



تحليل تداولي لنصيه رسائل الى المحرر في جريده التايمز

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المستخلص :

الهدف من هذه الورقة هو تحليل الأنواع الأكثر استخداما من أفعال الكلام في رسائل إلى المحرر في جريده التايمز (مع التركيز على كيفية تحقيقها) ومحاولة تحديد الوظائف التي تخدمها في الحياة اليومية كما ذكرها سيرل ، ١٩٦٩ ( جازم ، تصريحى ، معبر ، مفوض ، تصريحى). . يصنف فعل الكلام إلى ثلاثة أفعال ؛ الفعل الخطابى ، الفعل التنبهى ، والخطأ الإعلامى. في هذا البحث ، يعتبر الفعل الإنذاري هو الأهم لأنه كان أهم فعل في أفعال الكلام ولأنه يتعلق بقصد المتحدث. ي الباحث المنهج النوعي في تحليل أفعال الكلام التي توجد في حروف مختارة ، ثم قسمتها حسب مفهوم جون سيرل لأنواع الفعل التنبهى. ويظهر تحليل البيانات أن الكاتب استخدم جميع أنواع أفعال الكلام ، من تأكيدات ، ومفوضيات ، وتوجيهات ، وعبارات ، وتصريحات. تمشيا مع الفرضية المقدمة ، يبدو أن التأكيدات هي أكثر أفعال الكلام شيوعا من قبل كاتب الرسائل إلى المحرر في جريده التايمز.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نصية رسائل الى المحرر، افعال الكلام، جريده التايمز

### A Pragmatic Analysis of Letters to the Editor in The Times

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Qaderlaw1933@gmail.com , Ed.methaq.khamis.uoanbar.edu.iq Abstract

**Abstract :**

The aim of this paper is to analyze the most frequently employed types of speech acts in letters to the editor in The Times (focusing on how they are realized) and attempt to determine the functions they serve in everyday life as mentioned by Searle (1969), (assertive, declarative, expressive, commissive, and declarative). A speech act is classified into three acts; locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. In this research, an illocutionary act is the most important because it was the most essential act in the speech acts and it related to the intention of the speaker. The researcher conducted a qualitative method in analyzing speech acts which are found in selected letters and then divided them according to John Searle's concept of types of illocutionary acts. The analysis of data shows that the writer used all types of speech acts, namely assertives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives. Consistent with the given hypothesis, assertives seem to be the most commonly used speech acts by the writer of letters to the editor in The Times.

**Keywords:** Letters to the editor, Speech acts, Times .

**1. Introduction**

Language becomes a crucial instrument of communication in society. By using language, people can interact with each other. In this sense, they share beliefs, thoughts, ideas, feelings, and many other things via language. Communication is essential in our life because people can do communication in order to build a relationship with individuals and other groups. People can also transfer a message or information that is very necessary for others via these communications. There are many means in order to transfer a message such as magazines, television, news, and letters.

Letters to the editor can be regarded as a mighty feature of newspaper discourse because they aim to involve readers in the communication process. They represent a linguistic case in which the writer of these letters expresses a specific type of mode that must be interpreted in a correct way by readers, as each clause in the letter expresses a distinct proposition or mood. They are primarily argumentative, in the sense that they are intended to persuade



readers to accept a particular point of view and to provoke them to take immediate or future action.

In order to gain a better understanding of letters to the editor and to analyze the intended meaning of these letters, pragmatics is regarded as a powerful instrument for this purpose. Pragmatics exposes the writer's intent as it is sometimes unobserved and can't be realized effortlessly by the reader. Pragmatics is seen as how people use language to communicate and how they affect language use. Pragmatics concentrates on the area between sociolinguistics, semantics, and extra-linguistic context, but the boundaries between these domains are still difficult to define (Mey, 2001).

Pragmatics is a science that deals with the relationship between a sign and its user. Pragmatics and semantics both look into different aspects of linguistic meaning, but the first is concerned with the intended meaning of utterances and the propositions that they express based on the context in which they are used, whereas the second one deals with the literal and non-variable side of the true condition of propositions or sentences (Levinson, 1983). According to what has been written, it is clear that letters to the editor are employed to convey a specific message to the readers. As a result, the writer of these letters used a variety of speech acts, including assertive, commissive, declarative, directive, and expressive to transfer his message to the readers of these writers. They are used to make a statement, direct someone to do something or commit someone to do something.

