
Speech Acts in The British Sitcom *Not Going Out*
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Abstract

In this paper, the researcher tries to show how speech acts are classified according to the framework adopted by Kreidler (1998). Albeit being more popular and influential, both Austin's (1962) taxonomy and Searle's (1976) classification of speech acts have been used so excessively in pragmatic studies that seldom does it happen to find a research not depending on either of them, such as the model followed here. Another thing to highlight concerns speech acts that underlie or indicate other implied or indirect ones; it is the domain of pragmatics, after all, where hidden intentions and subtle or roundabout meanings have a considerable weight and impact. Hence, it becomes quite obviously justifiable why there are several approaches to speech acts classification. The data selected for the analysis are extracted from ten episodes of one of the greatest and most popular TV shows in Britain, viz., the sitcom *Not Going out* (2006-2023). The episodes are three from each of the seasons (2019, 2021, 2022) as well as (2020) 'Special' episode.

Key words: speech act, direct, indirect/implicit, assertive, verdictive, directive, commissive, expressive

أفعال الكلام في المسلسل الهزلي البريطاني *Not Going Out*

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المستخلص

يحاول الباحث في هذه الدراسة إظهار كيفية تصنيف أفعال الكلام وفقاً للإطار الذي اعتمده (Kreidler 1998). وعلى الرغم من كونهما أكثر شعبية وتأثيراً، فقد استُخدم تصنيفا Austin (1962) و Searle (1976) لأفعال الكلام بإفراط في الدراسات التداولية لدرجة أنه نادراً ما تصادف بحثاً لا يعتمد على أي منهما، كما هو الحال في هذه الدراسة. وثمَّ شيء آخر تتناوله الدراسة يتعلق بأفعال الكلام التي تستبطن أو تشير إلى أفعال أخرى ضمنية أو غير مباشرة. إنه مجال التداولية بالتأكيد، حيث يكون للنوايا والمعاني الخفية أو الملتوية وزن وتأثير كبيران. ومن ثمَّ، يتجلى سبب وجود عدة طرق أو منهجيات لتصنيف أفعال الكلام. يجدر الذكر ان البيانات المختارة للتحليل مأخوذة من عشر حلقات لوحد من أعظم العروض التليفزيونية وأكثرها شعبية في بريطانيا، وهو المسلسل الهزلي Not Going Out والذي بدأ عرض أول مواسمه عام (2006). الحلقات هي ثلاثة من كل موسم من المواسم (2019، 2021، 2022) بالإضافة إلى الحلقة "الخاصة" بعام 2020.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فعل الكلام، مباشر، ضمني، جازم، حكمي، توجيهي، وعدي، تعبير

Introduction

According to Löbner's (2013) "principle of compositionality", the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the lexical meanings of its components, their grammatical meanings and the syntactic structure of the whole (p. 15). Because of indirectness and figurative language people usually resort to, and consequently making one and the same sentence be uttered with quite different communicative results, speech act theory has to be brought to the fore to address the problem. The speech act level will be referred to as communicative meaning which is, unlike expression meaning and utterance meaning, lies outside the range of semantics. Rather, this level of interpreting such a hidden/communicative meaning is of central concern for pragmatics, which subsumes other sub-branches like deixis, conversational implicatures, presuppositions (Löbner, 2013). Put another way, what pragmatics deals with is "slippery" form of meaning that is not present in dictionaries (lexical meaning) and might change depending on the

circumstances. The same utterance will have distinct meanings in various circumstances and even to various individuals (Birner, 2013).

Finally, it is hypothesised that all types of speech acts are made pretty evenly by the participants of the sitcom, and that direct speech acts are outnumbered by indirect ones in the British situational comedy under study. Furthermore, some speech acts are liable to be perceived and classified differently.

First: The Problem

The problem becomes patent on the basis of conceding that sometimes there is no clear-cut decision on such pragmatic aspects as which type of speech acts a speaker makes in a situation; is it solely a direct speech act or a two-fold one that prompts a concomitant indirect one? Doubtless, this is something abstract and hidden with the intention inside the mind. Still, depending on some clues, context among other things, probability in reading and analysing has such a paramount role to play considering the best evidence available to support the researcher's stance.

