding of the utterance in order to achieve successful communication.

- **You should be confident enough. Confidence brings the strength.**

This example implies a piece of advice. The speaker advises the hearer to be confident as being confident means you are strong. Thus the speech act of explanation is not merely a matter of adding. Also it is not only a matter of cause and result. Explanation is used to explain and interpret the previous speech act (ibid:102).

### **3.3 Adding**

Van dijk(1977: 211) notes that adding is simply used to refer to those speech acts that imply the sense of the speaker needs to add a new idea for the first one.

The following sentences are examples of adding speech act:

- **Marry didn't attend the lecture. And her teacher thought that she was ill.**

Harry receive an award. And he expresses his happiness.

### **3.4 Concluding**

Van dijk (1977: 208) notes that there are various types of speech acts that work as conclusions for other speech acts which work as premise. They simply refer to the obtained ideas that can be understood from the other speech acts.

- **She wins the award in designing. She is a very clever girl.**
- **She seems so pale. She suffers from Anemia.**

The second clauses work as conclusions for the first ones. Firstly, the girl wins the award and that can give a conclusion that she works hard. Thus she is a clever girl. Secondly, through meeting one girl seems pale and their colleagues says that she suffers from Anemia.

### **3.5 Contradicting**

As a matter of fact, the speech act of contradiction refers to the utterance that gives a meaning or impact of denying. Denying of certain assumptions or gist of other utterances (van dijk, 1977:212).

- **He is a very handsome boy. But he is very rude too.**
- **It is a very nice weather. But I am so tired and I can't drive now.**

Thus, though he is a handsome boy but he contradicts this good property as he is rude with others. . The second clause e is the same, though the weather is nice, the speaker can't go outside as he is tired.

### **3.6 Explicating**

In explicating, the utterance seems so clear and real. It simply means that the utterance is followed by another one that explains and elaborates the previous speech act. This type of speech act is mentioned for a purpose of obviousness (van Dijk, 1980:61). Repetition and reinforcement are forms of explication. The following examples will clarify the meaning:

- **She is an elegant woman. She is really elegant.**
- **That is the best choice don't be worry. This is my opinion.**

### **3.7 Correcting**

In correcting speech act the speaker presents one utterance to check the truth of another. The main important word used in this type is 'or'

- **Would you like to leave now? Or you prefer next week?** (ibid,1977: 103)
- **Will you apply for a job.? Or you prefer to continue with study?**

### **3.8 Conditioning**

It simply refers to the speech act that is mentioned to illustrate whether the other speech act follows the essential conditions to be successful. Thus, one speech act cannot be done without the conditions of the next one.

- **This car is better for you to buy. If you want an advice.**
- **You can visit him tomorrow. If you want to apologize.** (van Dijk,1977)

## **4. FELICITY CONDITIONS OF SPEECH ACTS**

In the speech act theory, there is a very important term called Felicity conditions. They simply imply the conditions in speech act that should be followed by both the speaker and the hearer along with the context in which the speech is uttered. In applying these conditions, the speech act will be carried out successfully (Hogan, 2001).

Wardhaugh (2006) summarizes the felicity conditions as follows :

**Firstly**, a conventional procedure must be found thus the speaker can achieve what is to be done. **Secondly**, the participants have to execute the procedure accurately and

complete it. **Thirdly**, there are certain feelings, thoughts and intentions embodied in all parts.

Constatives can be notified whether they are true or false. Performatives can be described in terms of happy or unhappy. As a matter of fact, there is a certain criterion for happiness (there are certain points that illustrates if a specific speech act can be judged as felicitous or infelicitous. There is a connection between the speech and the conditions in which it is performed (Holtgraves, 2007) .

## **5.DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS**

In talking about speech act theory, Searle (1975) sheds a light on the classification of speech acts as direct and indirect. Direct speech act refers to that kind of speech in which the utterance form and the intended aim are the same. In other words, the interrogation implies a sense of question. Declarations implies a sense of stating and so on. Indirect speech act on the other hand refers to the speech act in which the intended meaning is different from the utterance form and it doesn't function as the form of the utterance suggests. The indirect speech act requires a shared knowledge between speaker and hearer. And this knowledge must be of linguistic and non-linguistic matters. In this sense, if the sentence form is question and its meaning is a request as in the example below:

- **Can you hold these dishes?**

Though the form is question, but the sentence is intended for a request purpose as the speaker seeks to have the dishes held. The reason behind this use of indirect is for the purpose of politeness. (ibid)

Indirect speech acts imply that there is an indirect relationship between the structure and the function of the utterance. It is worthy mentioning that the indirect speech act is used for the purpose of politeness. And that is justified as the speaker wants to leave a distance for the hearer to accept or refuse the idea (Black, 2006).

