| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Literature Review on the Research Progress of Speech Act Theory and Its Applications

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| ABSTRACT

Speech act exists in every aspect of people's daily life and performs an extinguished position in people's communication. Speech Act Theory was first proposed by the British philosopher J.L. Austin and later expounded and revised by the American philosopher J. Searle, which linked the meaning of language with speech act for the first time, opening up a new perspective for the study of meaning in the philosophy of language and logic. Through a brief review of the literature related to speech acts in the past 40 years, this paper introduces the background of Speech Act Theory, summarizes the content framework of it, reviews the relevant research and evaluation of the theory by domestic and foreign scholars, and analyzes the current application and research of the theory in related fields. Finally, this paper calls on research on the application of the theory in analyzing speech acts in such hot-discussed fields as artificial intelligence in an attempt to contribute to the modernity process of Speech Act Theory.

1. Introduction

Speech Act Theory originated from the study of meaning by philosophers and is, therefore, a theory for the study of language meaning. From different perspectives, Speech Act Theory has various shortcomings, such as the tendency to despise the inherent meaning of language elements and the lack of research on the perlocutionary act. However, Speech Act Theory has indeed played a unique role in promoting the development of meaning theory from being static to dynamic, effectively expanding the dimension of meaning research, providing a new perspective for meaning research, and further deepening people's understanding of meaning.

In this review, the historical background of Speech Act Theory is analyzed firstly, followed by the explanation of the reasons for the linguistic turn and the introduction of the development process of Speech Act Theory from the root; secondly, the review tries to give a critical comment on Austin's development of Speech Act Theory. The propositional and theoretical defects of constatives and performatives are introduced, and the critical evaluation of Austin's Speech Act Theory is conducted. Thirdly, Searle's inheritance, revision, and development of Speech Act Theory are expounded, explicating Searle's unique views and interpreting his contribution to Speech Act Theory. Finally, the application and development of Speech Act Theory are summarized, and the related research on Speech Act Theory at home and abroad is concluded as well.

2. Methodology
2.1 Combination of Chinese and Western research findings.
Language research in the West has a long history and profound accumulation, especially since the establishment of linguistics. Language research has entered the fast track of scientific development. For the Speech Act Theory, the West has numerous related fruits in this research situation. In this paper, it is necessary to draw on and absorb the reasonable elements of Western scholars.

At the same time, Speech Act Theory has been widely known in China for a long time, and many scholars in China have conducted in-depth research on it, providing us with a good theoretical basis and a solid theoretical foundation for understanding Speech Act Theory from different perspectives. In short, both Western and Chinese scholars' research on Speech Act Theory contains valuable insights of language scholars on speech act. The combination of Western and Eastern ideas will surely produce wonderful sparks.

2.2 Literature Reading Method
This paper reviews the current research progress in Speech Act Theory through the literature reading method. The literature involved in this paper includes both Chinese and English literature, and the combination of Chinese and English literature helps to better observe the development trend of Speech Act Theory at home and abroad. Since Speech Act Theory has been in existence for more than 7 decades, it has spanned a large period of time. In this regard, this paper only selects the works of the great authors and the key evaluation statements of key figures in the field to conduct a targeted study so as to make a concise and highly summarized general study of the Speech Act Theory as much as possible.

3. Literature Review
3.1 Background of Speech Act Theory: Linguistic Turn of Philosophy
With the baptism of the European Enlightenment in the 18th century, the revolutionary progress of natural science in the 19th century, and the emergence of psychology in the 20th century as an empirical science, the three major themes of traditional Western philosophy: God, matter, and soul gradually faded out of the field of Western philosophy research, and philosophy is therefore faced with a serious existential problem: where is the way out? (Fu Xitao, 2004)

The successful development of mathematical logic in the late 19th century inspired philosophers to investigate the nature of logic. Logic is reflected by language, and the meaning of language exists between facts, thoughts, and language, which neither belongs to the physical world nor the personal psychological world (Zhao Dunhua, 2001). Traditional philosophers discussed the meaning of language, took linguistics as their own research object, and analyzed language from a philosophical perspective, especially the philosophical research on language meaning and language use, which opened up a new philosophical field and philosophical object and realized the "Linguistic Turn" of modern philosophy. Therefore, "philosophy of language" can generally refer to philosophical research with language as its main subject in the 20th century. (Searl. 2006).

