

ILLOCUTIONARY FORCES IN DUBLIN'S TENEMENTS: A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF SEAN O'CASEY'S *JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK*

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Abstract:

This paper explores illocutionary forces in the play Juno and the Paycock (1924) by Sean O'Casey by applying the Speech Act Theory which was initially formulated by J.L. Austin and John R. Searle. Language in the play is introduced as an instrument of survival, resistance, and identity construction; it is set in the tenement slums of Dublin during the Irish Civil War. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology and the concept of close reading to classify and study representative, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative speech acts employed by main characters, especially Juno, Jack Boyle and Mary. The results indicate that illocutionary acts do not only reflect the socio-political situations of the characters; they are also the means of power bargaining and emotional release. The findings indicate the responsibility and authority characterize the language of Juno whereas the language of Jack is evasive and more performative, which represents the gender role in family discourse. Based on this analysis, the paper confirms that dramatic dialogue does indeed serve as the performative instrument of social action in O'Casey, and presents the view of how the victims of oppression manage to maintain that agency through their speech. The study bears significant contribution in terms of linguistic pragmatics, feminist discourse analysis and the Irish dramatic literature.

Keywords

Illocutionary acts, Speech Act Theory, Sean O'Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*, gendered language, Dublin tenements, linguistic pragmatics, dramatic discourse, Irish theatre, performativity

Introduction and Background

Sean O'Casey can be described as a giant in the study of the 20th century Irish drama, as he is credited with writing about the meeting of private and political failure among the urban working poor in Dublin. O'Casey was born in 1880 in Dublin and early life experiences restricted him to the margins of the society due to the extreme level of poverty, the death of his father and constant sickness. He had witnessed the poor housing situation in Dublin as a large proportion of the city population lived in dwellings that were overcrowded and unsanitary (more than one third of the population). This situation greatly influenced his literary mind (Murray, 1997; Sheeba, 2003). O'Casey existed at several margins in society, not only a Protestant in a Catholic society but also a self-educated intellectual among the working poor; later, he would characterize himself as an outsider, whose allegiances were with the despised (O'Casey, 1963, p. 25).

His play trilogy about Dublin *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) captures this turbulent period in Ireland as it passed through colonial oppression and into civil war. One of them, *Juno and the Paycock*, can be

singled out by a more complicated representation of the Boyle family, which has to live in a one-room tenement flat, where the family disintegration, the job loss, and political turmoil meet. The play combines tragedy and comedy that resemble absurdity and violence of time and more to the point, linguistic realism, displays how language reinstates and refashions the social reality of characters (McDonald, 2002).

Many critics addressed the plays of O Casey in political or feministic perspectives (Kiberd, 1995; Pilkington, 2012), but the paper considers the works in terms of the Speech Act Theory, conceived by J.L. Austin (1962) and explored in greater depth by John Searle (1969). The Speech Act Theory argues that language is not an act of description but an act: it gives orders, it makes promises, it accuses, it consoles, and so forth. In this theory, utterance can be grouped in three important components:

- **Locutionary act** - the act of saying something that has its literal meaning;
- **Illocutionary act**- the intention of the speaker (e.g. asserting, ordering, apologizing);
- **Perlocutionary act**- The impression that the talk has on the receiver (conviction, threatening).

The present study is primarily concerned with illocutionary acts because they also provide the key to the interpretation of character assertions of identity, power negotiation, and crisis responses in *Juno and the Paycock*. As an example, Jack Boyle often uses assertives and expressives in order to appear powerful and avoid blaming, which in many cases conceals his cowardliness and moral decadence. Juno, in contrast, resorts to statements and commissives, as she has to keep the family under control and be its practical and ethical core. These are unique applications of language depicting that illocutionary force is more gender, class, and agency related in the text.

