

COVID-19 and Advice Speech Act: A Syntactic-Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

Advising is a significant activity in a number of organizational health settings, including face-to-face counseling and the dissemination of information via pamphlets, posters, television, and Internet. Health-related advice includes anything from medicine to stopping smoking, getting immunized, and modifying one's diet. A strange sickness initially manifested itself in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. This disease spread rapidly over the world and was eventually named coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Due to the disease's global expansion, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared it a pandemic, which indicates that it is spreading among individuals in a large number of nations, resulting in mortality. In early May, the WHO announced that more than 200 thousand individuals had died. The situation is worse, as the number of reported cases continues to rise daily. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the language of acts and advising actions, as well as the right method of advising. The advising act verbs and COVID-19 can be investigated syntactically and pragmatically. There is an effective function for advice speeches in relation to COVID-19 announcements and advice. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between the number of mistakes and accuracy in the eight questions across the eight groups. The study's findings indicate that Iraqi students do not follow health recommendations supplied by foreign health organizations. Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO is one of the leaders capable of effectively managing its concerns and taking proactive measures to contain the disease by issuing directives addressing the viruses as contagious agents. By including these characteristics of syntactic-pragmatic advising acts, these sorts of actions may be comprehended and executed by everyone in any scenario when speaking. Iraqi EFL learners had an unsatisfactory performance evaluation result as a result of inadequate teaching of PV in connection with public advice during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Keywords: Covid19, Speech acts. Commissives, Declarations, Expressives, directives, representatives, syntactic structures, pragmatics, semantics, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary

1. Introduction

Austin coined the term "speech act" in 1960. It occurs when anything is stated. It is an activity that is carried out by speech, according to Yule (1996, p. 47). It is the unspoken meaning of a speaker's words. The locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary categories of speech acts were identified by Cruse (2004). On the basis of the locutionary, the utterance (what speakers say) is made. The purposeful meaning or purpose of what speakers say is referred to as the illocutionary component of communication. Perlocutionary, on the other hand, refers to the impact of the speaker's words. It has the potential to have an impact on the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors of the recipient. An important part of this study is to examine the illocutionary element, which deals with the capacity of words to accomplish a certain objective. In order to welcome, question, command, suggest, request, inform, and counsel, the illocutionary act is used.

In accordance with Searle (1979, p. 177), there are five different kinds of speech acts: assertive (representing the speaker's belief in truth), directive (requiring the recipient to do something), commissive (requiring the speaker to take future action), expressive (expressing the speaker's belief or a sincere wish regarding some condition or situation), and declarative (expressing the speaker's belief or a sincere wish regarding some condition or situation) (which creates the belief to which it refers) be baptized or excommunicated.

Wuhan, China, was hit hard by a peculiar illness that initially surfaced towards the end of 2019. Known as coronavirus disease, it quickly spread across the globe. The WHO has designated the illness a pandemic because of its worldwide spread and the deaths it is causing across many nations. In early May, the WHO announced that more than 200 thousand individuals had died. The situation is worse, as the number of reported cases continues to rise daily.

Numerous countries' presidents respond to this issue with presidential addresses outlining their country's status and strategy for dealing with the epidemic. When people communicate with one another using language in a given setting, they create utterances. Utterance is a speech analysis unit that can be defined in a variety of ways depending on the communication environment. When a phrase is said, the speaker does not just state it. Terms like warn, order, inform, deny, and assure must express a sense. This is referred to as a speaking act.

The syntactic-pragmatic study of speech acts focuses on how they interpret meaning in certain contexts, according to Yule (1996). This is only a portion of what it means that a pragmatic language study is important for those who work in communication to grasp what meaning implies in the utterances that speakers produce in order for the message to be received in its intended context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Interrelation between Syntax and Pragmatics*

Language units and their users are the focus of pragmatics, which studies "all psychological, biological, and social processes related to the functioning of signs". Psychological factors include our own experiences, which can help us develop our cognitive abilities and mature at a more advanced level. Gender, age, and behavior are some of the topics covered by the biological component. Political institutions, education, society, and societal norms are some of the sociological factors. Syntactic-semantic norms and pragmatic principles can work together in a variety of ways, and these rules can be both generative and regulative.