Another turn has occurred repeatedly within the philosophy of language; that is, language analysis no longer focuses on the meaning of words and sentences but on the function of speech acts, shifting attention from what language says to what language does. The Oxford School, who proclaimed themselves as language philosophers, believes that meaning is reflected in the usage and that describing the meaning of a word is giving the way it is used, showing the speech act that the word allows us to accomplish. Under the influence of the above historical background and this trend of thought, John Austin published *How to Do Things with Words* in 1962, marking the establishment of Speech Act Theory.

The philosophy of language needs to answer two questions: the meaning of language; the relationship between language and the world (Chen Jiaying, 2003). Speech Act Theory is special in that it explores the problem of meaning from the interpretation of the relationship between words and the world, arguing that the meaning of a sentence lies not in its true or false value but in what it does. Therefore, it can be said that Speech Act Theory opens up a new way of thinking for the discussion of meaning.

3.2 Austin's Speech Act Theory
Speech Act Theory is one of the core contents of modern pragmatics, originating from Austin's exploration of three philosophical issues: (1) the relationship between the everyday language and the philosophical research; (2) the methodology of research; (3) and the division between constatives and performatives. The distinction between constatives and performatives is the direct source of Austin's Speech Act Theory, and it is a breakthrough to contend with Logical Positivism.

Austin believes that to say something is to do something. Therefore, in his opinion, the object of linguistic research should not be words and sentences but should be the speech act completed by words and sentences. He believes that language is not only a tool to describe the objective world but also an act itself, that is, a speech act (Duan Kaicheng 1988). Based on the above understanding, Austin distinguishes two types of discourse in his work *How to Do Things with Words*: constatives and performatives. The purpose of constatives is to indicate things with words, and the purpose of performatives is to act with words. In other words, the constatives means a statement or an expression that can describe or express facts or situations, which is verifiable, that is, there is a truth or a false value, like the sentence "British is located in Europe"; the performatives is not verifiable, because it is used to perform a certain action not to describe or express a fact or a situation. Therefore, it has no truth or false value, but it can be appraised by the felicitous and the infelicitous. Besides, the implementation of performatives needs to meet three Happiness Conditions: firstly, the speaker is a person who has the conditions to carry out a certain speech act; secondly, the speaker must be

sincere about the speech act that he or she wants to carry out; thirdly, the speaker cannot go back on what he or she has said. In conclusion, the function of performatives is to act with words, such as the sentence when a judge says to a defendant, "I declare you to be in prison for ten years", and the word "declare" is a kind of act which put the defendant in prison for the next ten years. Since Austen's speech, Act Theory focuses more on performatives, which has even become synonymous with speech act (Levison, 1983).

Austin divides performative sentences into three types: explicit performatives, implicit performatives, and embedded performatives. Among them, explicit performatives must have performative verbs, which are equivalent to implementing a non-verbal act, such as "I hereby declare you the monitor of our class", and the word "declare" is a kind of act that appointed the people the position of a monitor; Implicit performatives do not require performative verbs, so the speech act it implements may result in different understandings, and understanding the implicit performatives, consequently, must depend on the relevant context. For example, "I 'll be there" can be understood as "I promise you that I will be there" or "I warn you I'll be there". It can be found that the same sentence can be interpreted differently by different people or in different contexts, and thus it is difficult to determine the real intention of the speaker by the literal meaning alone; The main verb of embedded performatives can be a verb for willingness, such as the word "wish" in "I wish to announce that I promise to be there", or be some structures followed by an infinitive, such as "I am pleased to tell you that you are the monitor of our class".

Although Austin proposed a distinction between constatives and performatives, and classified performatives, he found it unsatisfactory, especially for further exploration, because the three Happiness Conditions he proposed for performatives seem to apply to constatives as well. For instance, the sentence "The cat is on the mat" is equivalent to another one, "I tell you that the cat is on the mat", which can illustrate that the constatives are supposed to contain a speech act as well, and can be explicated by the verb "tell". Due to the flaws in the theory concerning performatives, Austin abandoned the distinction between constatives and performative and established the Speech Act Theory, which proposed that in most cases, a person is performing three acts at the same time as speaking: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. The locutionary act refers to the act of "speaking" itself. The illocutionary act refers to a kind of act carried out through the action of "speaking" and is embedded in the locutionary act. Perlocutionary act refers to the consequences of speaking, that is, the consequences of speech acts. Austin divides illocutionary act into five categories: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives.

Verdictives: this type of speech act is typically a ruling made by a judge, adjudicator, or arbitrator, or a conjecture, affirmation, or affirmative attitude. Most importantly, it is used to make a judgment about something that is not easy to draw conclusions about, such as the truth of something or the value of something. Commonly used verbs are "acquit, convict, find, hold, describe, reckon, estimate, etc.".

