Original Paper

Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Theory; Towards an Appraisal

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Abstract

This study is an appraisal of Bach and Harnish's (1979) speech act theory, which portrays language use as a fascinating speaker-hearer phenomenon. Like Grice's pragmatic theory (cf. Grice 1975), Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act theory contends that language use is a rational communicative behaviour on the part of the participants. Speech act theories are immersed in the appropriateness of speech acts in discrete contexts and situations. Hence, the term 'congruence' refers to how a speaker's speech act or utterance matches his/her addressee's social status. In critiquing or appraising Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act theory, this study brings to the fore, its strengths and weaknesses, as they apply not only to different dimensions of language use, but also in terms of features of human communication captured in the literature. Hinging on Charles Kriedler's language-speaker postulations, this study concludes that while Bach and Harnish's speech act theory is suitable for understanding speech acts in relation to shared knowledge, literal and non-literal propositions, the theory does not satisfactorily account for certain dimensions of human communication beyond the sentence.

Keywords

Bach and Harnish, speech act, pragmatics, appraisal, Charles Kreidler's language-speaker postulations

1. Introduction

This study is an integrative critique (appraisal) of Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act theory. Considering the speech act taxonomies evolved by Bach and Harnish and their efforts towards explaining different illocutionary strategies and layers of meaning in utterances (cf. Bach and Harnish ibid), it is appropriate to posit that the theory projects illocutionary act and meaning as core notions in human communication; the theory reveals that the investigation of illocutionary act is crucial in the study of meaning in language use across genres. The theory is therefore worthy of scholarly attention.

The possibility of speaking in literal or non-literal language means that a speaker can make choices in the use of illocutionary acts. As captured in the theory, it is clear that even though words do not mean in isolation, they are naturally used with specific kinds of illocutionary acts in meaning-determinism. Arguably, speakers' intentions for using illocutionary acts are the meanings of such acts. Indeed, the addressees construe such acts as they mean from speaker-end. This is the case in the use of direct, indirect, literal and non-literal utterances in varied contexts and situations. In construing speakers' utterances as 'conveying certain illocutionary acts, addressees/hearers do not necessarily need to know the expressions used. Bach and Harnish's postulations on speaker-hearer background knowledge are essentially about cognition which has to do with the 'mental states of the participants of discourse. Communication is fundamentally interpersonal. Cognitive pragmatics concerns the beliefs, desires, feelings, goals, emotions and intentions of language users in a speech community. See Bara (2010) for tips on this submission. In the appraisal of Bach and Harnish's speech act theory, this study explores critical perspectives in the literature; this approach gives the investigation sound theoretical footing.

2. Pragmatics and Speech Acts

Pragmatics is concerned with how language users rely on context in communicative events. Speech act is subsumed in pragmatics in the sense that it is an element of pragmatics. Kasia M. Jaszczolt (2012:103) notes that 'pragmatics has very respectable roots in philosophical writings of ordinary language philosophers of the Anglo-American tradition, and even further into the past, in the phenomenological writings in continental Europe.' The literature is replete with different definitions of pragmatics from classical and contemporary theorists. For example, Crystal and Varley (1993:42) define pragmatics as 'the study of the factors that govern our choice of language (sounds, construction, words) in social interaction, and the effects of our choice upon others. The subject includes the cooperation in our speaking behaviour and it thus involves when we use language to convey politeness, intimacy, playfulness, rudeness, awkwardness and a range of other 'social attributes.' Kempson (1986) defines pragmatics as 'the study of the general cognitive principles involved in the retrieval of information from an utterance.' For Yule (1996), pragmatics is 'the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener or reader.' Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as 'the study of those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars.' Adegbia (1999) provides insights on the scope of pragmatics:

> (i.) The message being communicated;
>
> (ii.) The participants involved in the message;
>
> (iii.) The knowledge of the world which they share;
>
> (iv.) The deductions to be made from the text on the basis of the context;
>
> (v.) The impact of the non-verbal aspect of interaction on meaning.

2. Speech Act

A well-established perspective in the literature of pragmatics is that 'speech acts are word-induced actions. According to Austin (1962), speech acts can be classified thus: locutionary act (performing an act OF saying something); illocutionary act (performing an act IN saying something); and perlocutionary act (performing an act BY saying something). In terms of the classification of speech acts, the illocutionary act categories in Austin (ibid), Searle (1969) as well as Bach and Harnish (ibid) are worthy of note, particularly because verbs that exemplify each category of illocutionary act as used in communicative events, are mentioned.