The illocutionary acts are rule-governed forms of behavior, according to Searle (1979); they are determined by the social conventions and expectations imposed and are a result of the institutional positions and hierarchies of power. Language is a kind of currency in the conditions of the lack of material resources which O Casey gives to his tenement where people have to assert their power or simply to protect the dignity or are forced to be dominated. It is possible to see that the fragmented conversations, interruptions, avoidances, and ironic interactions displayed in the play are ways to survive in an unsettled world through speech acts. Moreover, through the combination of Cultural Feminism and pragmatics, this research demonstrates that gendered use language use appears in the Boyle family. Juno is rational, instructive, and in fact sacrificing, in her speech, thus she takes the role of a nurturer and a moral adjudicator. She expresses herself on behalf of her family to a very large extent, often performing commissive acts, making a promise on behalf of the family, particularly when male characters such as Jack are unable to move into action. In this regards her illocutionary acts appear to be a subversive agency which is opposite to the impotent wordyness of her husband. This research is important due to interdisciplinary approach. Although the political implications of O Casey social realism have long been identified, through the prism of the Speech Act Theory, his work could be analyzed in a linguistic-pragmatic way in relation to the functioning of dialogue as social acts. It puts in the forefront, the idea that there is no fixed text in language in a drama, rather that language in a play emerges as done intention involving contextualization, speaker identity, and interpersonal dynamic.

Through a close analysis of a set of scenes and the methodical division of its main speech acts (e.g. assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations), this paper will demonstrate how the performative character of language in *Juno and the Paycock* uncovers the most interesting dynamics of force, struggle, emotional survival in the tenements of Dublin.

Research Statement

This paper examines the illocutionary acts in *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O'Casey in describing the effects of the Speech Act Theory by John Searle with focus on how language can act as a form of social action, and not just conversation. On the basis of the analysis of utterance of key characters especially Jack Boyles, Juno, Mary and Joxer the research finds substantial speech acts (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations) and how these are reflecting interpersonal power and socio-political tensions in Dublin life of a tenement.

This paper takes a critical approach and analyses the structure of the play and scenes to explore the role of speech as performative in creating a sense of identity and resistance and gendered communication. Using perspectives of cultural feminism, this is a key point that it discusses how speech acts portray authority and caring in Juno Boyle, as opposed to how Jack Boyle uses rhetorical evasions and performative assertions of masculinity.

Finally, the present study proves that O'Casey dialogue serves as a conveyor of ideological manifestation, displaying how language is utilized in negotiating power, gender and class conflicts in the early 20th century Irish society.

Literature Review

Language in drama does not simply relate what is happening or look beautiful — it is operational. In the socially and politically straining environment of Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* and in other contexts, language is seen as a weapon, a shelter, a role play and an indication of strength. This chapter examines the theoretical and critical background required to be able to analyze the forces of illocution of the play using Speech Act Theory. This review is constituted into five sections, which include the origin of the theory of speech acts, acknowledgement of the usage of speech act theory to literature and drama, socio-political dynamics of life in a tenement of Dublin, analytical response of *Juno and the Paycock*, and the relationship between language and power and gender in dramatic discourse.

The Speech Act Theory, as propounded by J. L. Austin, and as advanced by John R. Searle argues that speaking is an act. Austin (1962) creates a concept of illocutionary act in *How to Do Things with Words*, namely an utterance in which a certain action is done, like promising, warning, ordering, or requesting. These include five types of acts; assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

The Speech Acts developed by Searle (1969) extended this typology and formed standards through which one can comprehend the circumstances and impacts of these utterances in communication contexts. Bach and Harnish (1979) followed on this by highlighting the role of intentions and inferences during speech acts and this is critical when interpreting dramatic language where language performativity and subtext dominates.

Speech acts orient the relationships among the characters, the distribution of power, and emotional emphasis within the text of literary works particularly plays. Not only the psychology of character, but also the distribution of sociolinguistic power can be seen through the illocutionary force: that is, the intended purpose of an utterance.

