

**G.R. Zeynally** Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan, Baku  
e-mail: gulyaz.zeynalli@gmail.com**MEANING AND SPEECH ACTS**

The article deals with meaning and speech acts. Meaning is meant to express the linguistic as well as the nonlinguistic correlate, reference, or denotation of a linguistic form and expression. Speech acts are known to be the acts which refer to the action performed by utterances. A man may perform any action by pronouncing (or saying) something. Through speech acts, the speaker can convey physical action merely through words and phrases. The conveyed utterances are paramount to the actions performed. A word and a sentence are considered to be the main components of a speech act. Both of them are known to have crucial roles in perceiving any communication. The word (or the sentence) may have more meanings than one. It is necessary to catch their true meanings in the right context. Prosodic features turn out to play a great role in conveying the information through any of the speech acts as well.

The issue under discussion has been investigated by many of foreign and local scientists such as J. Austin, J. Searle, W. Alston, W. Croft as well as F.Y. Veysalli, A.A. Abdullayev, A.Y. Mammadov, L.M. Khanbutayeva, etc.

The theory of speech acts which was originated by J. Austin and J. Searle has been investigated in the article. It states that the language introduces itself as a form of the action in the speech acts. The divisions of the speech acts that have been put under discussion are widely touched upon in the article as well.

**Key words:** sentence, meaning, speech acts, information, convey, word

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Әзірбайжан тилдер университеті, Әзірбайжан, Баку қ.  
e-mail: gulyaz.zeynalli@gmail.com**Мағына және сөйлеу әрекеті**

Мақалада сөйлеу актісінің мағынасы қарастырылады. Мағына лингвистикалық, сондай-ақ тілдік емес корреляцияны, лингвистикалық форма мен экспрессияның сілтемесін немесе денотатын білдіруге арналады. Сөйлеу актісі айтылымдар арқылы орындалатын әрекетке байланысты актілер екені белгілі. Адам бір нәрсені айту (немесе сөйлеу) арқылы кез келген әрекетті жасай алады. Сөйлеу әрекеттері арқылы сөйлеуші физикалық әрекетті жай сөздер мен сөз тіркестері арқылы жеткізе алады. Айтылған сөздер орындалған әрекеттерге қатысы бойынша жоғары маңыздылыққа ие. Сөз бен сөйлем сөйлеу актісінің негізгі компоненттері болып саналады. Олардың екеуі де кез келген коммуникацияны қабылдауда шешуші рөл атқаратыны белгілі. Сөздің (немесе сөйлемнің) бірнеше мағынасы болуы мүмкін. Олардың шынайы мағынасын дұрыс контексте түсіру қажет. Кез келген сөйлеу әрекеті арқылы ақпаратты беруде просодикалық ерекшеліктер де үлкен рөл атқарады.

Талқыланып отырған мәселені Дж. Остин, Дж. Сир, В. Альстон, В. Крофт сияқты көптеген шетелдік және отандық ғалымдар, сонымен қатар Ф.Я. Вейсалли, А.А. Абдуллаев, А.Я. Мамедов, Л.М. Ханбутаева, т.б. зерттеген.

Мақалада Дж. Остин мен Дж. Сирль жасаған сөйлеу актілері теориясы қарастырылады. Онда тілдің сөйлеу актісінде әрекет формасы ретінде әрекет ететіні айтылады. Мақалада талқыланған сөйлеу актілерінің бөлімшелері кеңінен қозғалады.

**Түйін сөздер:** сөйлем, мағына, сөйлеу актілері, ақпарат, жеткізу, сөз.

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Азербайджанский университет языков, Азербайджан, г. Баку  
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В статье рассматриваются значение и речевой акт. Значение предназначено для выражения лингвистического, а также нелингвистического коррелята, референции или денотации языковой формы и выражения. Речевые акты, как известно, представляют собой акты, относящиеся к действию, выполняемому высказываниями. Человек может совершить любое действие,

произнес (или сказав) что-то. С помощью речевых актов говорящий может передать физическое действие просто с помощью слов и фраз. Переданные высказывания имеют первостепенное значение по отношению к совершаемым действиям. Слово и предложение считаются основными составляющими речевого акта. Оба они, как известно, играют решающую роль в восприятии любого общения. Слово (или предложение) может иметь несколько значений. Необходимо уловить их истинное значение в правильном контексте. Просодические особенности также играют большую роль в передаче информации посредством любых речевых актов.