Speaker-hearer shared knowledge is usually the basis for successful performance of speech acts. Factually, speech acts do not necessarily mean direct utterances. They can be indirect, and can even be performed without using words (non-performative formula). Pratt notes that 'speech act theory provides a way of talking about utterances not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties but also in terms of the context in which they are made, the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants … rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received.'

3. Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Theory

Two concepts ('intention' and 'inference') are crucial in Bach and Harnish's speech act theory. According to the theory, MCBs (mutual contextual beliefs) is about speaker-hearer shared knowledge concerning expressions engaged in communication. The theory contends that conversation (interactional talk) involves an inferential process. 'Speech Act Schemata' (SAS) is used in the theory, with regard to inference-making. According to Bach and Harnish (ibid), 'to infer what S (speaker) is saying, H (hearer) depends also on the 'Presumption of Literalness' (PL); the hearer should know when the linguistic communication of the speaker (S) is within or outside the bounds of literalness, and if S is speaking in a non-literal dimension, H should not only acknowledge it, but should also be able to understand what such speech by S means. Apart from MCBs, Bach and Harnish established other types of beliefs shared by an entire linguistic community, which the hearer relies on for inference-making:

(i)   Linguistic Presumption (LP); and

(ii)   Communicative Presumption (CP).

Linguistic Presumption (LP) refers to the moral belief that members of a Linguistic Community (LC) share on the particular language (L). Therefore, any expression (e) uttered by a member to any member of the community, is taken by the speaker for granted; the speaker presupposes that the hearer understands the expression or utterance. The success of a communicative act is determined by the hearer's ability to decode an utterance.

Bach and Harnish recognize two broad categories of illocutionary acts: communicative and non-communicative. In the former, the recognition of S's R-intention is required, whereas in the latter, it is not. Four major categories of communicative illocutionary acts are established in the theory:

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Constatives, Directives, Commissives and Acknowledgements. These four main categories correspond rougly to Austin's Expositives, Exercitives, Commissives, and Behabitives respectively and closely to Searle's Representatives (Assertives), Directives, Commissives and Expressives, differing mainly in their characterizations. There are two classes of non-communicative illocutionary acts: Effectives and Verdictives, corresponding roughly to Searle's (ibid) Declarations. Fifteen subcategories of this group are recognized as follows: Assertives, Informatives, Confirmatives, Concessives, Retractives, Assentives, Dissentives, Disputatives, Responsives, Suggestives and Suppositives.

Assertives are characterized by S's expression of belief that the hearer (H) also believes that P. Examples of verbs denoting Assertives are: affirm, allege, assert, aver, avow, declare, and deny.

Informatives are speech acts in which S expresses 'the belief that P' and also 'the intention that H form the belief that P'. Examples include advise, announce, appraise, disclose, inform, insist, notify, point out, report, reveal, tell, and testify.

In Descriptives, the speaker declares that 'a particular quality is possessed by a person, place or thing'; the speaker expresses 'the belief that O is F' and 'the intention that H believes that O is F. Examples are appraise, asses, call, categorize, characterize, classify, date, describe, diagnose, evaluate, etc.

Directives express the speaker's attitude toward a future action by the hearer and the speaker's intention or desire that the hearer considers his utterance as reason to act. Six subcategories of illocutionary acts are listed under this category: Requestives, Questions, Requirements, Prohibitives, Permissives, Advisories.

Questions are special cases of requests; the hearer is requested to provide the speaker with certain information. A speech act is considered a question if S expresses 'the desire that H tell S whether or not P' and 'intention that H tell S whether or not P because of S's desire'. Examples include ask, interrogate, query, questions, quiz, etc.

Advisories express the belief that 'there is (sufficient) reason for H to A (act)' and 'the intention that H takes S's belief as (sufficient) reason for him to A'. Examples include advise, caution, counsel, propose, recommend, suggest, urge, warn, etc.

Commissives involve 'the undertaking of an obligation or proposal to undertake an obligation'. Two main types of this category are distinguished: Promises and Offers. S promises H to A if S expresses 'the belief that his utterance obligates him to A', 'the intention to A', and 'the intention that H believes that S's utterance obligates S to A and that S intends to A'. For tips on listed verbs as they apply to each speech act category, see Bach and Harnish (ibid).

