

INDIRECT PERFORMATIVE SPEECH ACTS IN NABILA MAHJOUB'S NOVEL "WIND PASSAGES": A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Indirect speech acts are statements in which the apparent meaning contrasts with the intended meaning, such as "Can you pass me some water?" which appears to be a question but is actually a polite request. These acts are part of the pragmatics theory, established by John Austin and expanded by John Searle, which emphasizes intentionality and context in speech perception. A sentence is understood not only by its words, but also by the purpose for which it was uttered. This concept helps us explain how language is used to achieve social purposes and how communication goes beyond the mere exchange of knowledge.

Keywords: Pragmatics, speech acts, speaker, directive acts, pragmatic dimension.

Introduction

Indirect speech acts are among the most prominent and important concepts in modern pragmatics. They highlight the underlying dimensions of language and how it transcends the literal meaning of words. In our daily lives, we often use phrases that convey a different intent than their apparent meaning, such as asking a question or offering advice in the form of a question. This linguistic behavior is not considered a flaw or a mistake; rather, it is an essential part of human communication, reflecting the speaker's social intelligence and their ability to exploit context to achieve their communicative intentions in a polite and effective manner.

Section Three: Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect speech acts belong to the second type of linguistic communication patterns, as defined by speech act theory. Some scholars and researchers believe that indirect performative acts are the predominant type of linguistic communication, with a rate exceeding the use of direct speech acts ⁽¹⁾. Because it is formulated in a synthetic form linked to multiple and diverse contexts and purposes ⁽²⁾. Which gives it a wider communicative flexibility than direct performative verbs, so indirect verbs represent the largest amount in the language, and are more common in contexts of politeness in request ⁽³⁾. That is, it conveys to the recipient more than what the words carry, relying on the common background between the speaker and the listener, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, along with the listener's ability to interpret, infer and think ⁽⁴⁾. Whenever you find an indirect relationship between the structure and function, you get an indirect speech act. ⁽⁵⁾.

According to John Searle, the syntactic structure of indirect performative verbs does not indicate an increase in the literal performative meaning, but rather reflects an increase in what Searle called the speaker's meaning. He pointed out that the listener reaches the speaker's intention through what Searle called "inference stratification" ⁽⁶⁾.

Searle confirms this by saying: "Indirect actions retain ⁽⁷⁾ "...In its literal meanings, but it also acquires conventional uses)) that is, statements through which speakers aim to convey intentions that are not the literal meaning, as is the case with allusions, irony,

metaphor, and cases of multiple meanings.⁽⁸⁾ .So, indirect performative verbs (are those in which their force contradicts the speaker's intention⁽⁹⁾)

Searle gave an example that illustrates indirect performative verbs:

If a man says to his companion at the table: "Would you pass me the salt?" This is considered an indirect performative verb, because its original performative force indicates a question that needs an answer, and it is a source as evidenced by the question "would you?" But the question does not match the speaker's intent, rather it is a polite request that leads to an indirect performative meaning, which is: Pass me the salt.⁽¹⁰⁾ .

After observing, we see that indirect speech acts are often carried out in the form of an order, prohibition, or request, but in an implicit manner, and their meaning is understood from the linguistic context or the pragmatic structure of the discourse. George Yule also mentioned that most types of indirect speech acts contain interrogative forms, but their use is not usually intended to pose a question, i.e. we do not expect or wait for an answer from it, but rather it is employed to induce the addressee to carry out a specific action.⁽¹¹⁾ .

Searle also based his definition of indirect performative verbs on another example, in which he highlights how a meaning other than the literal apparent meaning is intended in our saying: "You are stepping on my foot." Searle defines it as follows: "It is a secondary performative verb, such as asking someone to stop 'stepping on the foot,' or it is a primary verb to confirm 'stepping on the foot⁽¹²⁾ '". That is, the inferential strategy is based first on clarifying the difference between the primary non-verbal goal and the literal goal, and then on identifying the primary non-verbal goal,⁽¹³⁾ . Thus, Searle noted that the most important motive for using direct verbs is politeness in speech.⁽¹⁴⁾ .