Обсуждаемый вопрос исследовался многими зарубежными и отечественными учеными, такими как Дж. Остин, Дж. Сёрл, У. Олстон, У. Крофт, а также Ф.Я. Вейсали, А.А. Абдуллаев, А.Я. Мамедов, Л.М. Ханбутаева, и др.

В статье исследуется теория речевых актов, созданная Дж. Остином и Дж. Сёрлом. В нем говорится, что язык выступает как форма действия в речевых актах. В статье широко затронуты подвергшиеся обсуждению подразделения речевых актов.

**Ключевые слова:** предложение, значение, речевые акты, информация, передать, слово.

## Introduction

Linguists have always been interested in how every living or inanimate concept that is observed around us can be misunderstood. J. Austin is known to be one of the figures who is especially interested in things and their names. He writes about it: 'I have always been interested in perceiving the true meanings of words, sentences, etc.' (Austin, 1975: 1). 'It was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some facts', which it must do either truly or falsely', he states (Austin, 1975: 1). As can be seen, some scientists (both grammarians and philosophers) have been aware that it is not easy to distinguish the meanings of statements (even simple ones), questions, commands, and so on.

J. Austin's famous work is 'How To Do Things with Words'; it is the work that is devoted to the study of this issue.

J. Austin was able to subtly observe the differences between everyday words and word families. Examining the comparative qualities of adverbs in his famous essay, the author divides them into the following types such as 'involuntarily' (qərəzliklə), 'inadvertently' (ehtiyatsızlıqla), 'by accident' (təsadüfən), 'by mistake' (səhvən). He claims that sentences, events, and situations that are named 'performative speech' are necessary to be more distinctive than descriptive as they control acts. For example, when a speaker uses the verb 'to apologize' (üzr üstəmək) in a sentence "I apologize for being late", it means that he (she) performs the act of begging pardon (Austin, 1975: 86).

It is noteworthy to highlight that there is a consistent connection among a sign, its meaning and significance. F.Y. Veysalli writes that this connection is that the sign has a meaning (Veysalli, 2013:

96). It should be noted that the meaning is not just a sign. The same meaning has different expressions in different languages as well as in the same language. Each expression has a specific meaning, but not always. Observations show that the same word usually has the same meaning. A grammatically correct expression means a certain name and always means the same thing. However, this does not mean that understanding has the same meaning.

F.Y. Veysalli believes that being the meaning of any concept does not mean that it has a certain meaning with full certainty (Veysalli, 2013: 100). Words used in a normal situation are considered to carry their meanings. It is possible to talk about words and their meanings. This also happens when someone else's words are used in direct conversation (indirect speech). In this case, the words are interpreted as someone else's words, and only then their meaning is possible to be observed (Veysalli, 2013: 120).

Theories of speculative grammars cannot be ignored when talking about things or names or their meanings. With their theories, they explored what they were based on in the study of language, the extensive analysis and memorization of Latin grammar as people changed their views on the language. The issues mentioned in the works of A. Donatus and S. Priscian were encountered. At that time, they carefully studied words in different languages, their descriptive forms, word order and grammatical rules. Beginning in 1100, Aristotle's works began to be translated, and Aristotle's commentaries in Arabic began to recirculate in European intellectual life in various ways. When Aristotle's 'Posterior Analytics' and other works began to be reexamined, scholars realized that traditional terms of language learning no longer gained status because according to Aristotle, science should be studied on the basis of general principles; it is not

enough to simply collect or classify the phenomenon (Veysølli, 2013: 13). The newly established medieval universities operated to pursue scientific and theoretical knowledge.

In order to discover what is basic or universal in the language, twenty-first-century scholars began to study many languages comparatively and were faced with the question: ‘What is common to all human languages?’ Some scholars are known to have taken different approaches. They believed that only ancient languages, such as Greek, Latin, and Hebrew needed to be studied, but Latin was the most widely used one. Medieval scholars believed that Latin was a highly developed language. It was meant to be a kind of example for all languages. Therefore, it was thought if they studied Latin carefully, they would be able to discover everything that was fundamental to all languages.

Speculative grammarians explored universal truths about language by writing commentaries. They used more questions and answer forms. That was reminiscent of the format written by the sixth-century scholar S. Priscian in his treatise “*Institutiones Grammaticales*”. Such texts began with a metagrammatic introduction and then continued with sections of Latin speech analysis, morphology, and syntax. The names of some speculative grammarians are important to be mentioned here such as D. Martin, D. Boezius, Thomas of Erfurt and others. Those scholars claimed to have identified the basic features of language. For example, Modistey scientists considered eight parts of speech to be universal, although in Greek, unlike Latin, there is no definite article. It was also a reference to one of the facts of their mutual linguistic acquisition. In more extensive writings, Modistey scientists explored the universality of syntax and semantics. According to them, language, thought and reality can be considered to be a mirror of one another. Commenting on S. Priscian’s grammar around 1270, D. Boezius wrote about it: “*There is some logic for all languages, and therefore there is only one grammar for all of them*” (Chomsky, 1965: 44).