3. Theoretical Framework

Charles Kreidler (ibid: 11-12) is an appropriate theoretical framework for critiquing Bach and Harnish's speech act theory. The reasons for this claim are logical: the theoretical framework captures shared knowledge, it is about meaning in language; it is about speakers of a language (as in language users in a speech community); it captures meaning within and beyond the sentence as typical in the use

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of literal and non-literal propositions (illocutionary acts); it acknowledges meaning as context; and it views meaning as not being fixed. Charles Kreidler (ibid: 11-12) gives insights on speakers of a language:

> ... Speakers of a language generally agree as to when two sentences have essentially the same meaning and when they do not …
>
> 3). Speakers generally agree when two words have essentially the same meaning – in a given context …
>
> 4). Speakers recognize when the meaning of one sentence contradicts another sentence …
>
> 5). Speakers generally agree when two words have opposite meanings in a given context …
>
> 6). Synonyms and antonyms have to have some common elements of meaning in order to be, respectively, the same or different. Words can have some element of meaning without being synonymous or antonymous …
>
> 7). Some sentences have double meanings; they can be interpreted in two ways. Speakers are aware of this fact because they appreciate jokes which depend on two-way interpretation …
>
> 8). Speakers know how knowledge is used when people interact. If one person asks a question or makes a remark, there are various possible answers to the question or replies one might make to the remarks …
>
> 9). Speakers are aware that two statements may be related in such a way that if one is true, the other must also be true.
>
> 10). Speakers know that the message conveyed in one sentence may presuppose other pieces of knowledge…

4. Towards an Appraisal of Bach and Harnish's Pragmatic Theory

This section of the paper examines strengths and weaknesses of Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act theory.

4.1 Strengths of Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Theory

4.1.1 Shared Knowledge and Presupposition

Bach and Harnish's speech act theory is quite instructive in the elucidation of meaning in language via speaker-hearer shared knowledge. Mutual contextual beliefs are essentially background assumptions that underpin language use. Such assumptions or presuppositions can be explicit or implicit. When mutual knowledge of the participants of discourse is the basis for using an utterance, the utterance is said to be appropriate in context; pragmatic presupposition operates therein. Inference-making is a calculative process. It is based on the mutual contextual beliefs of participants of discourse. Language users in a speech community rely on state-of-affairs (social institutions/value systems) which are

essentially their mutual beliefs about the elements of communication including the categories of speech acts engaged. Discourse participants are part of the larger society of humans (the universe of discourse). In this sense, discourse is essentially 'part of a whole'. Acheoah (2015) uses the terms SCK (Shared Contextual Knowledge) and SMK (Shared Macro Knowledge) to capture 'the actual context' of an ongoing communication and 'the larger context' respectively. The latter precedes an ongoing communication. These two categories of context impinge on what gets said and how it is interpreted.

4.1.2 The Interaction of Linguistic Conventions with Literal and Non-literal Meanings

Literal and Non-literal use of utterances, as can be seen in Bach and Harnish's speech act theory, is an intrinsic feature of human language. Thus, in terms of scope of investigation, the theory is a giant stride in linguistic research. In the use of literal and non-literal propositions, linguistic norms such as conversational structures impinge on meaning. For example, movement rules in English grammar explain how what is said in a particular clause relates to what is said in a preceding clause:

> Example 1
>
> Smith killed a snake when he was going to school.
>
> Example 2
>
> When he was going to school, Smith killed a snake.

There are two actions in Example 1 ('killed' and 'was going'). Both actions concern a single subject 'Smith'. The relationship between the first clause/main clause (Smith killed a snake) and the second clause/subordinate clause (when he was going to school) is that of 'doer/agentive' and 'time of doing'. There are also other kinds of connections between units in the two clauses: 'he' relates with 'Smith' while 'was' relates with 'killed'. In terms of gender and time, a feminine pronoun such as 'she' and a present continuous tense verb such as 'is going' cannot relate semantically with 'Smith' and 'killed' respectively. Even in non-literal constructions, this argument can hold. Bach and Harnish's speech act theory is quite incisive in implicature theorizing. Bach and Harnish's submissions on non-literal language and indirect illocutionary strategies show that implicatures are traditionally not in tandem with exact speaker-meaning. Thus, Bach and Harnish propose that the speaker should clearly state to his interlocutor, what is meant by an utterance.

Example 3

Bananas are affordable these days.

In Example 3, the speaker is saying 'bananas have become cheap' whereas, that may not be what is exactly meant. Different layers of implied meanings are obtainable in the utterance as in:

- Bananas are not as expensive as they used to be;

- Bananas are now cheap;

- Bananas are still expensive, but to an affordable extent.

