



RESEARCH PAPER**The Exploration of Speech Acts and Politeness in *Anandi* and *Overcoat*:
A Pragmatic Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the integration of speech acts and politeness in two short stories, "Anandi" (an Urdu short story) and "Overcoat" (an English short story), both by Ghulam Abbas. The focus is on how speech acts and politeness contribute to the portrayal of societal image and the theme of appearance versus reality. The stories were selected by the same author to see from the comparative lens to analyze pragmatic features hidden behind the textual instances. For this purpose, 'Speech Act Theory' has been employed proposed by Langshaw Austin (1962). Different types of speech acts, including locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, to see how they make language use more purpose-based in context. Politeness levels embedded in the content were also analyzed to understand their portrayal of societal norms. Results showed that speech acts significantly enhance language use by adding purpose and context. Locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts contributed to depicting societal norms and values. Politeness was crucial in portraying societal expectations and maintaining face in social interactions. Further studies should explore speech acts and politeness in various cultural contexts and genres to gain a broader understanding of their impact on communication. Additionally, examining other pragmatic aspects in different literary works can provide deeper insights into the role of context in meaning-making.

KEYWORDS Contextual Meaning, Politeness, Pragmatics, Speech Acts

Introduction

People communicate with each other to share their ideas and their different perspectives regarding certain things. In short, communication is the part and parcel of people's life to use language. Pragmatics is related in the scenario of communication. Pragmatics is related to meaning in a context. The main concern of pragmatics is to highlight the meaning of the words and sentences as well as hidden or intended meaning of the writer/speaker regarding certain piece of writing in terms of conversational field or context. The study of pragmatics mainly concerns with the communicative practices of the speakers and the interpretation of the hearer about the contextual meaning. It is through pragmatics that defines the speaker or the hearer to explore the intended meaning and to investigate the behavior of the speaker in terms of different situations. According to the crystal (1987) pragmatics deals with the factors of language that we choose to use within the social interaction. There are five vital aspects of pragmatics which are speaker and hearer, utterance in context, goal of an utterance, contextual meaning, utterance of verbal language comprising of short sentences. The study aims to highlight the significance of

speech acts in terms of contextual meanings and politeness as a pragmatic criteria in a communication. Two stories *Anandi* (Urdu) and *Overcoat* (English) are selected to analyze the text.

Literature Review

Pragmatics concerns with the contexts in which it is used, including such matters as deixis, politeness, text organization, presupposition, speech acts etc. Pragmatics is a field of linguistics whose main concern is of meaning making and it includes different factors of speech situation (Robin, 1964). It is a deep relationship between a listener and a reader. Speech acts were first discovered by John Austin. He defined his idea of speech acts while working in Oxford. (Searle, 1969), said that "to speak a language is to perform a speech act". (Sadock, 2006), further explained about the speech act theory; "It is the most appropriate balance between intention and convention". So people use speech acts for different purposes, to greet someone, to make promises, to ask about different queries. Actions which are involved in speaking are generally called as "speech acts" such as promise, request, question, complaint, invitation etc. (G.Yule, 1996). Then (Taylor, 1978) also talked about speech acts, he mentioned that these are the utterances which are used for different purposes like promising, questioning, requesting, complaining, warning, etc. Language is a powerful device for transmitting messages from one person to another. This power of language is often called as speech act theory and it is concerned with the communication factor which involves the actual acts and their functions (Taylor, 1978). According to the theory of speech act, every action is performed by a speaker on the basis of different utterances (Allan.K, 1986). (Austin, 1962) described that utterances are not only used for describing factors like true and false but they are also used for performing certain performances and different acts being performed. He named such type of utterances as performative utterances and distinguishes them from constative utterances. A common speech situation is a relationship between a speaker and a hearer, and an utterance by the speaker. These speech acts are mainly divided in to three basic types:

- Locutionary acts
- Illocutionary acts
- Perlocutionary acts

Locutionary acts deals with defining the value of the truth, for instance, 'the earth is round'. In illocutionary acts, a speaker uses performative verbs to express the intention with in the particular sentence, for instance 'I promise that I will work on time'. Perlocutionary acts have quite visible effects on the reader, for example insulting and convincing someone. Another important aspect of speech act is Politeness; it is a self-image that every person demands for himself or herself. Therefore politeness is all about positive and the negative face. (Brown & Levinson, 1987), introduced a theory of politeness and talked about face; the public self-image or the image of a person which he/she wants to make in a society. So explicitness plays an important role in our communication as sometimes different aspects in communication can be misunderstood (Segerstad, 2002). Thus politeness involves polite behaviors which involve both linguistics and non-linguistic terms. The role of politeness principle is to check out the friendly relationships which enable us to tell that our interlocutors are being cooperative (Leech, Principles of Pragmatics, 1983). Politeness can also be defined as a minimizing threatening act in discourse; and here occurs the possibility that a threatening act can occur and can perceived as well (Lakoff, 1989). According to (Fraser, 1990) the social cultural view of a society states that each society has its own norms, its own rules and regulations and these norms can tell about a certain behavior, way of thinking and different aspects related to context. A positive face arises when someone do something according to the norms of the society and

a negative face or impoliteness arises when someone do something which is opposite to the rules and regulations and norms of the society. Therefore, in pragmatics, both Politeness and speech acts are of great importance. According to Leech (1976), pragmatics is the way speakers and writers accomplish goals as social actors who do not just need to get things done but must attend to their interpersonal relationships with other participants at the same time. It studies the real meaning of an utterance related to its context.

Material and Methods

Two stories were taken to analyze the speech acts and politeness and their significance in the language use of the text. First selected story is "Anandi" written by a Pakistani writer Ghulam Abbas. This story is in Urdu language, selected to see the practicality of pragmatic concepts other than English language. On the other hand, second story is in English language to see the employed pragmatic techniques in the both languages. The story is named as "Overcoat", which is also written by Ghulam Abbas in Urdu but translated by Zainab Ghulam Abbas. Both stories are short but strong in pragmatic aspects. These two stories are investigated to see the use of speech acts and politeness used in the language of the content.

Data is analyzed on the basis of the concepts given by John Langshaw Austin to see the speech acts used in the text of both stories. Moreover, these speech acts will be categorizes under locutionary, perlocutionary and illocutionary acts to see the significant purpose in communication as well as to investigate their practicality to convey the meaning by the writer to the reader. After analyzing these speech acts, this paper will focus on the 'politeness' as a pragmatic marker, embedded in the text to convey the meaning effectively. This politeness will be seen as the strategy to pass on the intended meaning but in a deferent mood. It is based on the practicality of communication in this context. Thus, in short, at first this study will highlight the significance of 'speech acts' along with its subtypes and their purpose in the communication through the text, which will be followed by the 'politeness' used by the writer in the text of short stories. In addition, line from Urdu story *Anandi* will be presented in Roman Urdu to convey the meaning according to the context and text. Selected dialogues or words will be quoted to support the stance of pragmatic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Story 1: *Anandi* (Urdu Story)

As mentioned before, speech acts are based on the actions performed by the speaker or writer for certain kind of intention or condition. Inviting, promising, requesting, suggesting, complementing, and complaining etc. all are speech acts which are done through the linguistic codes in a communication according to the context. These speech acts tell us of the background of the communication as well as the intention of the speaker or a writer. As this study is based on the text thus writer is of main importance who is communicating to the readers. Different kinds of the speech acts are employed in the text of *Anandi* which are discussed below. Different speech acts like locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts are found in this Urdu story. Contextual meanings are of great importance in this story which are used and conveyed by the writer. Following instances and examples will depict all these acts included in the text which can be decoded through the help of context and the story's background.

Seemingly, this story is the story of legislation to shift the brothels outside the city as beginning highlights the parliament scene. All the parliamentarian argue in favour or

against it. At last they get agreed to do so. When brothel houses as a whole get shifted outside the city. All the markets, shops, other facilities also went there. In this way writer depicts that people do see what they are. They pretend that they are against this filthy action but hustle bustle there, show the real image of the people. Thus context in this story matters significantly and through the whole context of the story, writer reveals the real image of the society and their level of pretension.