The usage of Speech Act Theory has become a success in application on literature especially drama. The significance of speech acts in fictional discourse was highlighted by Pratt (1977), who holds that in as much as the literal meaning would be different to the performative one, the audience is required to understand the literal meaning combined with the performative one. Speech acts are not abstract in drama: they are context-bound, corporeal and plainly consequential.

Speech Act Theory analyses how meaning is constructed in the dialect not only, but also, in speech instructions, breaks or intrusions; factors that also play a significant part of the dramaturgy of O'Casey's.

Culpeper and Kyt (2010) analyzed Early Modern drama using speech act theory: they demonstrated several modes of social framing, gender communication, and effectiveness of politeness as encoded in verbal statements. In the same line of thought, Short (1996) argues that illocutionary analysis is particularly fruitful in investigating conflict and character interaction in being that it raises to the fore the power interrelations that lie in language.

Juno and the Paycock by O Casey was set in the tenement slums of Dublin in the period of the Irish Civil War- in such a condition, where social instability, financial problems, and national disappointment vehemently influence the effects of speech and communication between individuals.

James Moran (2000) stresses the importance of realism in O Casey as one of the methods of opening the linguistic texture of poverty through which language turns out to be the way of resistance and deceit, as well as survival. Tenement is colloquial, indirective, and performative, and it fits perfectly in the picture of illocutionary forms.

According to Terry Eagleton (1995), Irish drama presents an ostensible conflict between the voice of the populace and the voice of the hearth in general. In *Juno and the Paycock* we find evidence of this tension in classical scenes where the hearth conflict soft or reveals a greater political scar. Each word has a load on it- a request turns into demand, an insult into a judgment and a joke into a resistance.

Juno and the Paycock has been examined by scholars in different frames-namely realism, nationalism, gender studies, and Catholicism- however, the language aspect is still to be examined.

According to Christopher Murray (1997), the dialogue of O'Casey is perceived to be musical and rhythmic still having strong rooting in the working-class idioms. The opposition of the grandiloquent address of Jack Boyle and the assertive, down to business addressing of Juno makes a plentiful patchwork of the illocutionary force-where Jack relies upon declaratives and boasting of responsibility evasion, Juno relies on directive and expressive crisis and emotion management.

As noted by Helen Lojek (2004), the communicative strategy in the plays by O'Casey is manifested in this way: silence, interrupting the speech of other and even hesitating to talk in this way demonstrates the pragmatism of what is and what is not said. Such observations match the focus of Speech Act Theory on the felicity conditions, and missing/imperfect speech acts (in the case of Jack, empty promises) exposing the intent of such a character.

The interpretation offered by Kosok (1985) is that Juno is a feminist character who is doing caregiving, leadership, and, above all, resistance through her speech. Her words are full of the illocutionary power-she consoles, orders, laments and admonishes. Every word is her declaration of power in a fallen family and country.

The discourse of *Juno and the Paycock* acts are highly gendered. As the maternal character, Juno executes expressives (sadness, exhaustion, outbreaks of love) and directives (coordinated the house) with grave illocutionary force even in conditions of mockery or opposition. On the contrary, the language in this case is phatic or performative in Jack Boyle, a blusterer, an indirect, self-serving person.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) examines the gender gendered subjectivity through language. This information is useful in the investigation of Mary Boyle who speaking shifts into insistence after she is betrayed. Her feminist change of illocutionary tone (from expressive to declarative) characterizes her feminist transformation.

Lakoff (1975) points out that in patriarchal societies, women address issues which are characterized by certain rules of politeness, obliqueness. Juno however in this play by OCasey

violates this by adopting directness and control that traditionally belong to the male characters which shows that there is an attempt to use illocutionary power subversively.

Previous work offers rich analysis of *Juno*, and the *Paycock* as concerns the elements of class, gender and political history, and a good theoretical background of the Speech Act Theory. Nonetheless, the particular feature of the illocutionary force as a tool of character presentation, power relationships, and emotional opposition in the Dublin tenements has not been properly investigated.