### Materials and methods

It is a known fact that L. Wittgenstein made some ‘notes’ to St. Augustine’s concept of language learning. The first note was called ‘smart teaching’. In that concept, St. Augustine did not mean obtaining compliments for certain functional categories, such as articles and sentence members. St. Augustine did not accept the basics of grammar either.

However, unlike St. Augustine, L. Wittgenstein did not consider his (St. Augustine’s) style of communication to be appropriate during the complex stage of communication. According to him (L. Wittgenstein), people perform expressive acts through a language. L. Wittgenstein denies the linguistic condition of St. Augustine’s act of speech. It is necessary to note that L. Wittgenstein’s language games as well as St. Augustine’s language games are introduced in the form of ‘commands’ and should be followed by any of the speech acts. The language games may describe the landscape of the world providing information about events, create conditions for different aspects of the event: *offer, thank, curse, greet, praise, etc.* (Wittgenstein, 1961: 23). Later L. Wittgenstein writes that words can be considered to be deceptive in parallel. We consider it necessary to highlight that the roles of words in the act of speech are different. L. Wittgenstein states that ‘though the engineer presses one of the panels, the other panels of the locomotive may move because of their similarity, first one, then the other, and so on, and so on’ (Wittgenstein, 1961: 24). He proposes to pay attention to the language games in order to clearly explain the philosophy of speech acts. In this case, the role of words should not be forgotten. We’d like to underline that J. Austin’s theory of speech acts differed from L. Wittgenstein’s. This difference is possible to be observed both in style and structure. Commenting on L. Wittgenstein’s act of speech, J. Austin writes: ‘The complexity of words is determined during communication. Then he (J. Austin) presents their meanings as the concept of ‘family similarity’ (Austin, 1975: 66). He writes that there are words that can be explained by their definitions or meanings in the conditions that are considered to be necessary and sufficient. For example, he explores the word ‘game’ (oyun) in English. He writes that this word may be used to introduce different meanings: /tic-tac-toe/; /board games/; /Olympic games/; /poker/ and so on. These words cannot be explained by an unambiguous inductive definition, but in some cases they overlap, in other cases they do not (Austin, 1975: 66). It should be noted that modern psycholinguists present what J. Austin calls ‘family similarity’ as a concept that is observed in the modeling of the structures of semantic relations in the mental lexicon of a man.

In modern times, the act of conversation in the transmission of information has a significant impact on the communication process. During the communication, the emergence of the types of speech acts such as performatives, constatives as well as the

types of speech acts divided by J. Austin, 'happy words', 'unhappy words' is not accidental.

Speaking of the act of speech, we can mention the name of J. Searle. It should be noted that J. Searle's theory of the act of speech originated in 1969. Until then, language learning was studied in a different direction. J. Searle claims that the most important issue in conversational acts is to determine the philosophy of language. J. Searle contrasts the philosophy of language with the philosophy of linguistics (Searle, 1969: 3).

Linguistic philosophy deals with the relationship between the brain and the body, the relationship between science and ethics, the nature of reality (ontology), and the study of the epistemology of those around us.

The philosophy of language, on the other hand, examines what linguistic philosophy has studied. This means that studying the philosophy of language means exploring the language itself. According to J. Searle, it studies the language (Searle, 1969: 18). In studying the theory of speech acts, J. Searle's goal was to study the language and to explain how the language developed within national and ethnic boundaries as well. J. Searle's theory is to emphasize to us how language, and more precisely any language develops.

### Literature review

Investigations show that speech acts are divided into five broad groups (Austin, 1975: 15):

#### 1. Constatives:

In this case, the speaker confirms the truth reflected in the proposition. Such types of acts include *affirmative, assertive, inconclusive, emotional, negative, foretelling* sentences. For example, "So, you are going to be here at two? (Beləliklə, saat ikidə burada olacaqsınız?)"

#### 2. Directives:

In this case, a speaker conveys his (her) purpose to a listener in any way, and sentences such as *giving advice, asking, commanding, forbidding, insisting, allowing, asking questions, warning* are used in this type of speech act. For example, "Could you carry this for me?" (Bunu mənim üçün daşıya bilərsinizmi?)