One of the rules for distinguishing between direct and indirect use in the language is ::
(15)

Direct linguistic verbs	Indirect verbs
The performance power is constant and consistent in all situations.	The performance power in it is entrusted to the position and appears only in it.
The performance power may not be cancelled.	The performative force may be omitted. If a man says to his wife, "I divorce you now"! The indirect performative force, which is the request, may be omitted, and the phrase may be restricted to the direct force, which is the question.
The performative power in it is taken directly from the structure of the phrase itself.	Indirect performative power can only be achieved through deductive mental processes.
It has only one meaning, which is the direct meaning.	It has two meanings: a direct meaning and an indirect or metaphorical meaning.

In this study, we depended on Searle's five divisions of indirect speech acts, as it is the first and most precise perspective on speech acts, as follows::

First: Reporting, informative, or judgmental speech:

This type of speech aims to assure the listener of the truthfulness of the issue being presented, by presenting the issue in a realistic manner consistent with a real-life

situation. Examples include: declarative judgments, interpretations, classifications, phrases, and descriptions.⁽¹⁶⁾

This type of speech acts appears clearly in the novel “Wind Passages”, through speeches that include indirect information, reflecting within them the speaker’s implicit psychological and social positions. Among the narrative speeches that go beyond the apparent informative nature, the following passage reflects the speaker’s personal experience, carrying feelings of pain and disappointment within a narrative that contains reports and information about facts:

((The misfortunes lie in age. My husband sacrifices me for a young girl who is perhaps close to the age of my firstborn son, even though he apologized a lot through his messages when I refused to answer his calls. He said that I am making things a big deal and that he is not thinking about another woman)).

When the narrator says, "My husband sacrifices me for a little girl ⁽¹⁷⁾ ".

In its apparent meaning, it appears to be a news statement, but the saying includes an indirect suggestion in which it hints at an accusation and rejection of the husband’s psychological and moral position, as well as condemnation. It does not only describe an event in this phrase, but rather combines reporting and implication. As for the phrase ((perhaps she is close to the age of my eldest son)), in terms of appearance, it is a report about age, but implicitly it includes denunciation and shock from the age difference, and it is an indirect news act, meaning it implicitly carries moral wisdom or resentment due to a negative psychological feeling such as injustice, dissatisfaction or annoyance with this matter..

In her account of the husband's apology and the claim that she was "making things a big deal out of it"

These statements are conveyed in a reporter's form, but they suggest the wife's implicit rejection and denial of this justification, i.e., doubting the other party's sincerity. This is an indirect report that includes a psychological position, as they are tools that express tension and psychological breakdown. This is what makes them indirect reports with an implicit communicative force and their contribution to constructing a complex picture of relationships within the narrative structure.

All this is thanks to the availability of a background of shared contextual data between the speaker and the listener.⁽¹⁸⁾

In the same context, we present another narrative passage, in which the use of indirect declarative verbs is evident, in which the speaker addresses the personality of her sister Badia, explaining her shock at her new personality through declarative speech verbs :

((You don't know Badi'aa the lover. I knew Badi'aa the scholar that I knew, but I was shocked by another Badi'aa, a terrifying character defending the love of her life.)).⁽¹⁹⁾

This passage clearly shows the use of declarative verbs, going beyond the descriptive dimension to expressing hidden internal attitudes and emotions. His saying, “You do not know Badi’a the lover,” contains an indirect, implicit suggestion that Badi’a is absent from the recipients’ awareness, and there is a separation between the image of Badi’a in the eyes of others and her true image. This reflects an implicit judgment on the superficiality of others’ understanding of her. The phrase, “But I was shocked by another Badi’a,” here contains indirect declarative verbs that reveal the multiple faces of Badi’a’s personality. The phrase, “terrifying,” indicates the speaker’s feelings about the sudden transformation and justifies her behavior when she said, defending the love of her life. The declarative verbs here do not present reality, but rather reformulate it according to the speaker’s psychological experience, which gives the phrase a

communicative dimension that goes beyond mere declarativeness. Thus, declarative verbs are used to reshape the images of the fictional characters in the mind of the recipient/reader in a dual style between declarativeness and psychological emotions, as well as revealing a hidden tension that contributes to deepening Narrative structure. This is what Searle confirms in his division of declarative acts, in which he sees that the speaker is committed to the truth of the issue he expresses, and his portrayal of the issue is consistent with reality.⁽²⁰⁾