Hr shreef insan ko char o na char is zanan bazar se guzarna prta hai, this line represents the contextual meaning of prostitution and how good and bad both types of people come and attend prostitutes but portrayal of words here show satire in a lighter mood as suggest the willingness or non-willingness of people but it represents the real internal of the people. *Kya inhyen dekh kr hmare bhole bhaale nojawan in natajurba kar nashi me mehwa hote hn or pighal jate hn*, in this line two contextual meanings can be seen which can only be interpreted in terms of the context. 'bhole bhaale nojawan' are not that innocent but writer is trying to say that these innocent boys put their innocence back when get to prostitutes. The surface level of their innocence gets diminished when they attend them. Thus it highlights the dual-face of people. Secondly 'pighalna' in this sentence is not like melting literally but getting softer towards prostitute women and showing softness in their behavior, limits, rules and up-bringing. In this way pragmatically we can decode the meanings according to the context which can't be interpreted as it is without the context.

Illocutionary speech acts can also be found which performs an action. In the story *molve sb ne fatwa dia k is ghilazat, behayai ko bedakhal kr k, shehr ki pakeezgi behal ki jae*, this line is based on the speech act and performative verb which is based on illocutionary act 'fatwa dena'. 'Fatwa' is performed one Mufti says it. So the practicality of this word is based on action of the saying with the utterance of the word. In the same way, beginning scene of the story is regarding legislation, bill is passed in the parliament. It also shows the performative act. This passing of bill was regarding the shift of brothels from the city. The use of performative act here is showing the completion of the task in the parliament. On the other hand contextual meanings of the description of people in the story is also important. Description like:

Bari tond wale daarhi lie ik janab haazir hue...

('bari tond' is highlighting the corrupt nature of the man and 'Darrhi' is showing the innocence appearance but internally something else, in this way contextual clues give us the meaning and let us decide the intention of the writer, found in the speech acts of the texts.)

Madrassa k baani, jinka boht charcha hua krta tha, apni dheemi awaz me chilla kr bole...

('Dheemi awaz me chilla kr bolna' it is highlighting the strong personality and effective speech of the person being described. Founder of Madrassah is also showing something eminent of his personality)

Ik purani tehzeeb k alambardar b aage brhe jo aasaar e qadeema k mutwalli the...

(Purani tehzeeb, here highlighting the intention of the person not to sift the brothels as he was involved in the nasty acts of this prostitution. Because the all brothels were at the same place from last many years, the intention of a person although not revealed by him but the describing wording by the writer tells us about the person and how he takes the stance)

Sadar baldia b uthe, qad thigna, hath paon chote mgr sir bra tha...

(the description of the president of Baldia is also contextualized with the sentence, “chote hath poaon and bra sir’ highlights mysterious personality and criminal touch due to the tone employed by the writer in this person’s description.)

In the same way hundreds of examples are found in the story which are based on the contextual examples where meaning can be understood in the context. Illocutionary acts like ‘fatwa dena’, ‘bill paas krna’, ‘daawat dena’, ‘bddua dena’, ‘tareef krna’ etc. all are based on performative verbs. Some kind of action is done through the words. These performative verbs are interpreted through the context to know the intension of the writer.

Story 2: *Overcoat* (English Story)

Speech acts highlight the communicative function of the intentional meanings of writer or a speaker. So in this story *Overcoat* writer uses different speech acts to convey different meanings. Speech acts are based on the communicative functions of the text that what the utterance is communicating to the reader. Overall story reflects the roaming of a man on the mall road, wandering here and there. He was seemed as a high class member by his clothes but reality exposed later in the story. Pragmatically this story is based on a context of journey focused on a single man in a story. The lines written by the writer can only be understood through the context of the story. These lines may have other meaning than it seems to be. Meanings are only clear when story is understood from the beginning means context is important to get meaning conveyed by the writer.