The study of meaning at the word and phrase level is known as semantics. You may choose from a variety of chains and alternatives (that is, structural or lexical, horizontally or vertically). "Kid or child" is an example of a "chain" vs. an "option." Furthermore, semantic conditions of truth that are culturally particular are covered by syntax, such as "shades of meaning" (polysemy), interpretation (presumptions), implications, and compositional meaning (figurative language like metaphors). In contrast to this, a group's vision of the world is what defines the language they use to identify themselves as part of their own distinct group. In northern Mexico, "ice cream" (or "nieve") is pronounced precisely like "snow." Frozen (helado) is a term that is used to describe both snow and ice in southern Mexico. To better comprehend a speaker, you need to know where they come from and what type of community they belong to. A word's meaning may be influenced by its phonological and phonetic properties, as well as its syntactic and semantic norms. Pragmatics is a branch of logic that takes into account both syntax and semantics. Mey (2001) proposes a three-tiered pyramid of possible contexts:

- Restricted to syntax and some semantics, linguistic theory is the narrowest.
- where the discussion occurs and some additional semantic backdrop is formed, such as the relationship between communicators, their attitude, mood, environment and subject.
- This is the bottom of the pyramid and encompasses both the first two and their institutionalization. The interplay between education, religion, government, and the family (i.e., culture) is most evident here. It's the way people interact and communicate in a language.

If the theological trinity of the father, son, and spirit is taken into consideration, then it is possible to tie together the three facets of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Linguistics is a trinity, with semantics, syntax, and pragmatics as its three members. It is semantics that can explain and provide meaning; syntax (structures of word order and grammar) are the tools to grasp and explain what's being said, as is pragmatics.

2.2 *Definition of Speech Act*

Humans have always needed to be able to communicate with one another. The exchange of ideas among people, which directly contributes to the improvement of the standard of living, may be accomplished via communication. A person's ability to discern statements in a conversation may have a significant impact on their subsequent behavior. Verbal and nonverbal communication may be used to communicate information. There are two kinds of communication: verbal and nonverbal communication, according to Buck (2002). Verbal communication is a means of conveying information through the use of language and other linguistic forms. There are several ways to communicate a message without using words; they include nonverbal communication and studying how people's beliefs are transmitted through their actions rather than through their words. The speakers' utterances have a deeper significance than the words or phrases they use to express themselves.

In both verbal and nonverbal communication, a speech act, a kind of verbal communication, and a subcategory of pragmatics occur. Speech actions, according to Yule (1996), are an investigation of the ways in which speakers and listeners interact with language. An action in verbal communication is essentially a message, Bach (1979) says. As a result, effective communication involves more than just words. A speech act is the utterance that takes place, whereas an act is a specific activity. When a speaker says anything, there are more than just words or phrases at play.

That which is done with spoken words is called a speech act, according to Austin. Speech acts, according to Yule (1996), are actions that are carried out via utterances. A similar point is being made. When you say anything, you're really doing it. By just stating anything, folks may accomplish a task here. As a result of speech acts, the speaker is able to transmit physical actions just by using words and phrases because these speech acts may play a vital role in the speaker's pragmatic competence (Chen, 2017). The statements transmitted are of fundamental importance to the actions that are taken (Odebodem and Dabi, 2015).

2.3 *Types of Speech Acts*

According to Austin (1962:108), there are three categories of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary.

2.3.1 *Locutionary*

The act of locutionary speaking is the same as making a specific utterance with a specific context and reference, which is the same as the conventional sense of the word (Austin, 1962). "Locutionary" is what is uttered, according to Cutting (2002). Producing meaningful

utterances is what Yule (1996) calls a locutionary act. For example:

1. It's so dark in this room.

As said, the situation is as described above. In the first statement, it is about the room's illumination, and in the second, it is about the box.

2.3.2 Illocutionary

An utterance's expressive power, such as promising, apologizing, or offering, is used to accomplish the illocutionary act (Yule, 1996). The act of doing something in order to say something is also known as the act of speaking something. If you want your audience to respond in a certain way, you must first choose what kind of force you want to utilize in your speech. It's an accurate portrayal of the current state of the engagement.

For example:

1. It's so dark in this room.

There is a request to turn on the light and a request to hoist up the box, as seen in instances one and two.

2.3.3 Perlocutionary

Hufford and Heasley (1983) defined a perlocutionary act as the action a speaker takes when a speech has an impact on the hearer. In addition, it's the act of giving something to someone. What you say affects the other person's beliefs or actions. Perlocutionary acts allude to this. This is unique to the setting in which it is issued, and as a result, it cannot be done in a traditional way by just saying the words. It encompasses all the consequences, both intentional and unplanned, that a given speech in a certain scenario may have. For example:

-It is so dark in this room.