Second: The Hypotheses

It is hypothesised first that all types of speech acts are made pretty evenly by the participants of the sitcom, and that direct speech acts are outnumbered by indirect ones in the British situational comedy under study. Secondly, some speech acts are liable to be perceived and classified differently.

Third: The Aims

The aims of the paper are identifying the speech acts the characters make in their hyperbolic utterances and specifying the most frequent one in British sitcoms.

Fourth: The Procedures

Here are the procedures followed in the current study:

1. Surveying the related literature about pragmatics.
2. Watching the sitcom episodes on YouTube or other accessible sites prior to collecting the data scripts—copying the episodes' subtitles (or else taking screenshots of the excerpts) just to paste (or type them again) on a Microsoft Word Document, and then describing the data involved.
3. Analysing the data in question depending on the eclectic model by using both qualitative analysis which is based on linguistic theories and quantitative analysis which incorporates percentages and frequencies.
4. Drawing conclusions to test the validity of the hypotheses.

Fifth: The Limits

This study is limited to the investigation of hyperbole pragmatically in selected episodes of the British sitcom: Not Going Out (Seasons 10 1 (2019), 11 (2021), 12 (2022) and (2020) New Year Special) as a representative of the genre. It is thought that the series involved are fertile with communicative acts of hyperbole. Besides, they are analysed according to the eclectic model which is founded on linguistic theories. Accordingly, ten episodes' scripts are chosen from the sitcom (three for each season as well as one special) to serve as data for the analysis.

Review of Literature

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory was devised by the Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin in the 1930s, and expounded on it in a series of William James lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955. The twelve lectures were subsequently published in 1962 under the title How to Do

Things with Words. The theory is a response to what Austin refers to as the descriptive fallacy—the belief that a declarative sentence is always used to describe a state of affairs or a fact, which it must do either accurately or inaccurately. Austin noted that there are numerous declarative sentences that do not describe, report, or assert anything, and for which it is illogical to enquire as to whether they are true or false. The utterance of such sentences is, or is a component of, the performance of some action – an action that is not typically described as merely speaking. For such sentences as “I give and bequeath my jewelry to my son”, and “I bet 100\$ that the team will win tonight”, uttered in the appropriate context, they do not describe what someone is doing; rather, it is doing it, or a part of it. Austin referred to such utterances as performatives, as opposed to constatives, which are used to state a fact or describe a state of affairs. Only constatives can be true or false, while performatives can be happy or unhappy. Hence, two categories of speech appear to have value on distinct dimensions. The constatives have value on the dimension of truth/falsity, while the performatives have value on the dimension of happiness/unhappiness (Malmkjaer, 2002).

Hence, as Thomas (1995) illustrated, Austin's complete abandonment of the distinction between constatives (statements) and performatives. It is not irrational that statements have a performative characteristic; still, it is necessary to distinguish between the truth-conditional component of what a statement is and the action it performs, as well as between the speaker's intended meaning and the illocutionary force of their words.

Levinson (1983), moreover, tackled Austin's three-fold distinction as follows:

Locution uttering a sentence with clear sense and reference

Illocution producing a statement, offer, promise, and so forth depending on the conventional force attached to the sentence

Perlocution the ability to use a sentence to affect the audience in a way that is unique to the context in which it is spoken.

Here is an example struck by Thomas (1995):

"*It's hot in here!* (locution), meaning: *I want some fresh air!* (illocution) and the perlocutionary effect might be that someone opens the window. Generally speaking there is a close and predictable connection between locution and perlocutionary effect." (p. 149)

In a nutshell, pragmatics regards (through speech act theory) every utterance as a speech act which can be characterised according to its function instead of its form (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015).

Classification of Speech Acts

Austin's Taxonomy Austin (1962, Lecture 12; as cited in Malmkjaer, 2002, p. 489), pointed out the feasibility of classifying speech acts in light of their illocutionary force into a number of broad categories or families. Austin recommended the next classes:

a) *Verdictives*, b) *Excersitives*, c) *Commissives*, d) *Behavitives*, and e) *Expositives*.

Searle's Taxonomy Searle (1976) introduced a new taxonomy of speech acts instead of Austin's.

a) *Representatives*, b) *Directives*, c) *Commissives*, d) *Expressives*, and e) *Declarations* (or *declaratives*).