Second: Directives:

The strategy of this type of verb is based on a practical purpose, which is the speaker's attempt to push the recipient to perform a specific action by using directive methods ⁽²¹⁾. It expresses the speaker's intention while making the speaker match the outside world with his words ⁽²²⁾. The direction of conformity in it is always from the world to the word.

And among its means are suggestions, orders, demands, and petitions, which can either be responded to, obeyed, disobeyed, or rejected. Sincerity, intention, and pure desire are required in order to influence and convince the recipient. We can see the details of these actions in the novel "Passages of the Wind," which carries within it advice and guidance, which makes it a fertile analytical material in a text in which the speaker guides the addressee about treatment with the Qur'an and its effectiveness as a medicine for every disease: "And I made her understand that treatment with the Qur'an will not harm, for every disease has a medicine, and the word of God is a cure, like every disease, without dispute."⁽²³⁾ The saying includes directive speech acts in the context of advice and guidance. The act here does not carry a direct order to treat with the Qur'an, but rather it carries implicit advice urging the combination of medicine and the Qur'an. The sentence comes in the form of a report of personal conviction, but it carries a persuasive function to influence the recipient and direct him to accept the idea or act on the content of the advice (treatment with the Qur'an). This comes in harmony with what Searle decided on the directive acts that include rhetorical patterns. Multiple such as: advice - guidance - command - sympathy - encouragement ⁽²⁴⁾. Indirect directive actions are embodied in the novel "Wind Passages" through the characters' speech, which is not mostly based on an explicit command, but rather comes in the form of alternative linguistic formulas that perform the function of direction in an implicit suggestive way, in her saying "Believe it until you are sure"⁽²⁵⁾.

It is a sentence that in its literal, apparent form carries a prohibition, but it implicitly performs an advisory and guidance function, through the phrase "don't be weak" which directs the reader to be steadfast and not surrender and collapse, while the phrase "believe until you are sure" directs against accepting information without verifying it completely. So, the speaker is practicing a guidance act that is intended to influence the behavior of the addressee in an indirect manner and with calm rhetorical authority without a direct order, i.e.:

Don't be weak,  **it's meant to be encouraging.**

Believe it or not  **Behavioral guidance, directing towards belief in action rather than emotion.**

All linguistic methods (guidance, advice, command, sympathy, prohibition, and request) are used in linguistic methods that differ in intensity and clarity, but they all share one communicative goal, which is (influencing the behavior of the recipient/listener). Every "direction" is an expression of a desire for the listener to perform the action directed at him.⁽²⁶⁾

Third: Promises or Obligations:

Every performative act contains an obligation from the speaker to undertake to perform a specific act that constitutes the essence of the propositional content. Verbs of this type are found in commands, demands, vows, promises, mortgages, contracts, guarantees, appointments, and threats. However, unlike other types, they are against the interests of the listener/receiver and do not benefit them. Among their requirements is that they must include a role for intention and purpose, and their performance is limited solely to the speaker, as they constitute a personal commitment from the speaker to the person, with the world corresponding to the words.⁽²⁷⁾ This type of action is clearly evident in the following expressive text. The speaker faces a decisive situation between two options. She expresses her commitments by using speech acts of the type of promises and obligations: ((You are now in a position of choice between me and him. You have no other solution.)).⁽²⁸⁾