He looked such a dandy that tonga wallahs on catching sight of him, whipped down their horses and raced towards him. It’s an assertive speech act as writer is representing something. In this line, the writer created the context regarding the catching personality of the man that people passing by, were being attracted towards him due to his appearance. Moreover, the use of the word *tonga wallahs* highlights the pragmatic contextual significance which portrays the class of the man and the class who is attracted towards him. It highlights the satirical tone of the writer to portray the man as sign of appearance that appearance and reality can be understood easily. In the same way, *When he reached the statue of the queen, he sobered down and pulled a handkerchief and mopped his face.* In this line (assertive speech act), writer uses strange contextual meaning in *mopping* as this word is related to the cleaning of floor or wide surface. Communicative significance of this word is creating context of negative portrayal of a man in the story. In this way, writer is trying to convey the essence of the man’s personality by using these words in a context. Out of context, interpretation of these words would be different. That’s why pragmatics allow us to see the communicative functions of the words in a context employed by the speaker or a writer to make other understood.

Those who could not afford the pleasure inside, were contented to gaze at the coloured lights and brilliant advertisements outside. In this example, seemingly *contented* is showing satisfaction of the people but according to the context of the meaning, the writer is trying to give the meaning that these people have only the way to get out, wander here and there and just to see the coloured boards of advertisements. ‘Contented’ word is also highlighting the sentence’ meaning to show the loneliness of people. Not affording pleasure means that they don’t have such means to enjoy the life except to see outside at roads without the reason.

In another line of the story, *There was an unending stream of cars, buses, tongas, and bicycle with the pavements, thronged with pedestrians.* This speech act is expressive, as wrier is expressing his psychological view regarding the stance and expressing to convey the meaning by symbolizing. Literally, this sentence is telling the condition of heavy traffic

and people gathered in the form of the crowd. But contextually, it is highlighting the system of life that people come and pass their lives according to their own pace and interests. Some use cars means pass lavishly, some use bicycles, tongas which symbolizes other classes of life. Pavements were filled with pedestrians, it illustrates the wait that people are waiting to get the destination and to go to their desired aim or any direction.

The word *apology* and *sorry* used by the man in *Overcoat* highlights the illocutionary acts under the speech act. These words were uttered to the shopkeepers and carpet seller. These illocutionary acts are based on performative verbs. As he bids these words, he tried to excuse for getting time and seeing the thing. Literally these words employ the meaning of excusing or apologizing but in this context the man says sorry or apology to hide his inferiority and pretension. As he doesn't have money to buy but he was pretending to buy but he couldn't. Thus to compensate the situation he says 'sorry'; and gets out of the shops. In the same way, 'Thank you' is used to gratitude but in the story: *Thank you so much, I'll come again to see again*. This line highlights the meaning of 'thank you' as the denial not as a gratitude or acknowledgement. This meaning can be inferred through the context of the communication going between the man in the story and the carpet seller. In this way, meaning changes according to the context and according to the speaker or a writer. Similarly when the man enters into the shop, shopkeeper greets the man warmly and with pleasure. This kind of pleasure can also be understood according to the context. Pleasure is considered deep but in this context just an apparent pleasure or seemingly conventional to the shop context. In this way we decode the depth and latitude of the meaning through the pragmatic context of communication.

Locutionary acts are the sentences or utterances having sense and a reference which are based on information. These acts highlight the value of the truth in a sentence or an utterance. In this story, numbers of locutionary acts can be seen like in the beginning of the story, writer refers to the January's cold nights and calmness in the night time. So it's based on the truth thus a locutionary act. Similarly, names of roads like cheering cross, high court, post office, McLeod road etc. are representing the true places on mall road thus also the locutionary acts.