Other Approaches to Speech Acts Actually, some scholars have adopted a third model of speech acts—which will be followed in the current study—apart from the two aforementioned. Kreidler (1998), Schiffrin (1994) and Mey (1993), for example, held that there are seven rather than five speech acts:

- a) *Assertives* are statements involving the transmission and reception of information. Such information-containing statements are either true or false and are therefore subject to empirical validation.
- b) *Performative utterances* cause things to occur simply by being spoken; these include wagers and statements made during various ceremonies and official acts that have an effect on the individuals to whom they are spoken.
- c) *Verdictives* are statements that remark on the addressee's past actions or their current outcome such as criticising, blaming, applauding, and praising.
- d) *Expressives* take place when speakers describe their own recent actions and current emotions through apologies, boasts, and laments and so forth.
- e) *Directives* whereby the speaker seeks to sway the recipient's behavior. The distinction between such speech acts reflects primarily the level of control the speaker has over the addressee and includes commands, pleas, and suggestions.
- f) *Commissives* or those speech acts via which one commits to carrying out an action at a later time..
- g) *Phatic utterances* unfold via the exchange of greetings and goodbyes, the small talk about the weather, each other's health, or whatever is customary in a given society. They represent a good channel to preserve social bonds.

Kreidler (1998) mentioned that verdictives, expressives, directives and commissives are alike in being concerned with some action. They differ from one another as to whether the act has purportedly already taken place (retrospective) or is yet to occur (prospective), and whether the speaker or the addressee is the agent of the act. Actually, verdictives and expressives are both retrospective but the former are addressee-involved, the latter

speaker-involved. Directives and commissives, however, are prospective, the former being addressee-involved; the latter speaker-involved.

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Yule (2010) stated that there is a direct speech act whenever there is a direct connection between a structure and a function. There is an indirect speech act if there is a relationship that is indirect between a structure and a function. As a result, using a declarative to make a statement is a direct speech act, whereas using a declarative to make a request is an indirect speech act. Thus, different forms can be used for the sake of achieving the same basic function.

Kreidler (1998) elucidated the matter as follows:

Actual utterances can have various functions that are independent of form. As we all know, a person can ask a question without truly seeking information (“Did you really like that silly book?”)—the so-called rhetorical question—and can make a statement that is intended as a request (“It’s very warm in here with that window closed”) or produce a command that is not meant to elicit action from the addressee (“Have a good time”). “Did you know it’s raining?” can be a way of informing, and the person who says “I suppose you’ll be going away for the holiday” may well be soliciting information. Furthermore, a speaker may, for humor or irony, produce an utterance that is just the opposite of the message he wants to convey. The form of an utterance does not necessarily coincide with the speaker’s real intention. (p.177)

Quite importantly, Thomas (1995) added that all speech acts (except explicit performatives) are indirect to some degree and are performed by means of another speech act. For example, when making an assertive speech act like “*It is going to charge!*”, the speaker performs a directive speech act of warning (p. 94).

After all, it could be claimed that identifying some speech act class or type is not a question of utter objectivity. As far as the matter is concerned, scholars and researchers are expected to be different in their perspective and classification of the same speech act; subjective visions and justifications have a role to play.

Methodology

Mixed methods research incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses is employed to analyse the data.

Qualitative research, on the one hand, addresses attitudes, behaviors, and experiences (Dawson, 2009). When conducting qualitative research, the focus is on some naturally occurring phenomena. Data are not given in a numerical format (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Its methods primarily focus on presenting people's depth-subjective meanings in the context of their experiences.

Quantitative research, on the other hand, according to Leavy (2017), is "a top-down process" (p. 87), where an evaluation is needed for statistical description and generalisability centered on objectivity. Data quantification and numerical analysis

Data analysis

Analysis of Extract One: Series 10, Episode 1 'Parachute'

Trying his utmost to disguise his fear and shun doing the jump, Geoffrey makes a direct verdictive speech act (SA)—retrospective and addressee-involved: when saying: "*In fact, Wendy is the bravest one among you*". Later on, trying to show the others his overcoming any misgivings—with the same rich show of humbuggery he has accused the others of, Geoffrey makes a direct assertive SA of an absurd meaning that can be transferred to covert operations: "*Officially we didn't exist*".

On the part of Geoffrey's constant rival, Frank, the latter makes a direct verdictive SA to pejoratively hold Geoffrey's narrative as *"A load of nonsense about pervert operations"*.