The above is a true representation of the situation. It's a term used to describe how a room is lit.

2.4 Classifications of Speech Act

Five types of speech acts may be classified. "Representatives, directives, commissive, expressive, and declarations" are all included in Searle and Levinson (1983) as the five kinds of communication.

a. Representatives

Speech acts, such as those performed by representatives commit them to the truth in their statements. There is a direct correlation between the speaker's observations and the utterances. It is possible for a person to remark

2. She's gorgeous.

since they are expressing their own personal opinion regarding the physical appearance of a person. It also expresses whether or not the speaker has certain beliefs. They are all instances of the speaker's interpretation of the world, and they are all examples of how he or she sees it from his or her point of view. "The world is flat" is an example of a statement that the speaker has made. According to the speaker, the world is flat. Examples of representative speech act verbs include: remind, tell, assert, deny; correct; state; guess; forecast; report; describe; insist; agree; claim; and conclude.

b. Directives

The speaker utilizes directive speech actions to persuade another person to do something. The following speech actions are included in this category: asking, inquiring, commanding, ordering, and proposing. For instance, when someone asks

3. Could you give me a pencil, please?

the utterance indicates the speaker is requesting something from the hearer, in this case, lending him a pencil.

c. Commissive

Commissive speech acts are those in which the speaker's statements bind him or her to a future course of action; examples include promising, threatening, offering, refusing, and promises. For instance, when someone says

4. I'll be back

this reflects the speaker's commitment to return.

d. Expressive

Words that indicate a state of mind are considered expressive speech. All of these are instances of speaking acts, such as thanking, apologizing, welcoming, and applauding. There are times when someone tells you, as in:

5. Do not be scared, my house is your home

for example. Using this phrase, the speaker is expressing a wish to see someone face to face.

e. Declarations

Speech actions that have an immediate impact on the institutional state of affairs are known as declarations, and they frequently rely on complex extra-linguistic structures to be effective. A few instances of these verbal acts include: excommunication, declaration of war,

baptism, and the termination of employment, as in:

6. You have passed away from my consciousness.

2.5 Syntactic Realizations of Advice

Martinet (2001) notes that advice may be conveyed using a variety of language forms and idioms, such as:

A. "must, ought to and should can be used to express advice":

7. You should grow your vegetables.

B. "You had better + bare infinitive"

8. You'd better take off your wet shoes.

C. "If I were you, I should / would ..."?:

9. If I were you, I would buy a car?

D. "I advise / would advise you + infinitive or I advise / would advise you +gerund"

10. I (would) advise you to apply at once.

11. I (would) advise applying at once.

2.7 Syntactic and Pragmatic Strategies of Advice

Martinez-Flor (2003) observes that three distinct tactics are employed to carry out the advising speech act. There are three types of strategies: direct, conventionally indirect, and unconventionally indirect study." "Don't go out till late." "Declarative phrases with should or ought to clauses" and "Declarative sentences with performative verbs" are all examples of first-category methods. "I encourage you to study more," for example. The noun and verb 'advise' are used interchangeably in "My counsel to you." The indirect conventionalized approach consists of three language realizations: conditional, as in "If I were you, I would study," probability, as in "It could be desirable for you to study hard," and unique interrogative formulations.

According to Matsumura (2001), the effectiveness of the forms used to communicate advice determines the difference between direct and indirect guidance. For instance, direct counsel might include the phrases "You must", "You should", "You'd best", and imperatives. Other kinds of indirect advice include "You can...", "You may wish to...", and "It might/would be a good idea."

The third category of techniques is indirect non-traditional strategies, which include clues in which the speaker's objectives are not stated clearly, such as

12. You want to pass, don't you? (Martinez - Flor, 2003).

The table below outlines many language methods used to provide advice:

Table 1. Linguistic Strategies Used to Express Advice.

Type	Strategy	Example
Direct	Imperative Negative imperative, Declarative Performative	Be careful Don't worry You should/ought to/must/had better.... I advise you.... My advice is.....
Indirect Conventionalized	Conditional Probability Interrogative Declarative	If I were you....? It might be better for you. Why don't you...? You can/ could/might...
Indirect Non-conventionalized	Hints	You want to pass, don't you?

2.8 Advising Speech Act

In many institutional health settings, face-to-face consultations and messages conveyed through pamphlets, posters, television, and the Internet are essential components of the care provided. In the course of providing health advice, activities may include everything from taking medicine to giving up smoking, getting immunized, and changing one's eating habits. Advice-giving is usual and asymmetric in health visits to first-time mothers, according to Heritage and Sefi (1992).