Studies on refusal strategies and face acts align with some of the illocutionary strategies in Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Schemata because as in the above examples, such studies examine different layers of meaning in linguistic stretches, ro which S can make choices based on illocutionary

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goals/intentions. An established fact in Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Schemata is that pragmatic communication is immersed in speaker-based maneuvering of language. The perception or thoughts that language users deploy in processing non-literal utterances can logically be viewed as a demonstration of their competence level in the structure of the language that is being engaged in a communicative event. Lack of linguistic competence can result in pragmatic failure; that is, the inability to understand what is meant by what is said. In this sense, Bach and Harnish's concept referred to as MCBs may not be the basis for interpreting utterances. Linguistic competence is functional in the use of non-literal language and indirect speech acts from speaker-end, because using language to mean something in addition to what a speaker basically means (as in the use of primary and secondary illocutionary acts), is not an easy task. When literal, non-literal, direct and indirect communicative strategies are used by participants of discourse, language use is projected as 'social action' involving discourse actors who construct meaning in discrete contexts. The difference between a sentence and an utterance captures the notion that 'people mean, not words'.

4.1.3 Speech Act Taxonomy

As pragmatic theorists with speech act taxonomy to their credit, it is clear that Bach and Harnish acknowledge that 'meaning' is partly an extra-sentential phenomenon. Early speech act theorists argue that acts performed with expressions and linguistic stretches are crucial in the notion of 'meaning' or language use. In this regard, Alston, cited in David A. Brenders (1987, p. 336) correctly notes that 'the correct unit of analysis for meaning is not at the level of words since, referring or denoting is something one does in the course of performing a larger action-unit, such as making a request, admission, or prediction.' In a similar vein, David A. Brenders (ibid, p. 331) submits that 'speech act theory, as a part of the philosophy of language, has been concerned with analyzing the performance of linguistic acts (asserting, promising, questioning) as a rule-governed form of behaviour…' Bach and Harnish's speech act theory reveals that the achievement of intended perlocutionary acts is crucial in written and spoken communication. Their speech act categories cover what speakers attempt to do with utterances in different contexts. Thus, the theory is also about sequels/uptake as in Austin (ibid). Theoretical frameworks in language and linguistics are advancements of predating theories. Searle, cited in Brenders (ibid, p. 340) submits that 'in the performance of an illocutionary act the speaker intends to produce a certain effect by means of getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce that effect, and furthermore, if he is using words literally, he intends this recognition to be achieved …' Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Schemata encapsulates the coherence-driven nature of human communication. Language users consciously explore resources of language to coordinate, maneuver and manipulate illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

4.1.4 Nexus between Context and Meaning

Unlike artificial language, natural human language conveys meaning via context. Bach and Harnish's speech act theory encapsulates the linguistic context (as in the use of a particular expression 'e') and physical context (as in a linguistic community (LC)) of utterances. Adeniran, cited in Ayodabo (2013, p.

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22) contends that 'any account of language which fails to build in the relevant situation as essential ingredient is likely to be artificial (as it is with most of the constructed examples often employed as heuristics in structural linguistic analysis and of limited value if not totally unrewarding in pragmatic analysis.' Scholars of language and linguistics do not ignore the fact that environmental nuances constitute elements of meaning in language use. The perlocutionary act of an utterance varies, as it interacts with different pragmatic variables. For example, the different contexts in which a speaker warns an addressee/hearer by using certain speech act verbs, determines the addressee's reaction, which may either be positive or negative. It is also worthy of note that the addressee's reaction can also depend on hi/her interpretation of the utterance (uptake/sequel).

The speech act categories in Bach and Harnish (ibid) are performative acts in terms of the context of speech and context of situation that generate or underpin them. Context can be viewed in different ways as evident in the different types of contexts in the literature of pragmatics. For example, the view that 'context is location' is captured by Crystal, cited in Adegbija (1999) who defines context as 'the place in which a communicative event occurs.' If context is viewed just in terms of location, there cannot be satisfactory interpretation of speech act categories including those categories in Bach and Harnish's speech act theory. Scholars contend that the psychological underpinnings of utterances are meaning-laden and can foster textual interpretation. There is also what is referred to as 'psychological context'. According to van Dijk T. A. (1977, p. 36), 'the actual context is defined by the period of time and the place where the common activities of speaker and hearer are realized and which satisfy the properties of 'here' and 'now' logically, physically and cognitively.' Commenting on types of contexts, Adegbija (ibid, p. 192) submits:

> Broadly, we may identify at least four types of context as impinging on utterance interpretation: the physical, the socio-cultural, the linguistic, and the psychological. Pertinent questions for probing into the context include the following:
>
> Did the communicative exchange occur at night, in the morning, twenty years ago, at a church, at a mosque, in a bedroom, in the market, at a cemetery, at a hospital. Socio-culturally, one may ask questions such as these: what are the beliefs, habits, value systems, or cultures of those involved? Are their religious and cultural beliefs at hand? Linguistically, what are the other words appearing in the environment of the word used? What do they mean? What do they imply within the physical and socio-cultural setting? Psychologically, what is the state of mind of those involved in the interaction?