Austin and Searle, who are regarded as the pioneers of the theory of speech acts, made significant contributions to the field. They claim that many of the utterances that we utter do not convey information about facts, but rather concern action. In other words, when a speaker speaks or when a writer writes, he engages in a specific speech act. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) both look at speech acts from different points of view. They divide them into various groups of verbs, each with its own name. Therefore, the current study concentrates on identifying the types of speech acts which are used in letters to the editor and analyzing these speech acts depending on Searle's taxonomy of speech acts.



However, **Adwan (2015)** tackled speech acts in headlines of "The Independent" newspaper. The objective of this research is to pragmatically analyze newspaper headlines constructed on five speech acts in newspaper headlines (assertive, expressive, directive, declarative and commissive) in order to know which forms of speech acts are most commonly used in newspaper headlines. It also tries to illustrate in the headlines which functions are performed in order to clarify how they apply to the communication act by the readers or writers. Searle's (1979) modal was adopted to analyze newspaper headlines. The results of this study indicate that directives and assertive speech acts seem to be more commonly used than expressive, commissive, and declaration and this study reveals that declarative phrases are utilized in large numbers of headlines. Finally, large numbers of grammatical structures (imperative, interrogative, declarative, and exclamative) are utilized by journalists to show various kinds of speech activities.

**Mustofa (2017)** in his study entitled illocutionary acts in the headlines and slogans of beauty product advertising focused on illocutionary acts in beauty product advertising in headlines and slogans, and in order to reveal the discursive meaning of illocutionary acts in beauty product advertising in headlines and slogans. This research utilized pragmatics and discourse as a theoretical framework that forms the basis for the analysis of data. It was achieved utilizing a qualitative approach. The data were collected both from headlines and slogans supplied in Elle March 2016 for beauty product ads. The data were in a series of words, clauses, sentences, and phrases. The data is divided depending on Searle's typology of illocutionary acts. The findings of this research indicated that via the headlines and slogans in beauty product advertising, there are four types of illocutionary acts utilized, namely, (assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive). An assertive speech act is the most commonly used.

**Al-Hindawi (2018)** entitled "A pragmatic study of CNN and BBC News Headlines Covering Syrian Conflict. The aim of this study is to clarify the types of speech acts that reflect the Syrian conflict utilized in CNN and BBC headlines. Fifty-six headlines (26) from CNN and (30) from the BBC, are



selected from both of these news outlets. The study indicated that encoded pragmatic meanings of the news can be fulfilled, which lets this analysis deserve undertaking in order to present certain types of meaning. Searle's modal (1979) was adopted. The researcher used a qualitative approach. This study is restricted to the investigation of the linguistic structure and sense of the headlines surrounding the Syrian conflict. The results indicated that the CNN news channel headlines display a dominant usage of commissive speech acts, whereas the BBC news channel headlines display a predominant use of expressive speech acts.

**Alawiyah (2020)** conducted a study entitled Speech Act Analysis of Dr. Zakir Naik's Speech on a YouTube Channel Entitled: Does God Exist? The aims of this research are to recognize and identify the types of speech acts used by Dr. Zakir Naik in his standing dawah on the YouTube channel entitled: Does God Exist? In this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative approach. The data were collected, and the writer utilized several steps. First, download the video on the internet. Second, transcript the dialogues into the texts. Third, reading the conversation texts. After that, recognized the sentences from Dr. Zakir Naik's speech. After that, count the sentences consisting of speech. And, finally identifying the reason why the sentences consist of a certain speech act. Researchers investigated naturally every speech act that existed in the theory mentioned by Yule (1969) classified into representative, assertive, directive, declaration, and commissive. The findings showed that the researcher found 13 utterances as representative, 7 utterances as directive, 2 utterances as commissive, 2 utterances as a declarative, and expressive was not used in that speech.