Speech includes an indirect imperative, which carries a hidden threat or warning connotation. It obliges the recipient to make a compulsory choice, a specific and unavoidable one, and places them in a coercive position, either to obey or to bear the consequences. It is implicitly indirect, as the threat is not explicitly stated, but is understood from the tone of voice. That is, it is an implicit threat of losing the addressee or separation and distance if the choice is not made according to the speaker's intentions. This reflects to the recipient the tension in the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and the power imbalance between them. Therefore, this type of imperative verbs gains great importance in narrative discourse, as the speaker imposes an obligation on the addressee without directly declaring a threat or authority; because the speech act is the smallest unit that achieves language. Thanks to her, he actually did it with his eyes and (ordered, requested, promised, threatened, etc.).⁽²⁹⁾

The indirect commitment is also embodied in the following text from the novel (*Wind Passages*), in the speaker's saying: ((What do you think, coffee and sweets sweeten the conversation)).⁽³⁰⁾

Where the commitment appears in an implicit manner, as it carries in the linguistic structure an implicit social hint of communication and the intention to meet without direct statement, which enhances the latent performative power linked to the potential future interaction between the speaker and the addressee. Such types of expressions clearly employ the tools of pragmatic persuasion to generate an indirect pragmatic commitment characterized by flexibility and possibility, free of commands or categorical statements, which reflects the pragmatic dimension in the narrative dialogue of indirect committed actions.

Fourth: Expressions or disclosures:

The goal included in expressive acts is to reveal the psychological state of the speaker, and this is the intended goal in expressive acts, determined by the condition of sincerity or integrity related to the content of the statement, and the characteristic of these acts is that they are not restricted to the direction of conformity or the standard of truthfulness with the organic content, but rather with the truthfulness of the speaker's inner feeling (the world of feelings⁽³¹⁾). Examples of expressions: (apology - consolation - thanks - congratulations - greetings - condolences,⁽³²⁾) That is: they are sentences that express pain, joy, happiness, sadness, or what is beloved or hated, caused by something done by the speaker or listener, but they are specific to the speaker's experience and expertise.⁽³³⁾

Among the manifestations of these considerations and communicative visions in the novel “Wind Passages” is the character’s saying, “Why does everything beautiful only come late,⁽³⁴⁾”?

An example of indirect expressive verbs in which the speaker uses the interrogative form as a means to present and express an emotional state such as (sadness - sorrow - grumbling - regret) towards the constant delay of all beautiful things, and it is understood from the phrase that the speaker is in a state where he does not wait for an answer, but rather reveals an inner feeling in an apparent rhetorical manner, so it is an indirect expression, i.e. implicit, because it came in the form of a question, but the function that the phrase contains is to disclose a buried inner psychological secret, so it falls within the expressions with an indirect performative formulation.

In a similar context, indirect expressive verbs are prominent in the passage in which the speaker describes her feelings of anxiety and fear: “What’s wrong with you? Did you feel anything? Yes, afraid of something, perhaps a raid of another kind.⁽³⁵⁾”.

The speaker does not express her inner feelings directly, but rather relies on allusive language to convey anxiety and fear without the explicit use of emotional verbs. There is an allusion and internal tension in it. The intention is not just to inform, but rather to express an emotional state in emotionally charged language. The state is described in a reflective (perhaps surprising) style, relying on the context and emotion. As for the first sentence, it appears to be a question, but it conveys interest and anxiety from the speaker, that is, it also shows an inner feeling indirectly (implicitly). The indirect expressions revealed to us an internal psychological disturbance without the explicit use of emotional verbs, just as we observed in the previous phrase: ((Why does everything that is beautiful only come late)), which performed an expressive function of feelings of sorrow and regret through an apparent question that conceals a deep emotional state. Therefore, the analysis in both examples is integrated to show how expressive/disclosing words can be employed to convey internal psychological states without a direct, apparent statement, which gives the discourse a semantic psychological dimension rich in meanings.