#### 3. Commissions:

In this case, a speaker performs any action, such as *offering, inviting, assuring, setting goals, swearing*, etc. The following examples may highlight this type of speech act: "Do that again and I'm going to smack you!" (Bir də bunu etsən, səni

şapalaqlayacam) (*promise, warning*); "I now covenant with you" (Mən indi sizinlə razıyam) (*agreement*); "I promise to exercise every day" (Söz verirəm ki, hər gün idmanla məşğul olacağam) (*promise*); "I solemnly swear to tell the truth" (Mən təntənəli şəkildə and içirəm ki, düzüünü deyəcəm) (*swear*).

4. Expressives (*thanks, congratulations, assurances*):

In this case, the speaker expresses his (her) attitude or reaction to any situations related to the context. These types of sentences may express *apologize, likeness, praise, judgment, regret, thank*, and so on. Let us look at the examples below: "Thank you for giving me the money" (Mənə pul verdiyin üçün sənə təşəkkür edirəm), "I apologize for stepping on your place" (Sizin yerinizi tutduğum üçün üzr istəyirəm), etc.

#### 5. Declarations:

The speaker performs the act of speech only and only with the execution of the speech (Alston, 1970: 172). For example: "I hereby declare war on your country!" (Mən bununla da sizin ölkənizə müharibə elan edirəm!); "I now pronounce you husband and wife" (Mən sizi ər- arvad elan edirəm); "This note is legal permission for all debts" (Bu qəbz bütün borclar üçün rəsmi icazədir).

S.L. Tsohatzidis claims that the act of speech is an important and complex source of communication (Tsohatzidis, 1994: 11). The importance of the act of speech is now accepted in linguistics and has already attracted the attention of linguists as an object of research.

The act of speech can be considered to be ambiguous. The ambiguous speech acts were mentioned as 'the games of the language' by L. Wittgenstein. 'The language games' that was presented by L. Wittgenstein are used in the communication process by the speaker, and L. Wittgenstein figuratively named the 'language games' as 'extensive ammunition or clothing of speech rule' (Wittgenstein, 1961: 22).

### Experiment

An act of speech means that a speaker or a writer utters and uses a word or a sentence in a special form, which is necessary in any situations. Words and sentences are important components of the acts of speech. Both of them play an important role in every communication. It is important to pay attention to the fact that a word and a sentence have more than one meaning during the speech acts. The role of in-

tonation is important in determining the role of both language units in the communication too. During a speech act, the speaker tries to convey the necessary information to the participants. The following examples may illustrate our point of view.

Example I: "A father enters the room and sees a child playing with matches. He (the father) says to the child: Come here!" (Buraya gəl!) The command is heard to be pronounced in a special tone, the listener is taken out of one situation in any way and directed to the other one. This form of speech act is called directives (*direktivlər*: göstərişlər, təlimatlar).

Example II: 'Can you pass me that book?' (O kitabı mənə ötürə bilərsinizmi?) Any general request in the form of this general question is intended as a form of courtesy. Depending on the situation, a listener's attention is drawn not to the physical ability of the individual, but to his (her) politeness in the performance of any task. Therefore, speech acts are considered to be more related to the intention of the speaker than to the constitutional sense. Among the scholars engaged in research on speech acts, we can mention the names of J. Austin, J. Searle, etc.

## Discussion

J. Austin writes that the main feature of performatives is that they are neither true nor false, that is, evaluated in terms of truth (Austin, 1975: 57).

Differences between speech acts, their capabilities, and the verbal and non-verbal elements used to transmit information affect their act. J. Austin offers five *illocutive* powers. (Note: *locution* is what was said and meant, *illocution* is what was done, and *perlocution* is what happened as a result).

L.M. Khanbutayeva also analyses the types of the speech acts. She discusses the three types of them: *locutive*; *illocutive and perlocutive acts* (Xanbutayeva, 2018: 35).

L.M. Geis gives five divisions of speech acts as following (Geis, 1995: 80):

1. Constatives. The speaker confirms something about the correctness of the proposition. In this case, what is said is confirmed, claimed, denied, explained, predicted, and trusted, and so on.

Example 1:

/I confess to stealing the money// (Pulu oğurladığımı etiraf edirəm (boynuma alıram)).