Politeness in the *Anandi*

As discussed before, politeness is the strategy to show the level of deference or light mood towards something. This feature has been found in Urdu story and used by the writer in short story *Anandi*. As this story covers the bitter reality of the society for going towards the evil. So writer didn't hit directly to the society, but in a satirical way. He uses lighter tone to depict the status of the society. His use of politeness is more effective as it affects the reader in more impressive way. Meaning is conveyed strongly by using politeness in the discourse. In the story, writer uses euphemistic terms for the evil of people or society for the purpose of hitting indirectly. This way of politeness is conveying the message efficaciously. Instances like, bazar-e-husn for brothel, moazziz hazraat for attenders of prostitutes, dewian for these prostitutes, azeem ulama for religious people with corrupt practices etc. These all instances hit the meaning target greatly, as politeness is shown but meanings are triggered with pressure under this politeness strategy.

This paper highlights the study of speech act and how these speech acts are integrated in the context in the language. Speech acts are the actions which are performed by the linguistic representations. These acts can be based on information only as discussed in the analysis of *Overcoat* and secondly these acts may be of performative verbs which are performed when uttered. The analysis of both stories tells that contextual meanings are significant in interpreting or studying these speech acts. Speech acts like, promising,

announcing fatwa etc. are used in the content of stories. All this kind of speech acts are true performative verbs and fulfil the stance of J.L Austin's *How to do Things with Words*. On the other hand other locutionary acts like information based were also seen in the context. These types of acts can be evaluated as true or false. The truth of these acts can be interpreted through the context of the utterance or a sentence. In these stories, contextual meanings enhance the specific act to interpret in a more fine way.

On the other hand, use of politeness can also be seen in the story *Anandi*. These polite scenario is in fact ruder but employed in a satirical way. Polite substitutes of words were used with some honorifics to hit the target. Politeness is based on the negative face of the society for the evil. This strategy is used for the reformation purpose. Overall politeness is an important pragmatic strategy to convey the meaning.

Conclusion

This paper delves into the use of speech acts and politeness within the stories "Anandi" and "Overcoat," highlighting their contextual importance. Speech acts, which include performative verbs like promising and issuing fatwas, are shown to fulfill J.L. Austin's concept of performativity – where the act of speaking itself performs an action. Additionally, locutionary acts, which convey information, are assessed for their truthfulness based on their context. The study demonstrates that understanding the context is vital for interpreting these speech acts accurately.

In "Anandi," politeness is used in a satirical manner, where seemingly polite language, enhanced with honorifics, subtly critiques societal evils. This use of politeness, based on the negative face strategy, aims at reforming societal behaviors. The analysis underscores that politeness, as a pragmatic strategy, plays a significant role in conveying deeper meanings and facilitating social critique. Overall, the paper illustrates how both speech acts and politeness are intricately woven into the narratives to enrich the interpretation and convey nuanced messages.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this paper, several recommendations can be made. Future research should examine how different contexts within the same cultural framework affect the interpretation of speech acts and politeness strategies, possibly by analyzing more stories by Ghulam Abbas or similar writers. Additionally, conducting comparative studies between Urdu and English literature, or other language pairs, would explore how speech acts and politeness strategies vary across cultures. Extending the analysis to other literary genres, such as poetry, drama, and contemporary fiction, could reveal how speech acts and politeness are utilized in different narrative forms. Incorporating insights from sociology, anthropology, and psychology would deepen the understanding of how these strategies reflect and influence societal norms and behaviors.

Developing educational materials that emphasize the importance of pragmatics in language learning can enhance students' linguistic competence and intercultural communication skills. Utilizing computational tools to analyze larger corpora of texts for speech acts and politeness strategies can identify patterns not immediately apparent through manual analysis. Applying critical discourse analysis to investigate power dynamics and social hierarchies reflected through these strategies can uncover deeper societal implications. Special attention should be paid to implicit forms of communication, such as irony, sarcasm, and indirect speech acts, to reveal subtle nuances and underlying intentions in literary texts. Furthermore, the role of politeness as a tool for social critique,

as demonstrated in "Anandi," should be further studied to understand how politeness strategies can address and reform societal issues. By pursuing these recommendations, researchers can expand the understanding of speech acts and politeness in literature, contributing to the broader field of pragmatics.

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