However, the current study attempts to analyze the types of speech acts of the letters to the editor have not been focused on Yet. The following discussion about past studies will make the gap in those studies prominent to the reader. The current study is similar to most of the previous studies, especially in terms of its aims. Thus, all of the studies including the present one dealt with analyzing the types of speech acts in written text. In spite of such a similarity, the current study differs from the mentioned previous



studies because it attempts to identify and analyze the types of speech acts in these letters which may not be discussed before.

## 2. Methodology

The goal of this section is to present the methodology employed in conducting this study and attaining its goals. This chapter debated a detailed explanation relevant to the research design, instrument and data collection, and data analysis. The sections that follow these ideas are in detail.

### 2.1 Research Design

Research design is an essential part of doing research. Thus, the important purpose of the research design is to clarify how the researcher gets answers to the research questions. Furthermore, the appropriateness of research design is essential because it enables the researcher to achieve accurate data collecting and analysis, correct findings, and conclusions. A study design is connected to the research design including data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Thus, the research design is the logical plan for the current study. It includes the link between the research questions, the data collection, and the procedures of analyzing the data (Robert, 2011; Kumar, 2011).

However, in the present study, the researcher applied a qualitative research method. Therefore, this study is designed in a way in which qualitative data are selected and after that analyzed qualitatively based on Searle's modal of speech acts (1969).

Richards and Schmidt (2002) and Creswell, (2007) mentioned that qualitative research is a type of research in which the procedures employed, depend on non-numerical data for instance, case studies, interviews, conversations, or written data. Thus, such type of study depends on employing words instead of numbers in the analysis of its data .

Moreover, qualitative research is an activity that places the observer in the world. It involves a set of interpretive material practices which make the world perceivable. Hence, the qualitative method concerns objects in their natural settings as an attempt to make sense of or interpret specific phenomena according to the meanings stated by people (Richards and Schmidt, 2002; Creswell, 2007).



The current study is considered a qualitative one as it studies speech acts in letters to the editor in depth. Furthermore, this study employed a qualitative method for three important reasons: to get in-depth information concerning the aspect, to get a clear and sufficient analysis of the data, and to identify the aspect in its real context. Based on this research design, and with an indication of the objectives of the study and its research questions, the present study employed writing text as a research instrument. Based on this instrument, the researcher used 30 letters to the editor to analyze the types of speech acts used in these letters depending on Searle's modal of speech acts (1969).

## 2.2 Data Collection

For a study to be reliable, reliable methods and instruments should be considered and dependent, and these methods should be facilely understood and comprehended (Kasper, 2000). Pragmatics as the core of the current study is one of the approaches whose study relies on the perception and understanding of the methods adopted for data collection. In this sense, any misunderstanding of data collection and methods may call into question the reliability of methods employed to collect data about letters to the editor. This, in turn, leads to unreliable results. In this regard, methods for collecting linguistic data are categorized into two types, methods for collecting pragmatic data like authentic, role-plays, observation, and discourse completion tasks, and methods for collecting metapragmatic data, like scaled-response questionnaire, documentation, multiple-choice questionnaire, and interviews

Since the current study interests in the investigation of the metapragmatic aspects embedded in the language utilized to convey a certain message in letters to the editor, documentation instruments and methods are the most suitable ones for collecting reliable and authentic data (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). Employing such a method enables the researcher to authenticate his study by discovering and investigating more insights concerning the employed pragmatic strategies and speech acts to express certain ideas .



The corpus of the study is taken from The Times newspaper that was printed in 2022, letters to the editor section in order to identify the types of speech acts which are used by the writer of this letter, and to analyze these types of speech acts.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

In conducting the current study, content and descriptive analysis were employed in analyzing the data under investigation. The content analysis concentrates on the analysis of textual data. It interests going deeply into the intended meaning and structure of a message or communication. The message may be intended within the document, film, video, song, and real human behavior noticed.

As stated by Babby (1986), content analysis can be used to analyze any kind of communication, involving books, poetry, magazine, music, film, speech letters, and other component. Based on this argument, content analysis is employed as a technique to analyze the speech acts and strategies utilized within the data of this study. In this regard, it can be said that content analysis may be the most appropriate technique for analyzing the data under investigation as it interests the content and contextual meaning of any text.