## **6. GRICE MAXIMS**

Grice (1975) proposes his principles and he simply names it as Cooperative Principle, in which he presents four maxims:

**The maxim of quantity**, in which the speaker must use an adequate number of words, not too much words and not too few words.

**The maxim of quality**, in which the speaker must say only what he knows exactly is real.



**The maxim of manner**, in which the speaker must be clear and he must avoid using ambiguous expressions.

**The maxim of relevance**, in which the speaker must present a related idea. In other words, his speech must be related only to the topic that he talks about.

## **7. DATA ANALYSIS**

In this section, some famous baby songs are mentioned to be the data of analysis. The macro and auxiliary speech acts will be identified in these songs .

### **Song (1)**

"The wheels on the bus go round and round

Round and round

Round and round

The wheels on the bus go round and round

All through the town

The doors on the bus go open and shut

Open and shut

Open and shut

The doors on the bus go open and shut

All through the town

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish

Swish, swish, swish

Swish, swish, swish

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish

All through the town"

### **Analysis**

Firstly, the speech act of stating is noticed in the first line " The wheels on the bus go round and round "as the speaker states that they spend their time outside walking in

the town. Repetition is used many times to give an emphasis. And that means explicating speech act is used highly in the song.

Secondly, in the line " **The doors on the bus go open and shut**", the speaker tries to describe the state of the doors. Thus the speech of describing is actually used here. Repetition is used again in the words " Open and shut " for a sake of emphasis.

With regard to the line" The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish", a speech act of stating is used here.nThe utterance "All through the town" implies a sense of explicating speech act. A speech act of adding is used also as it is embodied by the use of *and* many times. Cooperative principle, the quantity is flouted here through using repetition in the whole song.

### Song (2)

"I jump in the bathtub, it's time to get all clean

I'll be the cleanest kid you've ever seen!

The soap and the bubbles are filling up the tub,

So I'll jump in the water and scrub, scrub, scrub!

Wash my hair, do do do do do do

Wash my hair, do do do do do do

Wash my hair, do do do do do do

Wash my hair!

Wash my face do do do do do do

Wash my face do do do do do do

Wash my face do do do do do do

Wash my face"!

### Analysis

In talking about macro speech acts, the speech act of declaring is used in the first line. As the speaker declares that he jumps in the bathtub. Concerning the auxiliary speech acts, the speech act of explaining is embodied in the first line"I jump in the bathtub, it's time to get all clean"

The second utterance it's time to... is a form of explaining speech act!

In the second line, the commissive speech act is noticed and it is promising " I'll be the cleanest kid you've ever seen "as the kid promises that he will be the cleanest kid one can see.

The speech act of describing is used again in the line "The soap and the bubbles are filling up the tub "

Then a speech act of stating is highly embodied through the use of repetition which can also refer to the speech act of explicating.

Maxims flouting, the maxim of quality is flouted through the use of utterance "The soap and the bubbles are filling up the tub" as the speaker says *are filling* and this is incompatible to (saying the truth).

### **Song (3)**

"When you see something you want

What's the magic word?

Please, please, please

When you get something you want

What's the magic word?

Thank you, thank you, thank you

Please and thank you, please and thank you

These are the nice words you can say

Please and thank you, please and thank you

Say them every day"

### **Analysis**

Firstly, asking speech act is used. Asking is considered as a directive speech act, repetition of the word please is used also to imply a meaning of explicating speech act.

The same words can be said with regard to to the second part of thank you word. "Please and thank you, please and thank you , These are the nice words you can say" the speech act of explaining is noticed here as the speaker explains that they are the nice words.

Finally, the directive speech of commanding is used in the expression "say them every day" Maxims flouting, one can notice that the maxim of manner is flouted through the use of the word (magic) which is ambiguous here.

