Searle’s Typology
Class TYBA General English/MA I, Paper-2.3, Sem II

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J.R. Searle is another important linguist who has helped us to understand speech acts in details. His contribution to the language is admitted by worldwide language students. His seminal, Speech Acts, published in 1969. He has expanded Austin’s idea and later on added his own dimension to the speech acts. He has published his book on speech acts as ‘Expression and Meaning’, in 1979.
Searle has categorized illocutionary acts into five distinctive categories, such as Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declaratives act. These categories were published in his paper, ‘A classification of Illocutionary Acts’, in 1976.
1. Assertives

- Searle defined assertives are those types of utterances in which speaker ‘commits to the listener. Speaker use verbs like complain, conclude, boast, deduce etc.

- Example:- I complained that I was being denied individual rights in the office.

- When the speaker uses the assertive illocutionary act with the help of the verb ‘complain’, the speaker is fully believed that whatever he has stated is true.
2. Directive Act

- A speech act that has the function of getting the listener to do something such as a request or command is termed as the directive act. This act directs the listener to do action.
- Example:- She requested him to close the window.
- In the above example speaker expects from listener that to close the window. Here speaker has not make only polite requests but sometimes issues an order. Most of the advertisements are examples of directive act.
3. Commissive Act:

- A speech act that commits the speaker to do something in the future such as a promise or a threat is termed as a commissive act. This act refers to the speaker’s commitment.

- Example:- I promise that I will take you to the movie tomorrow.

- In the above example speaker make promise to the speaker that tomorrow he will take her to movie.
4. Expressive Act

An act in which the speaker expresses his feelings and attitude about something is defined as an expressive act. It can be an apology or a complaint. It also includes things like thanking someone, congratulating someone, giving good wishes etc.

Example:– The food was delicious.

Whenever speaker uses an expressive illocutionary act, he expresses his feelings or attitude towards a proposition.
5. Declaratives

A speech act that changes the state of affairs in the word is termed as a declarative act.

Example:- The queen says, ‘I name this ship queen Elizabeth’.

If you look at the above example, queen declared that the name of the ship is changed immediately. Other verbs are used un this kind of illocutionary acts are resign, declare, appoint, fire, christen etc.
Thus Searle’s Typology helps us to communicate effectively.

Students can go through ‘Linguistics’ text prescribed by Board of Studies, SPPU for detailed study.

Thank You,