Analysis of Extract Two: Series 10, Episode 2 'Holiday Share'

Lucy harshly chastises her friend, Anna, making a direct verdictive SA, comparing being with her to *"Airbnb-being in Hitler's bunker"*. Subsequently, Lucy portrays Toby, Anna's husband, as *"Siri"* for doing whatever Anna dictates. This is another direct verdictive SA.

After the sudden presence of Toby at the couple's room window, and suspecting that he could have heard their harsh criticism about him and his wife, Lucy shockingly repeats the same description of Anna's character (the resemblance to Hitler). Lee, also, mentions the Toby – Siri comparison once again. Additionally, making another verdictive SA, Lucy addresses Lee: *"If I'd called her a stuck-up witch married to a neutered poodle?"*. This is an indirect SA since its structure is not in harmony with its function—a rhetorical question used to express criticism; i.e., an interrogative sentence not used for the function of soliciting information.

Analysis of Extract Three: Series 10, Episode 5 'Memory'

Lee makes a direct expressive SA (that is retrospective and speaker-involved): *"I can't believe I can't remember... It's annoying, isn't it?"* to show his annoyance about being unable to remember an actor's name who appears in *"loads of things"*. Lucy makes an assertive SA *"It's bloody infuriating"* in response to the confusion Lee makes while she tries to enjoy watching her favourite TV show. The act is indirect because the sentence is declarative (not imperative) but is used as a command (or a request) to stop Lee from chitchatting, i.e., the form and the function do not coincide.

Also, by means of a direct assertive SA: *"The point I'm trying to make is that as you've gotten older you've subsequently watched loads more TV programmes and read hundreds more books"*, Lucy tries to reassure Lee that he has nothing serious to worry about.

Analysis of Extract Four: Series 11, Episode 2 'Pup Quiz'

Describing Toby as a secret weapon and stating why they all are going to win the memorial competition, Lucy makes a direct assertive SA: *“And that is why we're going to win with our secret weapon, Toby”*. Then, Lucy makes a direct verdictive SA when justifying to Anna: *“Toby is the secret weapon but you're more of an obvious weapon like a...”*. Also, being reluctant and not informative enough, Lucy hesitates to exemplify for the hyperbolic remark of Anna being *'an obvious weapon'*. Meanwhile, Toby's reply to her *“Weapon of mass destruction”*—which is just a phrase—could easily be rendered and fathomed as a complete illocution: *'Anna is like a weapon of mass destruction'*: a direct verdictive SA.

After the separation of the group which creates two rivalries: Team Lucy (Lucy & Toby) VS. Team Lee (Lee & Anna), Lucy threatens Toby when she realises that he intentionally gives wrong answers to let Anna win. Lucy asks him whether he can imagine what she is going to do if he does not help her beat Lee. Actually, Toby's reply *“I suppose it's optimistic to think: take pity on a man who's clearly traumatized - help him go into hiding from his wife and get him enrolled in the witness protection scheme”* may be perceived as a directive SA which is indirect for being a declarative used as a request (to help); or as a direct assertive SA stating the miserable life the speaker undergoes.

Analysis of Extract Five: Series 11, Episode 4 'Old Acquaintance'

Initially, a direct assertive SA is made by Lucy who sardonically justifies why she invites Karen for the second time—*“it's hard work mocking him by myself all these years”*. The conversation continues and the ladies keep on targeting Lee. Karen, showing old photos of Lee's, portrays him as *“an absolute pillock”* trying to imitate a famous artist in the appearance (the hair cut). Lucy, being more sarcastic, likens him to Steffi Graff, once a prominent tennis female player: *“He looks more like Steffi Graff”*, making a direct verdictive SA.

At the end of the discourse, and after the embarrassment Lee undergoes, especially by Karen for the mention of their previous engagement and some other concomitant details, Karen realises Lee's uneasy situation and says: *"I am killing him"*. This, in fact, is a direct assertive SA. Lucy replies to Karen positively as if Lee were dying (because of the virtual killing) and Lucy were waiting for her role in the crime. Her locution *"Yeah. Leave me with something to do"* is a direct directive SA. Quite interestingly, this locution is liable to be pointing out an illocution of Lucy's threatening intention, viz., another implicit commissive SA.