On the other hand, qualitative research deals with the subjective assessment of views, attitudes, and behavior. Research in this situation is a function of the insight and impression of the researcher. Such an approach creates results either in a non-quantitative form or in a form which are not exposed to strict quantitative analysis (Khotary,2009). Qualitative research works towards understanding not only “what” people believe, but also “why” do they think in a certain way. The writers themselves clarify their thought process behind a certain choice or opinions in their answers and qualitative research methodology analyses the data gathered to result in conclusions that can be generalized for a larger population of the same type. This approach will be employed by the researcher to identify and analyze the types of speech acts of letters to the editor in The Times.

However, based on the theoretical and conceptual framework adopted in this study and research question one, the first step concentrated on





identifying the types of speech acts in letters to the editor whereas analyzing these types of speech acts was the second step. The writers tend to employ a variety of techniques that contribute to impacting the attitudes of readers toward their argumentation and finally changing their behavior .

### 3. Results and discussion

#### Analysis of letter (1)

#### Times letters: Scotland's future and the question of referendums

Sir, Matthew Parris recommends a royal commission to examine the place of the referendum in the British constitution ("Yes-no votes aren't as simple as we pretend", Jan 2) // directive //. Two obvious issues arise // assertive //. The first is the threshold required to decide a winner // directive //. A simple majority seems too low to achieve public acceptance, exemplified by the Brexit vote // assertive //. If it were at least 60 percent, the losing party would be more likely to accept it // commissive //. The second is to improve balance by providing the public with impartial information to help them decide which way to vote // assertive// .

(Monday January 04, 2022, 12.01 am GMT, The Times)

In this letter, there are six speech acts corresponding to five messages contained or outlined above. The illocutionary point in the first speech act is Mathew Parris's bits of advice for a royal commission to check the place of the referendum in the British. The illocutionary point in the second speech act (Two obvious issues arise) is to emphasize that there are two matters that direct the attention. The illocutionary point in the third speech act (The first is the threshold required to decide a winner) presents that the first matter that is raised is that the doorstep is required to determine the winner.

The fourth speech act is (A simple majority seems too low to achieve public acceptance, exemplified by the Brexit vote). Its illocutionary point is that the writer argued that the simple majority appears to obtain public acceptance exemplified by the Brexit vote that already effect. The deep structure of the fifth speech act is that the writer promises if the simple majority was at least 60 percent, the losing party would be more likely to be accepted. The illocutionary force in the sixth speech act is to insist the



second thing to obtain balance is by supplying the citizen with unbiased information to help them decide which way for voting .

To sum up, the writer employed an assertive speech act two times besides the directive one. The writer intends to focus on the essential thing to get balance by providing the citizens with unbiased information to help them decide which way for voting.

### Analysis of letter (2)

#### Times letters: Using private hospitals during the pandemic

Sir, Matthew Parris asks whether it would be wrong to have private knee surgery during this health crisis (My Week, Jan 13) // directive //. Of course, he would not be wrong // assertive//. He is taking responsibility for himself and removing himself from an ever-growing NHS list of orthopedic operations that are unable to take place at present // assertive // and that will prolong the pain of many who are waiting for surgery // assertive //. He is fortunate to be in such a position but that does not make his actions unreasonable or morally wrong // assertive //. I wish him well // directive //and hope he will be out of pain and able to walk well very soon // directive//.

**Valerie Green**

**(Thursday, January 14, 2022, 12.01 am GMT )**

In the above letter, there are seven speech acts. The first one satisfied the conditions of the directive speech act in which Matthew Parris asks if he would be at fault to have private knee surgery through his health crisis. The second speech act is assertive where the writer affirms that Matthew Parris would not be at fault. The deep structure of the third speech act is that Matthew Parris commits himself to remove himself from the list of orthopedic operations that are unable to take place at the present time.

In the fourth speech act, the writer asserts that if Mathew Parris would be on the list of orthopedic operations that will lengthen or extend the pains of many patients who are waiting for surgery. The illocutionary force in the fifth speech act is that the writer confirms that Mathew Parris is so lucky to be in such a position that does not make this action morally wrong.