This study will provide a more delicate perspective of the performative strength of language in the formation of identity and crisis management aspects by applying the speech act theory by Austin and Searle to the play by O Casey.

Research Methodology

The current qualitative study uses Speech Act Theory as an analytical tool to explore how illocutionary forces are used and what roles they play in the play *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O Casey. It is limited to the main text and the language employed by characters in the three acts of the play is given a sustained examination.

The methodology includes a textual reading of the dialogue and then locating utterances and classifying utterances according to the five categories of speech acts described by John Searle (1976):

1. **Representatives** (stating, asserting),
2. **Directives** (commanding, requesting),
3. **Commissives** (promising, offering),
4. **Expressives** (apologizing, lamenting),
5. **Declaratives** (declaring, appointing).

Two dialogues are chosen to be analyzed in each of the acts of the play with the division according to the illocutionary functions. The data has been represented in the quantitative tables indicating the tally and the list of each type of speech act in Act I, II and III. This assists in identifying the major language strategies used by characters and their relevance in the social, political, and family background of the play.

The attention is drawn to some major characters: Juno Boyle, Jack Boyle, Mary Boyle, Johnny Boyle, and Joxer Daly to examine how speech provides authoritativeness, defiance, emotional conditions, and resistance. In the analysis, there is also who is dominating in the conversation, who is submissive, the negotiation in power and identity through language in both the domestic space and social space in tenement life in Dublin.

This approach allows reflection and better comprehension of the ways in which not only meaning but also social action is present in the speech, how character relationships are created, how dramatic angle is built during the play.

Theoretical Framework

This work presents a theoretical framework based on Speech Act Theory, which was first presented mainly by J.L. Austin in his *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) work, and further developed by John R. Searle in another work titled *Speech Acts* (1969). This theory is considered to be a pillar of pragmatics which is a sub-discipline of linguistics which investigates the roles of language in real life responses.

Austin believes that three levels of meaning comes with any utterance:

- **Locutionary act** – the literal meaning of the sentence,
- **Illocutionary act** – the intended function of the speaker (e.g., promising, requesting),
- **Perlocutionary act** – the effect produced on the listener (e.g., persuasion, fear).

Searle expanded this and subdivided illocutionary acts into five categories:

1. **Representatives** – assert truth (e.g., stating facts),

2. **Directives** – attempt to get the listener to do something (e.g., orders, requests),
3. **Commissives** – commit the speaker to future actions (e.g., promises, vows),
4. **Expressives** – express psychological states (e.g., regrets, thanks),
5. **Declaratives** – bring about change through utterance (e.g., resigning, baptizing).

In the present research, Searle taxonomy has been adopted as an analytical tool to analyze the illocutionary force behind the dialogues of the *Juno and the Paycock*. Through speaking, the characters of the play, in particular Juno, Jack, and Joxer represent the world of poverty, conflict, and gender oppression. Their speech is not a mere expression of some meaning but an act which represents the power relation, identity-seeking and social location in the Irish tenements milieu.

Within this framework the study examines the processes by which speech is transformed into action and language constructs or fractures relations, classifies, recreates and reproduces relations of dominance and systems of control as well as resistance and resignation.

Data Analysis

In this paper, the researchers attempt to present a critical reception of *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), a Sean O Casey work based on Speech Act Theory which is broadly a five-fold categorization introduced by John Searle, effective communication, command, order, promise, speech and expression. The leading aim is to examine the way the characters of the play employ language both to speak but also to act it demands of them to mark their authority, demonstrate their feelings, give and receive promises, command and change social facts. This paper aims of examining these illocutionary forces as they appear in the three acts of the play to bring out deeper meanings into the psychology of the characters involved as well as their social and political background and power dynamics within the tenements of Dublin in early 20 th century.