Analysis of Extract Six: Series 11, Episode 5 'War'

Making a direct assertive SA, and having been trying to dodge the question of her real age, Wendy claims that *"A lot of people as we get a little older aren't entirely honest about our age"*. Frank, in his comment on Geoffrey's mentioning of his first meeting with Wendy—trying to upset Geoffrey as usual, makes a direct assertive SA: *"And realised she'd be better off adding a couple of decades"*. This is because he begrudges Geoffrey and usually tries to vex him especially before Wendy. Actually, it is right to say that the same SA performed by Frank does embrace another verdictive one (judging Geoffrey). Then, Lee appears as ironically mitigating Lucy's shock about her mother's real age and that two years at her age is not that bad. Lee, immediately though, uses the idiom: *"It's a drop in the ocean"*, which is a direct assertive SA.

Eventually, Lucy ironically and nervously wonders: *"So, that time I spent a fortune flying you to Rome for your 60th birthday, you were actually 62?"*. Her conclusion is a directive SA. It is evidently indirect since the interrogative sentence here is not used for the sake of asking or requesting; rather, it is made to seek confirmation, viz., the real age of Wendy. Actually, it has an illocution that Lucy feels sorry for the 'fortune' she spent accordingly—another implicit expressive SA.

Analysis of Extract Seven: Series 12, Episode 1 'Painting'

Justifying why he has moved the painting to Mollie's room, Lee says: *"She said she'd never had a piece of artwork connect with her before on such a visceral level. Didn't she, Lucy?"*. Irrespective of the (fake) reported speech clause, there is a direct assertive SA. Lucy's reply: *"Yes. It was like she was suddenly 20 years older"* is a direct assertive SA, too.

"And she looked at us and she asked, well, she begged, she said, Mummy, Daddy, can I have Grandad Frank in my room with me?", Lee, keeping on his virtual tale, makes a direct assertive SA to state how so much Mollie gets attracted to the portrait that she asks and begs to have it in her room. Additionally, Lee portrays Mollie as having the highest degree of sorrow and devastation following the departure of Frank: *"We've all been devastated by the loss of Dad, but I think Mollie was hit the hardest"*. It is another direct assertive SA. Moreover, another direct assertive SA given by Lee: *"Although it did take me many, many years to get over the loss of my own grandfather"* implicates that getting back the portrait from Mollie's room to its first place should take a long period of time.

Analysis of Extract Eight: Series 12, Episode 2 'Text'

The phrase "the all-clear" is used to indicate the culmination of some dangerous or difficult situation. As such, Lee uses the phrase wryly here in an allusion to Anna who has come and left (harmlessly). He makes a directive SA which is indirect because Lee merely means *'Anna had left'*; thus, the structure of the locution does not match its function. Actually, the directive SA indicates an implicit verdictive one (judging Anna).

Talking about the message sent mistakenly to Anna (targeting Anna) by Lee, Lucy shows that *[It says, "You were right, Lucy, Anna is rude and snobby, and a little..."]*. Neglecting the report clause, what follows is a direct verdictive SA.

Analysis of Extract Nine: Series 12, Episode 6 'Tent'

Tantalised by Toby, Anna asks about the facilities that should be available for their (virtual) glamping (which is more comfortable and luxurious than traditional camping). Lee sarcastically comments: *“You mean the, uh, the hot yoga and the badminton courts?”*. Lee's remark is an indirect directive SA which intrinsically indicates a negative answer and invites Anna to acquiesce to his humble arrangements. Following that, seeing that the place lacking facilities and comforts, Anna asks Toby about 'glamping' that he has promised. Lee, a constant opponent to Lucy, tries to justify on behalf of Toby, claiming *“I've been glamping. Full of glunts”*. Lee's comment is a direct assertive SA with another implicit verdictive one to implicate that anyone who likes glamping should be a glunt (someone who acts like a douchebag); it is a rude hint about Anna's character.

Having seen a bone, the group are quite nervous and scared. Anna proves the most terrified one. As Lee and Geoffrey suggest that it is just an animal bone like deer, Anna anxiously comments: *“Oh, yeah, maybe it was flying overhead on Christmas Eve and had a heart attack”*. This is a direct assertive SA. Meanwhile, Wendy, in her provoking remark about the rather long absence of Toby, holds the bone and says: *“Or maybe a little part of him is here”*. She makes a direct assertive SA.