Exercitives: it refers to the exercise of power, such as naming, voting, ordering, urging, suggesting, warning, etc. Commonly used verbs are "appreciate, degrade, demote, dismiss, claim, direct, pardon, beg, pray, press, etc.".

Commissives: it generally refers to making commitments or taking responsibility. Once it is performed, people must fulfill their commitments. Commonly used verbs are "promise, contract, undertake, give my word, intend, determined to, shall, purpose, swear, etc.".

Behabitives: it involves a wide range and includes more complex situations. It is closely related to the speaker's attitude and behavior, such as apology, congratulations, comments, comforts, curses, etc. Commonly used verbs are "apologize, thank, deploy, congratulate, overlook, bid, wish, etc.".

Expositives: it is difficult to define, but in the process of performing such kind of act, people's language is connected to reality; it shows how people use language. Commonly used verbs are "withdraw, mention, deny, accept, tell, answer, affirm, apprise, state, etc.".

Austin pioneered the way to study language from the perspective of speech acts and made groundbreaking work, which is mainly reflected in the following four fields: (1) Speech Act Theory has changed people's understanding of the nature of language. Most traditional philosophers and linguists believe that language is a symbol system corresponding to the world. Its primary function is to "depict" the world, convey information about facts, and provide true or false propositions. Speech Act Theory has changed the traditional philosophers' and linguists' understanding of language, giving it a new function, namely the speech act function, so that people begin to understand language during the process of communication interactions; (2) changes in people's view on the nature of language will directly lead to changes in people's view on the relationship between language and the world; (3) Speech Act Theory provides a rational integration of semantics and pragmatics. Austin found another factor besides the truth and falsity of "meaning", that is the pragmatic meaning, which has changed the traditional philosopher's and linguistics' understanding of

language meaning and made the "meaning" complete, which means the integration of pragmatic meaning and semantic meaning. (4) the introduction of the concept of pragmatic meaning not only explains the relationship between semantics and pragmatics but also delimits them. \

There is no doubt that Austin's contribution to language understanding is immortal. Yang Yucheng (2004) stated that the concept of performatives and speech act theory is original and permanent contributions to philosophy and linguistics. Gu Yueguo (1989) believes that although Austin failed to put forward a relatively complete linguistic theory like Saussure, Chomsky, and Halliday, it opened up a new way to study the use of language from the perspective of speech act.

Despite the world's high opinion of Austin, there are some problems with his theory. Austin's classification of illocutionary acts lacks a unified standard, equating the classification of illocutionary acts with the classification of performative verbs, committing the conceptual fallacy that action equals effect. Austin himself pointed out that beyond these five types of speech acts, there are still many marginal acts that are difficult to classify in language, and even among these five types, there are still many overlapping phenomena. Liu Baoshan (1982) believes that the boundaries between various types of performative verbs are not clear-cut because many performative verbs can have several different functions. Gu Yueguo (1994) holds that whether a speaker does a certain illocutionary act cannot be judged without considering his motives and intentions, which Austin ignores. Gu Yueguo (1989) made a new interpretation and criticism of Austin's speech act. While affirming Austin's major contributions to speech act theory, he believed that Austin's understanding of the nature of illocutionary acts had ideological loopholes, and pointed out that the three main shortcomings of its illocutionary act classification: lack of a unified standard for classification; equating speech acts and speech act verbs; the internal content of the classification in the speech act is complex and chaotic. Zhao Dunhua (2001) believed that Austin was less involved in expressing the illocutionary act and did not deeply explore the relationship between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. He believed that Austin's thinking emphasized distinction while ignoring comparison and connection.

3.3 Searle's Contribution to Speech Act Theory
The master of the Speech Act Theory is the American philosopher of language J.R. Searle. He inherited, revised, and developed the Speech Act Theory. After Austin founded the Speech Act Theory, with Searle's further research and development, Speech Act Theory aroused widespread attention in the philosophical and linguistic circles and became the core theory in the field of Western philosophy and linguistics, especially in pragmatics (Fu Xitao 2004). There is a great deal of attention to Speech Act Theory in China as well. Domestic research on Searle's Speech Act Theory is first seen in the works that comment on it. In 1988, Mr. Ji Liang published "*A Summary of Philosophy of English and American Language*", in which the eighth chapter made a comprehensive review of the development of Speech Act Theory and discussed Searle's theory of speech act, which is the earliest domestic study of Searle's speech act. In 1998, Cai Shushan published "*Speech Act and Pragmatic Logic*", which discussed Speech Act Theory in detail.