Fifth: Declaratives or statements:

What is not explicitly implied is what leads to a change in the world through the symbolic representation of the linguistic act. This change is achieved to the extent that this act actually occurs in the context. Declaratives are distinct among speech acts, as they bring about a real change in the real world when the speech act is successfully performed. These statements are only realized through the presence of social or legal institutions outside the scope of language, which give the statement its performative power and the direction of correspondence from the words to the world and vice versa. They do not require sincerity, and they require the speaker to play a non-linguistic institutional role based on a higher authority that determines the rules of its use, such as: (a court, a committee, a mosque, or books, principles of behavior, etc.).⁽³⁶⁾

What confirms this type of actions in the novel is the speaker’s saying: “Is this your final decision?⁽³⁷⁾” Despite the apparent interrogative form that the text carries, there is an implicit goal for the phrase represented in confirming the decision or position or announcing the end of the dialogue and cutting off understanding according to the context of the speech, and perhaps pushing the recipient to retreat or reconsider the matter, in addition to the fact that it carries within it an authoritarian orientation that contains an acknowledgment or demand to end the decision, and all of that is an implicit announcement to resolve the negotiating position between the two parties of the discourse, as described by Searle, saying: ((They are actions that achieve their

propositional content, if their completion is available, at the time of the utterance itself)).⁽³⁸⁾

Conclusion

At the end of this research, we present the most important points we have reached:

- Indirect speech acts are an important element in human interaction, demonstrating how language transcends literal meaning.
- Understanding these acts lies in the social context in which they are uttered and the intent behind them.
- Their use reflects the speaker's intelligence and ability to achieve their communicative purposes in a polite and effective manner.
- Understanding indirect speech acts enhances our ability to analyze discourse more deeply and understand its hidden motives.
- Indirect acts are evidence of the richness and flexibility of language, and its ability to express the depths of social and human relationships.

Footnotes

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- 1) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 82.
 - 2) See: Linguistics: An Introduction to the Introductions, 217.
 - 3) See: The Pragmatic and Functional Trend in Linguistic Lesson, 60.
 - 4) See: same source, 59-60.
 - 5) See: Pragmatics from Austin to Goffman, 92.
 - 6) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 61. See: Pragmatic Linguistic Theory, 108.
 - 7) The pragmatic and functional approach in linguistics, 61.
 - 8) See: From Austin to Goffman, 68.
 - 9) Pragmatic Linguistic Theory, 108. See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 50-51.
 - 10) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 51. See: The Pragmatic Theory of Linguistics, 108.
 - 11) See: George Boole, 93.
 - 12) Introduction to Pragmatics, 29.
 - 13) Pragmatics from Austin to Goffman, 69.
 - 14) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 51.
 - 15) See: The same source, 83. See also: Discourse Strategies, 370. See also: The Pragmatic and Functional Approach in Linguistic Lessons, 61.
 - 16) See: Action, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World, 183
 - 17) Wind Passages Novel, 413.
 - 18) See: Pragmatics from Austin to Goffman, 69.
 - 19) Wind Passages Novel, 520.
 - 20) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 49.
 - 21) See: The same source: 49.
 - 22) See: Speech Act Theory, 125. See: Functional Linguistics: A Theoretical Introduction, 25.
 - 23) Wind Passages Novel, 425.
 - 24) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 50.
 - 25) The Wind Passages Novel, 411.
 - 26) The pragmatic and functional approach in linguistic studies, 49.

- 27) See: Pragmatics from Austin to Goffman, 66.
- 28) Wind Corridors Novel, 474.
- 29) See: Key Terms, 7.
- 30) Profit Corridors Novel, 209.
- 31) See: The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pragmatics, 76, and see: Theory of Speech Acts, 126.
- 32) See: New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research, 50. Functional Linguistics: A Theoretical Introduction, 25. See: Mind, Language and Society, 184.
- 33) See: George Boole's Pragmatics, 90.
- 34) Windy Corridors Novel, 493 .
- 35) The Windy Corridors Novel, 492.
- 36) See: Speech Act Theory, 126; and George Boole's Pragmatics, 89.
- 37) Wind Corridors Novel 415.
- 38) Functional Linguistics: A Theoretical Introduction 25.

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