Trying to reassure Anna, Lee says that she is safe and there is nothing to be afraid of. However, Anna replies: *“Oh, yes, perfectly safe behind this unreachable monster-proof sheet of thin nylon”*. This is a direct assertive SA (sarcastically claiming being safe) with an implicit expressive one (showing her dissatisfaction and anxiety).

Analysis of Extract Ten: New Year 2020 Special 'Resolutions'

In (1), Geoffrey, while contending with Lee, makes a direct assertive SA: *“Well, it's so hard to tell nowadays”*. He defends himself by claiming that although he has heard of Taylor Swift, it is so hard nowadays to discern whether one is male or female; that is why Geoffrey has mistaken 'her' for 'him'. Geoffrey could have actually heard of the singer

Taylor Swift but he does not know her gender, or he has really known the name deceptively. Actually, the latter supposition might be seconded by Geoffrey's decline to name a Taylor Swift's song. His reply to Lee *"I don't need to be cross-examined by you to prove my integrity!"* is a direct expressive SA.

In **(2)**, during the game, Anna—sceptical and uptight as usual—asks why Toby should choose Cruella de Vil for her. Lee intrudes and comments: *"Perhaps he couldn't spell Goebbels"*. His comment is a direct assertive SA underlying an implicit verdictive one (condemning Anna). Inferring that Toby gives a bad impression about her by associating her with Cruella de Vil, Anna again wonders if Toby hints that she is capable of killing dogs to use their skin as raiment. While Toby negates this bid, Lee again comments: *"Yeah, he knows you wouldn't bother killing them first"*. Once again, he makes a direct assertive SA underlying a verdictive one. When it comes to the character Anna has chosen for Toby, Anna's dark side drastically surges. She addresses Toby as follows: *"If I was trying to encapsulate your personality, I'd have left the paper blank"*. Quite surprisingly, Wendy, high-spirited, instantly and vulgarly replies: *"Oh, what a bitch!"*. Wendy's exclamation is a direct verdictive SA.

In **(3)**, Lucy expresses her annoyance about Lee's irritating, usual habits and describes choosing the worst one: *"It's like being asked to choose my least favourite child"*. So, Lucy makes a direct assertive SA. Quite surprisingly though, in an unexpected reaction to Lucy's last comparison, the old woman directly names Charlie (as Lucy's least favourite kid). Because of intoxication, Wendy makes this direct assertive SA; still, the drunk grandmother hastily refrains: *"You take a chill pill - it was just a joke"*, making a direct directive SA—after tasting the bitter fruit of her 'joke'. Frank, however, usually slapdash and naive, comments on Wendy's flat joke, saying: *"Yeah, she hates them all"*: a direct assertive SA.

In (4), Toby says: “*We've all been given resolutions and we've all accepted them*”. His utterance can be read and classified from four different angles: as a direct assertive SA, as a direct expressive SA, as a direct commissive SA (promising to accept resolutions), or it can be perceived as an indirect directive to conciliate all and to suggest concluding the game of resolutions. Using the inclusive 'we', Toby flouts the maxim of quantity because neither he nor his wife, Anna, has given resolutions apart from accepting them. He flouts the maxim of quality as well because not all the attendants accept their resolutions (for the new year) genuinely and practically. Seemingly, Toby's hyperbolic locution triggers the implicature that he is afraid of his uptight wife's discourteous reaction when her turn comes (to confess and accept her shortcomings and accordingly to make resolutions), given that he is the one who has suggested this kind of negotiations as a means to have fun that night.

In (5), the bitterest contention between Geoffrey and Frank takes place. Geoffrey, because of Frank's constant lewd remarks about Wendy, tries to condescend Frank—who appears to be feckless and lacking in the cognitive potentials (and linguistic competence) the others possess. So, when Frank says that he is not obliged to abide by his resolutions because the others do not, he refers to Geoffrey by saying: “*And that pompous get isn't making no effort at all*”. Provoked, Geoffrey reacts: ‘*No need to get fractious with me, you stupid little man*’. Quite eccentrically, Frank replies to Geoffrey: “*You want to get fractures? I'll give you fractures*”. First, Frank makes an indirect directive SA (a rhetorical question); then threatening Geoffrey, Frank makes a direct commissive SA. Actually, Frank's eerie reaction is followed by another one said by Geoffrey who mockingly corrects Frank about the word ‘*Fractious! With an I-O-U*’ and carries on: “*... that thing you use as payment at the working men's club*”. Geoffrey's explanation to the meaning of ‘fractious’ is a direct assertive SA underlying an implicit verdictive one of Frank as disadvantaged and suffering a sort of cognitive impairment.