Searle's outstanding contribution to Speech Act Theory lies in improving it and expounding his own unique insights: Austin proposed speech acts but did not clearly define what speech acts are. Searle narrowed speech acts to acts with words and believed that speech acts are the basic elements of communication; Searle pointed out the weaknesses of the classification made by Austin and thus made a more detailed classification.

Searle's contribution to Speech Act Theory is not only the inheritance and modification of Austin's theories but also the introduction of "Indirect Speech Act Theory", which states that the problem to be solved by Indirect Speech Act Theory is how speakers express indirect illocutionary force through literal force. In this regard, indirect speech acts can be further divided into conventional indirect speech acts and non-conventional indirect speech acts. Conventional indirect speech acts are the general inferences to the literal meaning, mainly out of the politeness to the hearer. Non-conventional indirect speech acts can only be inferred by relying on both participants' common knowledge and context. Searle pointed out that in order for any speech act to be valid, four felicity conditions must be satisfied, namely: propositional content condition, preparatory condition, sincerity condition, and essential condition. The propositional content condition means that the speaker needs to mention an act that he or she will do; the preparatory condition means that the speaker must believe that what he or she is about to do is in the interests of the hearer. The sincerity condition means that the speaker sincerely wants to do the action. The essential condition is that the speaker should assume the obligation to do something. Based on these, Searle divided speech acts into five categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

Elaboration: the speaker makes a commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed; therefore, which can be judged as true or false, such as "statements, assertions, conclusions, etc."

Instructions: the speaker tries to make the listener do a certain thing to some degree, which can be a very gentle suggestion or a strong command, such as "request, beg, order, etc."

Commitment: the speaker undertakes a certain obligation to do something and makes a promise to achieve the future act, such as a "promise, threat, guarantee, etc.".

Expressives: express a certain mental state, such as "congratulations, apologies, welcomes, etc."

Declarations: generally speaking, the execution of such speech acts requires the corresponding non-verbal conventions and asking the speaker have a certain power and status to execute the act, such as "appointment, nomination, resignation, etc."

As the student and disciple of Austin, the pioneer of Speech Act Theory, Searle inherited and introduced new research methods and contents to Speech Act Theory. It can be deservedly said that Searle developed and made a great contribution to Speech Act Theory, which is mainly reflected in the following 2 points: (1) Searle adopted a different research approach from his predecessors to study speech acts, aiming to extract the constitutive rules of speech acts through the study of it, so as to answer what speech acts are. (2) Searle proposed many new research contents, enriched and made a more systematic and clear elaboration to the system of Speech Act Theory. In this way, Searle has broadened the discussion scope of the Speech Act Theory and has further inspired other related research, which allowed Speech Act Theory to develop greatly in the future.

Searle's research is basically purely theoretical, that is, to classify, analyze, and determine the relationship among all possible speech acts in human language (Duan Kaicheng, 1988); Liang Jun (2000) believes that the study of language phenomena from the perspective of speech acts breaks the tradition of statically studying language, and the research on the classification standards of speech acts is a major contribution to the modern philosophy of language and promotes the development of it.

Although Searle's classification is recognized as a more reasonable classification, it does not mean that there are no problems at all; He Zhaoxiong (1988) believed that Searle's classification was not satisfactory, and the biggest shortcoming lay in the lack of a consistent principle and standard for classification; Gu Yueguo (1994) believed that Searle's Speech Act Theory in the later period only paid attention to the individuality of speech acts, and believed that the essence and classification basis of speech acts originated from the intentional mechanism of the brain, ignoring the social nature of speech acts. Searle almost avoided talking about the perlocutionary act, which led to the abnormal development of Speech Act Theory; Li Changnian (1997) argued that Speech Act Theory was still deficient in the study of the correspondence between human behavior patterns and Speech Act Theory, as well as the causes of the formation of speech act styles; Zhu Huimin (2010) believed that Searle's classification defects of speech acts were mainly manifested in two aspects: First, Searle limited the study of speech acts to the human mind, ignoring that speech acts were a kind of characteristic of human social communication activities. Although Searle had begun to emphasize the importance of the shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer in the process of communication, he had neglected the subjectivity of speech acts. Second, Searle's classification of speech acts was mainly made from three aspects: the speaker's psychological state, the scope of adaptation, and the purpose of acting, ignoring the interaction between the hearer and the speaker; Verschueren (1999) believed that speech acts were structurally limited to the sentence level, but the speech acts always appeared in the form of utterance components rather than the form of complete utterances, and speech act theory was, therefore, powerless to analyze some more complex structures; Mey (2001) believed that Searde's speech act classification standard should also add contextual conditions and reference persons of speech acts; Levinson (2001) argued that Searle's classification lacked a principled basis, and although Searle's classification of speech acts was an improvement over Austin's, it was still disappointing. Leech (1983) proposed a new classification from the perspective of interpersonal communication. In addition, Holdcroft (1978), Streek (1980), Levinson (1981), Frank (1981), and Kreckel (1981) also offered critical critiques of Speech Act Theory.