When someone gives you advice, you should consider it normative in the sense that it always includes a judgment about future behavior or action (e.g., as "desirable, good, or healthy"). A consultant "describes, suggests, or otherwise advances a desired path of future action" (Heritage & Sefi, 1992, p. 368).

Searle's (1976) taxonomy of illocutionary actions classifies advising acts as instructions. Haverkate (1984, cited in Martnez-Flor, 2003) also says that there is a difference between impositive and non-impressive exhortative speech actions. Counsel falls into the non-impressive category because the speaker is not pressuring as much as they are demanding. Another hallmark of the directive speech act is its confrontational aspect. Brown and Levinson (1987) characterize delivering counsel as an essentially face-threatening act, even

when the speaker implies that he or she has no intention of evading the addressee's freedom of action. Successful advice-giving is contingent upon the advisor's ability to adjust advice to the receiver and eliminate any barriers to its acceptance. This requires an adviser to respond to or, even better, anticipate any criticisms of counsel and move them out of the way.

2.9 COVID-19

The coronavirus 2 that causes severe acute respiratory illness (SARS-CoV-2) is the cause of the coronavirus, or COVID-19. It was discovered in Wuhan, China, in 2019 and has since spread fast over the globe. The World Health Organization declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. It has infected over 5 million individuals in the United States since then, and the death toll has risen to over 219,000 at the time of publication. United States that were originally identified as COVID-19 epicenters were able to reduce community transmission via shelter-in-place orders, mandated masks, and social distancing measures. COVID-19 may spread quickly between humans through respiratory droplets generated by breathing, singing, speaking, coughing, or sneezing.

2.10 Advice Act and COVID-19

The distinction between health counseling and other sorts of guidance may be clarified by reference to one of Searle's (1976) dimensions for categorizing speech actions. An important characteristic is the "differences between activities that require the assistance of extra-linguistic institutions and those that do not" (Searle, 1976, p. 6). It is necessary to employ an extra-linguistic institution to provide advice in health-related circumstances since the speech act of advising requires it. When it comes to health communication, advice is credible not only because of the extra-linguistic institution that provides it, but it is also implemented because the institution has some responsibility for the well-being of those who receive it as well (Childress et al., 2002).

The speaker always has a good reason to believe that the conduct he or she recommends would improve the hearer's health when it comes to offering advice in health situations (or the health of someone the hearer is responsible for). Because health professionals have a responsibility to both people and a broader part of the public, the activities that are prescribed should not be harmful to others in the community. The advised action should be beneficial to both the person who is hearing it and the general public. It is also possible that the act to which the speech act is connected is narrowed because advice-giving in the health sector is constantly concerned with health-related action. Such "health-related" behaviors might include a wide variety of activities. We can differentiate between activities intended to prevent a health issue, acts intended to treat a health problem, and acts intended to detect a health problem (van Poppel, 2013).

The World Health Organization is one of the most dependable sources of advice on everyday health matters around the world. Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO is one of the leaders that can effectively manage COVID-19 difficulties and take swift and decisive action to contain COVID-19 by educating people about how to cope with the virus as an infectious agent.

3. Method

3.1 Data Adopted of the Study

The approach used is a questionnaire to obtain data from pupils. Additionally, other features are included to ensure that things are obvious. After the supervisor has corrected all issues and made the final revisions, the assignment is presented to the students. In general, the questionnaire was circulated and gathered online through Google Forms during a two-week period. Ten minutes have been allotted for completing the questionnaire. The data is then examined using SPSS and descriptive statistics, as well as an independent sample T-test.

3.2 Participants

The study involves 100 students who are Iraqi EFL learners at Tikrit University/Department of English, fourth stage. Those who take part are 70, but others do not participate in the questionnaire. The participants are both male and female, and they are from different areas of Iraq and of different social classes.

3.3 Instruments

This study collects data from students using a single research instrument, a questionnaire. The questionnaire is the primary instrument for determining how students communicate their views on something positive via complementary behaviors. According to Nunan (1992), a questionnaire is a sort of data collection tool that is typically written. It consists of open-ended and/or closed-ended questions, as well as other probes that require responses from subjects. The questionnaire for this study is composed of eighteen multiple-choice items. Each item describes a situation that necessitates a complementing act in one of the possible combinations of power, distance, or imposition. It requires students to read eighteen descriptions of situations and then choose one of three responses to each situation. Additionally, the use of this test serves to confirm the test's objectivity.