Application of Speech Act Theory

In response, Speech Act Theory, as it is known was originally conceived by John L. Austin and subsequently ameliorated by John Searle (1976) and holds that language is not only a medium through which information is conveyed, but rather a speech act which is itself an action. Characteristic features of a dramatic text, such as *Juno and the Paycock* are the fact that characters do not simply talk, but act with their speech. A typical example, similar to the phrase, I will go to the doctor is commissive behavior, one which promises the individual to take some sort of action in the future. When Juno says, “*We’ll leave this place,*” it is not simply information — it is a decision that alters her family’s trajectory.

This theory allows one to comprehend how dialogue works in a play. Language as the most immediate means of negotiation, rejection, and survival takes a predominant position in the world of the play by O casey, where characters are economically disempowered, politically powerless, and have to face the patriarchal conventions. Dividing and counting these speech acts, we will be able to follow the use of language by characters and learn about social situations they have to face.

Quantitative Breakdown of Speech Acts

Speech Act Type	Act One	Act Two	Act Three	Total	Percentage
Representative	13	13	7	33	30.27%

Directive	5	8	8	21	19.27%
Commissive	6	8	10	24	22.01%
Expressive	7	7	5	19	17.43%
Declarative	1	0	5	6	5.50%
Total	32	36	35	103	100%

Representative Speech Acts (30.27%)

The use of representative speech acts overwhelmed the conversation in all the three acts. These are utterances, which bind the speaker to the reality of the uttered statement. They are mainly applied in situation description, expression of beliefs and an event narration. An example can be Captain Boyle who in many occasions resorts to representative statements either to justify his failure to act or to portray himself as a big person: *“Captain Boyle can look after himself.”* These statements mean that he not only denies the reality but also he has delusional bravado. As opposed to these, the actions of Juno are based on realism. She speaks with sincerity and emotional and social awareness as she can always make remarks about the weakening family structure, economic uncertainty, and the suffering of her children. Her speech as a representative of ordinary people acts as counter-discourse to her husband whose escapism is rooted in concrete outcomes of Irish tenement life.

Commissive Speech Acts (22.01%)

There is significant presence of commissive acts where the speaker is committing them to a future act as shown in the text. The frequency rises in number in the progression between the first and third acts indicating something has changed about the agency of the characters in particular of Juno. To give an example, when Juno sets that she is going to run out of the house with her daughter Mary, she is not merely proclaiming her choice but forming a pivot in the story. Her commissive behavior is her way of rebelling against an order of patriarchy in which she is meant to be a victim of misery.

However the commissive acts of Captain Boyle cannot always be trusted. He does not waste any opportunity to come up with some empty promises, telling his family he is going to get a job or assume his responsibilities, but they are not followed up most of the time. Thematically, his untruthfulness in promising is the opposite of Juno, giving more evidence of the authenticity of female power over false masculinity.

Directive Speech Acts (19.27%)

Most of the characters use directive acts i.e. commands, suggestions, requests to compel others or for someone to act. Such actions are most likely in domestic arena where power struggles on who is going to be in control and who is going to put who under responsibility are most evident. Juno employs directive speech acts repeatedly to rein in the order of the household: e.g. or better, or sit down and have a cup of tay, Joxer. Such statements, which appear to be ordinary, reflect her power and nursing position in the house.

Interestingly, Captain Boyle also resorts to acts of directive, although very frequently in order to take it off the shoulders: *“Go out of this place! Ay, she shall get out of this place a quick tool”* This dictatorial voice is barren and pathetic, as he fails to resort to actions when it is actually required. In this way, directive acts represent an aspect of family dynamics of power and illustrate the power of language, which can be used as means of control but, on the other hand, as a tool of care.