The sixth speech act is (I wish him well) Its illocutionary point is the writer expresses his wish regarding Mathew Parris that he will be well. The seventh speech act amplifies the sixth one emphasizing the same meaning and presenting a directive speech act.

This letter can be summarized as follows, an assertive speech act is most commonly employed by the writer of this letter. Assertive speech acts are those types of speech acts that commit the writer or speaker act to the truth of the expressed proposition and thus carry a truth value.

### Analysis of letter (3)

#### School lockdown and vaccination of pupils

Sir, as you report (Jan 5), all secondary schools in England will be closed until February 15 in the hope that they can then reopen because the virus will have been tamed // assertive //. That is a pipedream // assertive //. Even if 12 million people are inoculated by then that is just a fifth of the population // assertive //— the virus will still be rampant // assertive // and secondary schools will remain closed // assertive// .

(Wednesday, January 06, 2022, 12.01 am GMT, The Times)

In the above letter, there are five speech acts. The first one satisfies the condition of the assertive speech act in which the writer attested that all secondary schools in England will be closed in order to control the virus from separation. The second speech act is assertive where the writer considers that to control the virus from separation is a fantasy.

The third speech act is (Even if 12 million people are inoculated by then that is just a fifth of the population). Its illocutionary force is that the writer declares that even if 12 million people are protected themselves from the virus is just fifty of the population. The fourth speech act is assertive where the writer insists that the virus will still be uncontrolled. The illocutionary point of the fifth speech act is that the writer asserted that secondary schools will remain locked because the virus is widespread .

To conclude, the writer utilized an assertive speech act all the time. The writer declares that the virus is widespread and it is tough to control it, so all secondary schools will close.



#### Analysis of Letter (4)

##### Times letters: Rishi Sunak and the prospect of tax rises

Sir, while former prime ministers and chancellors may be able to teach this government a thing or two about stealth taxes (“No New Taxes”, leading article, Feb 26) // assertive //, Rishi Sunak seems to recognize that carefully targeted tax increases need not be unpopular // expressive //. Different corporation tax rates for large and small companies are a case in point // assertive //. Many companies have endured a dreadful pandemic and // assertive //, when they return to profitability, will benefit from a lower rate of corporation tax // commissive //. Other businesses have enjoyed record profits during the pandemic // assertive//.

(Saturday, February 27, 2022, 12.01 am GMT, The Times)

The above letter includes six types of speech acts. Each one includes a certain message. In the first speech act, the writer claims that the prime minister and chancellors are able to prevent secret taxes. The deep structure in the second speech act is that the writer is blaming Rishi Sunak in spite that he realizes the bad effects of taxes, but he did not do anything to prevent them. The third speech act is (Different corporation tax rates for large and small companies are a case in point). Its illocutionary point is that the writer asserts that the taxes on small and big companies have bad effects on these companies.

The illocutionary force in the fourth speech act is that the writer confirms that many companies are suffering from the rates. In the fifth speech act, the writer promises that when companies return to profitability, they will obtain benefits. The sixth speech act is (Other businesses have enjoyed record profits during the pandemic). It is illocutionary that many businesses obtained interest through the crisis.

To conclude, the writer utilizes an assertive speech act four times. He wants to emphasize the rates are affected in a bad way not only on the citizens but even on the small and bad companies. He also asserted that taxes can increase the pandemic in the country.



#### 4. Conclusions

1. The findings of this study showed that Assertives were the highest types of speech acts utilized by the writers of letters to the editor since they use many utterances or even entire sentences to express their feeling or to describe some facts about their society.

2. In the letters to the editor, the writer employed declaratives only two times in opposition to other types of speech acts that are mentioned by Searle. The reason returns to the setting itself because declaration speech acts must be uttered in a special place for instance courts or parliament hall not in the public.

3. The most convincing category is that of Searle (1969) because it described illocutionary acts according to their communicative purposes in society. Nevertheless, the three categories (Austin, Searle and Bach, and Harnish lead to some difficulties that are in fact unable to cover the whole range of speech acts in language.

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