The Findings and Discussion

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts Results

The following table and figure show the results of the direct and indirect speech acts that are made by the participants:

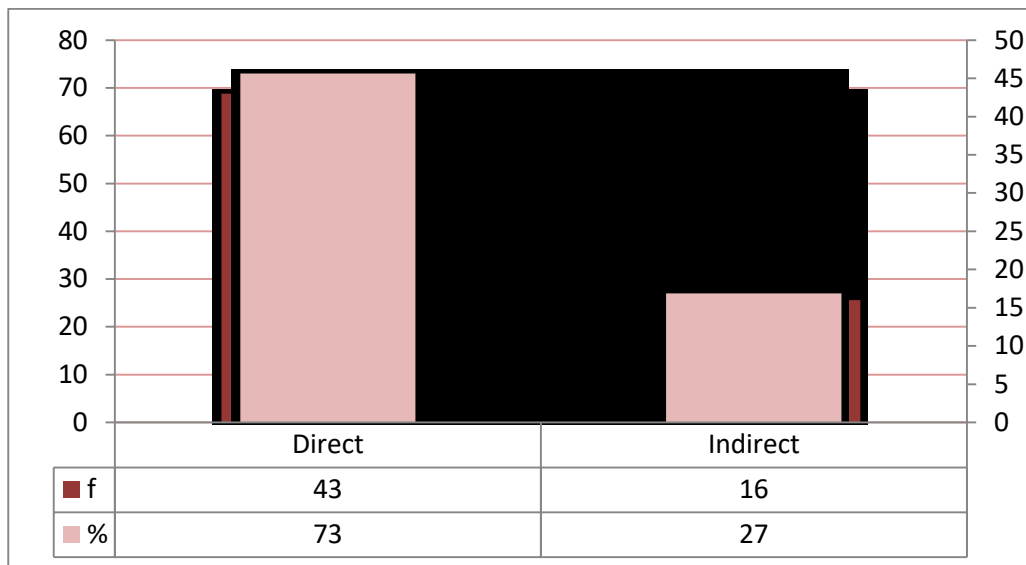
Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

The Item		<i>f</i>	%
Speech Acts	Direct	43	72.8
	Indirect	16	27.1
Total		59	100

Figure 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts



As Table 1 and Figure 1 show, direct speech acts are more made than indirect speech acts by the sitcom characters in their locutions. Actually, the percentage of direct speech acts is approximately 73% with a frequency of occurrence equals 43 times; however, the percentage of indirect speech acts is 27% following an occurrence of 16 times. Evidently, direct speech acts does prevail throughout the sitcom discourse.

Types of Speech Act Results

The following table and figure show the results that come out of the analysis concerning the types of speech act:

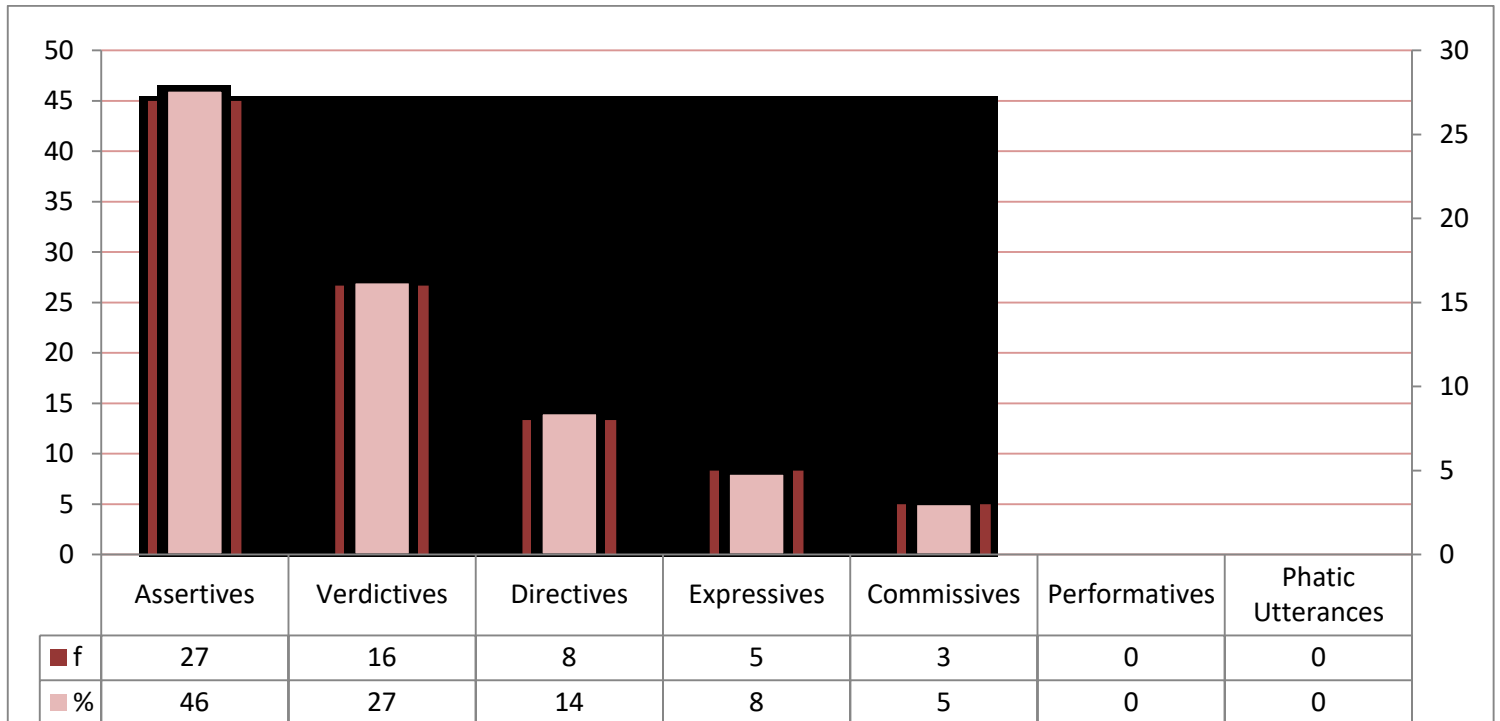
Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Speech Act Types

	The Item	<i>f</i>	%
Speech Acts	Assertives	27	45.7
	Verdictives	16	27.1
	Directives	8	13.5
	Expressives	5	8.4
	Commissives	3	5
	Performatives	0	0
	Phatic Utterances	0	0
	Total	59	100

Figure 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Speech Act Types



According to Table 2 and Figure 2, the findings demonstrate that two of the total seven speech acts are never made by the participants of the sitcom under study, especially with respect of their hyperbolic remarks and locutions, viz., performatives and phatic utterances.

In descending order, the most dominant of the remaining five speech acts are assertives, achieving a percentage of approximately 46% – a frequency of 27 times. Actually, that indicates an inclination of the interlocutors to give and take information, make statements and allegations, irrespective of their credibility. Coming second in order, verdictive speech acts occur in a percentage of nearly 27% after appearing 16 times. Less than their tendency to make assertive utterances, the sitcom participants are apt to pass judgments on one another. As for directives, the percentage decrease continues to reach a half that of verdictives, i.e., 14% since they are performed eight times. So, the frequency of commands,

requests or suggestions comes third in the order – equal to both of the following speech acts. Fourth, with a percent of 8%, come expressive speech acts following an occurrence of five times. It means that those retrospective, speaker-involved utterances are not highly preferred by the characters. Finally, occurring only three times—outnumbered by each of the four speech acts stated above—commissives make a percent of 5%. Hence, such prospective, speaker-involved speech acts are not quite involved in the participant's speeches.

Conclusions

1. Not all types of speech acts are made by the sitcom characters. Nor are direct speech acts are outnumbered by those indirect ones; on the contrary, direct speech acts occur approximately three times indirect speech acts. Hence, the first hypothesis of the study is refuted since performatives and phatic utterances have never been found; assertives are the most frequent speech acts, achieving the highest proportion of occurrence.
2. To identify or classify some speech act(s) is not always clear-cut. Indirectness and subtlety make the matter rather complicated and consequently such classifications might require more subjectivity and intuition on the part of the judging reader than objectivity. This comes in harmony with the second hypothesis.

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