Expressive Speech Acts (17.43%)

Expressive acts show psychological condition of the speaker, his/her feelings and personal reaction. These play a key role in creating the emotional tone of the play in Juno and the

Paycock. Take the case of Juno, her grief, frustration, and sorrow are usually voiced using lines such as *“Holy Mary, Mother o God or isn t this a nice thing to fall on top o me?”* Such phrases are the catharsis and they reaffirm the emotional load that female characters have.

Mary Boyle resorts to expressive speech acts rather often too to express her inner contradiction, ashamed self and fear in particular issues of her pregnancy. Her rejection of Jerry Devine's proposal and subsequent realization of her vulnerability are key expressive moments in the play.

Even relatively minor characters, like Joxer and Mrs. Madigan, are used to provide the expressive dimension, mostly through satire and comic exaggeration, bringing emotional balance to and a broader perspective of the desperation and comedy within the community.

Declarative Speech Acts (5.50%)

Declarative acts are not as commonly found as performative acts, but they play the key role in changing the turn of the play. This is where there is change brought about by these kinds of statements made merely by pronouncing them like passing a declaration or making a diagnosis or a decision that is official. As Mary gets pregnant, the words serve a declarative act: because Mary is going to have a baby in the near future. This does not only change her social standing, but also makes Juno decide about leaving her husband, which is a declarative action in itself as well.

They are few but liberating moments proving that despite all the oppressive standards instilled in the realm, it is possible to make a difference with words. These illocutionary powers indicate how characters struggle to oppose, remake, and repossess their realities using the instance of speech.

Thematic and Contextual Implications

The general scheme of the speech acts used supports the realist and the political dramaturgy of Sean O Casey. Domination of representative acts is supported by the fact that O Casey is concerned with representing a world being laden with economic hardship, false promises and political disappointments. The directive and commissive acts reveal the bargaining process of life unlike the expressive acts which humanize the inner agony of the characters.

Culturally, culturally feminist approaches to illocutionary patterns also indicate the gendering of speech in the play. The language of women is pragmatic, emotional and morally responsible, especially of Juno. Instead, the speech used by men tends to point to fantasy, denial, or performative masculinity and points out their inability to satisfy the conventional gender roles. The play speech acts also support the tragi-comic color in the play. The humor is created by misfiring speech acts created by delusions of grandeur of Captain Boyle whereas tragic development of the story is created through solemn statements and articulate lamentations. Speech acts through this rapid give-and-take represent the shaky, turbulent universe of tenements in Dublin through the Irish Civil War.

Conclusion

This study has investigated illocutionary forces in Juno and the Paycock by Sean O casey in the context of the Speech Act Theory and how language can be used beyond a means of communication but as an agent of social action and influencing power. Using theoretical background of Austin and Searle, as well as some textual and quantitative evidence, the article has revealed that representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative illocutionary acts are structural/thematic scaffoldings in the play.

The results show that the characters of O Casey, especially Juno Boyle, Jack Boyle and Mary, use speech acts in order to overcome the dominating socio-political situation of the 1920s of the life in the Dublin tenement. The consequent expansion of commissive and declarative acts that are used by Juno depicts her agency and emotional's fortitude signifying her as moral and

practical heart of the household. On the contrary, the dependence of Captain Boyle on the performative representative and failed commissive acts shows his escapism, impotence, and loss of power.

This paper can attest to the fact that in the state of limited economy, patriarch dominance, volatile politics, language turns out to be the most reachable and effective medium of self-affirmation, of dignity, and defiance. In the tenements of O, physical force is weak and material agency is excluded, so the characters resort to speech as the essential mode of power, affiliation and subsistence.

Altogether, the study confirms the importance of using Speech Act Theory in the analysis of literary drama, which provides linguistic and cultural insight into the concept of words as actions as a theatrical and a social phenomenon. *Juno and the Paycock* is a demonstration of the fact that no word is insignificant the words that are spoken on the stage of O'Casey are created, negotiated, and destroyed to create and complete personal and social world. In this case words do not just describe the world, words create the world.

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