2. Directives. In this act of speech, the speaker's goal is to direct a listener to the action in a special way. Such sentences may express *giving advice*, *asking*, *ordering*, *encouraging*, *forbidding*, *insist-*

*ing*, *instructing*, *allowing*, *forbidding*, *questioning*, *offering*, *warning*, and so on.

Example 2:

/If your boss gives you some instructions, it is the best to get it out of the way quickly to show him you can handle any job// (Əgər müdirin sənə tapşırıq verirsə, onun tapşırığını cəld yerinə yetir ki, sən hər bir işin öhdəsindən gələdiyini bilsin.)

3. Commissions. In this act of speech, a speaker performs acts such as *guarantee*, *offer*, *invitation*, *oath*, and *commitment*, etc.

Example 3:

/You may stay with us some more days// (Siz bir neçə gün də bizimlə qala bilərsiniz.)

4. Expressives (confessions). The speaker expresses his (her) attitude to the situation of any case. In this case, *apologize*, *praise*, *appreciate*, *congratulate*, *regret*, *thank*, *welcome*, and other acts are performed by the speaker.

Example 4:

/I am so sorry for having kept you waiting// (Sizi gözlətdiyim üçün çox təəssüf edirəm.)

5. Declarations. A speaker carries out some *rulings*, *orders* (*religious*, *official*, etc.).

Example 5:

[The marriage officer tells the newlyweds:]

/I pronounce you man and wife// (Sizi ər və arvad elan edirəm.)

[The person conducting the meeting says:]

/I declare this meeting closed// (Bu iclası bağlı elan edirəm.)

Each act of speech in this division has its own language. For example, 'judgments' are used to judge, as the name implies. Who can give a verdict, for example, a judge, a jury, an arbitrator, etc.? The verdict is either factual, or evaluative, or may have other status. Each of these types is perceived in the act of speech, regardless of whether it performs any function. Therefore, the acts of conversation that take place in different media appear differently. It is true that J. Austin writes that although the first four are distinguished or observed in the act of speech, the fifth, that is, the recognition of the expositives, is a bit more complicated (Austin, 1975: 152). Expositives clarify the purpose of our speech, that is, what word or words we use in what situation and for what purpose.

## Results

Any performance used in a speech act is performed in a different style and structure with different combinations of the same content. It is not

necessary to have any exhaustion. J. Austin writes: "I cannot offer a ranking in this division because of its complete consistency as sometimes I am also confused in choosing them. It is necessary to state that all aspects that have been put forward are presented in all classes of the speech acts." (Austin, 1975: 152)

There are special speech acts that clearly show the recipient of the speech act, the inclusion of the information transmitted in the act into the existing data model, and the difficulty of these extrapolation procedures is addressed at the level aimed for the speech act (Holdcroft, 1994: 71).

During the transmission of a speech act, different people understand the meaning of the speech act differently, depending on the amount of background knowledge, the experience, and ability to use language tools, mental state and other factors. The explicit and implicit transmission of the proposition by the executor of the act of speech will inevitably create in the mind of the recipient a mental reflection of the extraordinary situation which he (she) has programmed in his (her) brain.

### Conclusion

The communicative types of sentences are mainly intended for the speaker. In this case, the wishes and desires of the speaker are taken into account. These sentences tend to be somewhat purposeful. They are mostly used in the present tense forms. Sentences can express *exclamation, command, narration, etc.*

There are declarative, interrogative, negative sentences.

Exclamatory sentences express *strong emotion*.

Command (Imperative) sentences mean *command, instruction, request, suggestion, direction*.

Informative sentences are sentences that benefit both the listener and the speaker, and these types of sentences are interactive on both sides. They are more intentional or premeditated, less rhetorical, and intend to provide or obtain information.

Based on our research, we conclude that speech acts have the following peculiarities:

- 1) The purpose of communication;
- 2) The occurrence of communication; whether the information transmitted during the speech act is new or old;
- 3) The use of verbal and non-verbal signs in the act of conversation;
- 4) The persuasive nature;
- 5) The purposeful realization of each communication.

Among these features, the goal stands first. There can be no purposeless communication; even if we make sounds like /Ah/, /Oh/, /Ouch/, etc. in any situations, we make them for some reasons.

Speech acts are carried out only on purpose. For example, if we tell a friend /It is very hot today // (Bu gün çox istidir), this means that we warn our friend about the weather. Our goal is to warn someone. We can say that it may not be something we have planned in advance to let a friend know the condition of the weather. Due to the hot weather, we are currently performing such an act on the basis of conversation. On the other hand, our friend may think that we did it on purpose. We'd like to stress that by conveying this type of message, we have been purposeful.

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