**Song (4)**

"Are we there yet? Not yet

It so much fun

To drive so far

Let's look outside and enjoy the pretty ride

Driving in the car.

Let's play a game

Look at where we are

Won't you look with me and tell me what you see

Driving in the car"

**Analysis**

The speech act of questioning is used in the first utterance and it is classified as directive speech act. Then the declarative speech act of describing is used in the expression (it so much fun). And there is a very important note here if this utterance is taken alone it can be considered as declarative but if one completes hearing the song he will understand that it is an advice. As the singer continues saying to drive so far. Though the form is declarative but it indirectly works as advising to driving so far. Then the directive speech act of suggesting is used in the expression ( let's look.. Pretty ride) and in the utterance (let's play).

The directive speech act of commanding is noticed in (look at) then the speech act of requesting in (won't you... see) and this is also an indirect speech act.

**Song (5)**

"Rain, rain, go away.

Come again another day.

Sister wants to play.

Rain, rain, go away.

Rain, rain, go away.

Come again another day.

Baby wants to play.

Rain, rain, go away"

### **Analysis**

The song is opened with a speech act of commanding for rain to stop (and it is a directive speech act). The second utterance imply a sense of commanding along with stating. The rain is required to come later as children want to play (a representative speech act of stating) The same can be said concerning the second part of the song as it requires rain to go as the baby wants to play.

Thus, the whole song is a mixture of directive commanding and a declarative stating speech act. Concerning the auxiliary speech acts, the speech act of justifying is used as the singer justifies the reason of rain going as to play. Explicating is used also and it is represented by the use of repetition. Maxims flouting, the maxim of quality is flouted here when the speaker talks to rain as if something animate.

### **Song (6)**

"My little baby, not feeling well?

You have a fever, Daddy can tell.

Rest little baby, I'll care for you.

You'll get well soon, I'll make sure you do.

My little baby, not feeling well?

I hear you coughing, Mommy can tell.

Rest little baby, I'll care for you.

You'll get well soon, I'll make sure you do"

### **Analysis**

The speech act of questioning is noticed in the first line as the father asks boy if he is still sick. Father knows about his son sickness but he asks him to be certified. Thus a directive speech of questioning is used here. Then the speech act of stating is used as mentioned that father is aware of his son sickness. Thus a declarative speech act is noticed here. The directive speech of advice is noticed in (rest little) then the commissive speech of offering

is used as the father tells his son that he will care for him. Then the commissive speech act of promising is embodied in the last line. Maxim flouting, the maxim of manner is flouted here since it is not clear why does the speaker is sure that his son will be well. Below are the tables that show the percentage of the research.

#### **Macro Speech Acts Percentage**

<b>Representatives</b>	<b>Directives</b>	<b>Commissives</b>	<b>Declaratives</b>
<b>Stating 30%</b>	<b>Command 18%, question and advice 9%, suggesting 4%</b>	<b>Promising 13%</b>	<b>Describing 17%</b>

#### **Auxiliary Speech Acts Percentage**

<b>Explicating</b>	<b>Explaining</b>	<b>Adding</b>	<b>Justifying</b>
<b>38%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>

#### **Grice Maxims Flouting Percentage**

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Manner</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>40%</b>

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

Speech act is used highly in baby songs. And the percentage shows that :

1. Concerning the macro speech acts, the representative speech act of stating is used mostly in baby songs as it is used 30% in the selected data.
2. The purpose of using stating speech act more than others, is for giving the children more information via stating speech acts.
3. The directive speech act of commanding is used 18% then questioning and advising are used equally 9% in the selected data. Whereas suggesting speech act is used with a percentage of 4% in baby songs.

4. The declarative speech act of describing is used 17% in the selected data.
5. The commissive speech act of promising is used 13% in the selected data. Thus, the representatives are used mostly, after directives then the commissives.
6. The Auxiliary speech acts are used also in baby songs. Explicating and explaining speech acts are used equally and they are the most dominant auxiliary speech acts occur in baby songs. They are used 38%.
7. Adding and justifying speech acts are used with a percentage of 12% in baby songs that analysed before.
8. Grice maxims are flouted in the selected data. The maxim of quantity is flouted 20% , quality is flouted equally with manner 40%.

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