3.4 Data Analysis

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international health institutions, advice regarding COVID-19 was given in a strict and direct manner because it was addressed to the public, and because of the seriousness of the situation regarding an ongoing pandemic, the advice was given without further discussion. Many published articles provide advice in the form of questions that most people will ask regarding the pandemic. Such as the following WHO pieces of advice:

"Maintain at least a 1-metre distance between yourself and others to reduce your risk of infection".

- *"Make wearing a mask a normal part of being around other people."*

- "Clean your hands before you put your mask on, as well as before and after you take it off, and after you touch it at any time."
 - "Make sure it covers both your nose, mouth and chin."
 - "Wear a mask continuously while you travel, frequently clean your hands with hand sanitizer, cover a cough or sneeze with a bent elbow or tissue, and maintain at least a 1"
 - "metre distance from others wherever possible. You should stop travelling as soon as feasible." (WHO, 2021)
- We can observe that answers in which the speaker is attempting to compel the addressee to act, i.e., contain imperatives, and the modal verb is 'should' in "You should..." or a direct verb, "Wear a mask," without equivocation.
- While the advice may appear harsh in light of the fact that it concerns public health in the face of a pandemic, it was respectful and professional. As can be seen, all three of Hinkle's tactics were discovered, although the most often employed were direct and hedge. Along with Hinkle's tactics, our present guidance analysis is classified as directed advice by Searle (1969) and as a positive-face act by Levinson (1983).
- The illocutionary act is the most significant activity level of a speech act because the speaker's desired force governs it. The illocutionary act may be a more accurate description of the interaction state. It may be observed in the true meaning of the adviser's statements. The WHO has employed representational, commissive, and directive illocutionary actions in its advisory speech act. Each word has a distinct function and a distinct meaning.

Giving sound advice in English is a difficult speech act, according to Hinkel (1997), and it should be undertaken with caution until the speaker is reasonably certain that the hearer is likely to heed the counsel. All advice should be hedged and never overtly offered in order to avoid offending the hearer. The speaker is presumed to have the power or right to offer counsel (Hinkel, 1997, p. 24). Empirical research indicates that offering advice as a form of solidarity and aid frequently results in misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers. Cultural differences make it difficult to communicate effectively without addressing some pragmatic issues. As a result, effective advice realizations are critical for establishing and maintaining connections within a speech community. However, the World Health Organization uses the appropriate language to convey their advice to alleviate public concern regarding COVID-19. By issuing a statement, it is critical to take preventative measures in order to resolve and manage the pandemic. As a result, they can maintain control of the entire situation and limit virus-related illnesses and fatalities.

3.5 Conclusions

1. Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO is one of the leaders capable of effectively managing COVID-19 concerns and taking swift and decisive action to contain COVID-19 by issuing directives addressing the viruses as contagious agents.
2. Based on Austin, Searle, Leech, and Thomas's pragmatic interpretations of performatives and their system of categories and subcategories, the classification of illocutionary acts has been a significant pastime for those wishing to conduct a thorough examination of the things that can be done with words to 'produce performative sentences'.
3. Most of the syntactic structures that are used to give speech acts of advice are direct and in a full syntactic structure so as to be clear for every recipient of the advice.
4. Most of the sentences carrying the speech acts of advice are put forward in simple syntactic forms so as to make ambiguity of structure far from being there.

3.6 Suggestions

By including these characteristics of syntactic-pragmatic advising acts, these sorts of actions may be comprehended and executed by everyone in any scenario when speaking. Iraqi EFL learners' bad performance evaluation resulted from inadequate teaching of PV in reference to public advice for the COVID-19 epidemic.

3.7 Recommendations

- 1- COVID-19 is spreading across our community; therefore, it is critical to take basic measures such as physical separation, wearing a mask, keeping rooms properly aired, avoiding crowds, washing your hands, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue. And here are some precautions to take to protect yourself and others from illness.
- 2- The general public takes into account the recommendations made by international health agencies.
- 3- The learner and instructor should be the first line of defence since they are regarded as the most intellectual segment of society and have a better grasp of the problem.
- 4- It is critical to understand how to give correct and accurate advice by employing the most effective method of communication.
- 5- Researchers should conduct further research on a large scale in the future, using a larger community as study subjects.

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Authors contributions

Asst. Pro. Dr. Samara M. Ahmed, and Asst. lecturer. Ali. E. Rushdi were responsible for study design and revising. Dr. Ahmed F. Saber, was

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