4. Findings

After Austin founded Speech Act Theory, in Searle's further research and development, the theory aroused widespread attention from linguists and became one of the core theories in pragmatic research. But after Austin and Searle, the Speech Act Theory has lost much of its prestige. However, given the situation that the analytical tradition is still prevalent in British and American colleges, related research on Speech Act Theory has never stopped. At present, many scholars have devoted themselves to the ontological and applied research of speech acts, and Speech act theory has been developed and applied continuously in many fields.

Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989) studied speech acts from the perspective of cultures and conducted a comparative study of cross-cultural speech acts. Anna Wierzbicka (1987) conducted semantic research on English speech act verbs. Her book "English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary" divided more than 270 speech act verbs in English into 37 groups for semantic original word interpretation, which expanded the research on the Speech Act Theory. Clark and Carlson (1991) proposed and emphasized the "joint act" in speech acts - an action that can be joint when it is carried out by an ensemble of people acting in coordination.

Clark (1991) pointed out six properties of indirect speech acts (multiplicity of meaning, logical precondition of meaning, rationality of logically derived relations, conventionality, politeness, and purpose) and six characteristics of responding to indirect speech acts (diversity, versatility, orderliness, optionality, politeness, abbreviatedness) and six sources of information for understanding indirect speech acts (conventionalization of manner, conventionalization of form, special marking, implied meaning obviousness, literal irrelevance, and attribution to the speaker's plan or goal). M.A.van Rees (1992) analyzed daily conversation in Speech Act Theory. Harnish (1994) examined the influence of tone on speech act and gave three main tones in English—declarative/expressive, imperative, and interrogative, and discussed the relationship among orce, form, content, and speech act. Savas L. Tsohatzidis (1994) conducted applied research on it, integrating Speech Act Theory with teaching. Verschueren (2000) provided a detailed explanation of the performative nature of speech act verbs, distinguishing between general act verbs and speech act verbs. He believed that if the meaning of an action verb can satisfy both the "action condition or characteristic" of the act to be performed and the "descriptive condition or characteristic" of the act currently expressed in language, then the verb will be a performative speech act verb. But when an action verb satisfies or conforms to the "action condition or characteristic" in a sense but fails to satisfy or conform to the "descriptive condition or characteristic", the action verb cannot be counted as a speech act verb.

After the search at CNKI with the keyword "Speech Act Theory", and on the basis of ensuring the novelty and comprehensiveness of this review, the literature from the past 10 years was selected, and then 638 Chinese literature was retrieved. The figure indicates that domestic scholars have achieved fruitful results in this field. To sum up this literature, the research on speech acts in China is mainly divided into the following four aspects: first, a comprehensive interpretation and evaluation of Speech Act Theory. By sorting out the development context of Speech Act Theory, an overall general comment on Speech Act Theory is made; the second is a specialized research, which explores some of the more attractive issues in Searle's Speech Act Theory from one or more dimensions; the third is the comparison research between Speech Act Theory and the theories from other philosophers; the fourth is an applied study of Speech Act Theory, mostly in the fields of education, literature, and jurisprudence.

5. Conclusions
Through combing and analyzing the literature, it can be found that the current applied research on Speech Act Theory is mostly distributed in conventional disciplines, which is relatively old-fashioned in comparison. With the progress and development of the times, science and technology have been developed rapidly, and artificial intelligence and the technology of Internet Plus have made rapid changes so that the need for Speech Act Theory is more urgent than before. For example, artificial intelligence needs to continuously optimize the intelligent simulation dialogues under the guidance of Speech Act Theory, while Internet Plus has created numerous opportunities for language art performance, such as the popular e-commerce live broadcast, where the Key Opinion Leader (KOL) with language charm can win the favor of a large number of fans, whose language charm can be analyzed under the guidance of Speech Act Theory. Therefore, it is necessary to apply Speech Act Theory to the current hot-discussed fields, like artificial intelligence, Internet Plus, and so on.

However, so far, there has not been much research on the application of Speech Acts Theory to these fields, so it is necessary to analyze the speech acts in artificial intelligence, Internet Plus, and the related fields from the perspective of Speech Act Theory. In this regard, it is hoped that this paper will further expand the application scope of the Speech Act Theory and provide some inspiration for subsequent research.

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