4.2 Weaknesses of Bach and Harnish's Speech Act Theory

4.2.1 Meaning beyond the Sentence

Although Bach and Harnish's speech act theory has its strengths, there are weaknesses therein. First, the theory cannot satisfactorily account for meaning beyond the sentence. There is no doubt about the

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fact that the theory advances knowledge in speech act theorizing, if compared to predating speech act theories. The intractable nature of speech acts means that there can hardly be any speech act theory that can absolutely explain what people do with language. One of the the contentious issues in the literature is that speech act verbs may not correlate with established speech act categories. This fact remains contentious till date. Such non-correlation distorts speaker-meaning and addressees' interpretation of language use. When S advises H, certain category of verbs classified as verbs for warning an addressee or suggesting to an addressee, may be used. In this sense, context determines the appropriateness of speakers' choice of verbs when advising, suggesting or warning addressees. This fact makes Bach and Harnish's speech act theory place linguistic conventions above contextual nuances and extra-sentential underpinnings. The fact that language accommodates 'family of words' (or synonyms), amplifies arguments revolving around the non-correlation of speech act verbs with speech act categories. Since natural human communication deploys illocutionary acts naturally, speech act verbs will not suffice in the use of illocutionary force in context. Scholars therefore contend for updated inference theories that elucidate the use of literal and non-literal propositions not only in relation to speech act verbs and categories, but also in relation to the dynamics of contextual and environmental variables. Culture-bound use and interpretation of speech acts implies that illocutionary act categorization in classical pragmatic theories is loose and inadequate for the explanation of language use. There are more studies on the dynamics of actual language use. Levinson (1983) is insructive in this regard.

Utterances can only acceptably mean in terms of the context of speech and context of situation that produce them; as far back as the era of Firth (1962), this claim is acknowledged. A more universal approach to the study of speech act, especially illocutionary act, could make Bach and Harnish's theory more realistic in the elucidation of human communication. For example, speech acts can be performed with preparatory conditions, and when this rule is flouted, the interpretation of S's literal or non-literal language may not be based on speaker-hearer mutual contextual beliefs. Rather, it will be based on H's linguistic competence; that is, knowledge of the Operative Language. Acheoah (ibid) evolves the term Operative Language to refer to any language that is being used for an ongoing written or spoken communication. The grammar of languages differs, and it is the level of participants' mastery of the structure of the language used in an ongoing communication, that determines locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

4.2.2 Non-verbal Communication

Bach and Harnish's speech act theory does not emphasize non-verbal communication, which indeed, is crucial in discourse. In communication situations, illocutionary acts are amplified by non-verbal accompaniments in discrete contexts. If communication elements are speech-community specific as Bach and Harnish reveals, then it is worthy of note that the participants of discourse can also be engaged in the use of region-specific non-verbal elements of communication (paralinguistics). For example, Acheoah (ibid) evolves the term GI (Geoimplicature) which refers to region-specific non-verbal communication with both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts potentials. Austin (ibid,

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p.119) asserts that '… it is characteristic of perlocutionary acts that the response achieved or the sequel can be achieved by additional or entirely by non-locutionary means: thus intimidation may be achieved by waving a stick or pointing a gun.' This submission aligns with Searle, cited in Jozsef Andor, (2011, p. 124) who states that 'illocutionary acts are always, in my sense, speech acts, even if they are not performed in language but are performed by raising your arm or by winking, or by making some other gestures. But perlocutionary acts cannot be performed as speech acts. They are not essentially speech acts at all. A perlocutionary act has to do with the effect on the hearer.'

4.2.3 Contentious Nature of Speaker-meaning

So long as Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act theory is based on intention and inference, it is an emphasis on speaker-meaning. However, speaker-meaning remains unresolved in the literature, because of the intractable nature of 'speech acts', 'meaning' and 'context'. Eva Alcon Soler (2012, p. 512) reports that 'the ability to comprehend speakers' intentions has been examined in a number of studies, the results of which show that comprehension of pragmatic meaning depends on the level of indirectness encoded in the utterance, as well as learners' L2 proficiency.' If not for the fact that speakers often try to be cooperative by exploring speaker-hearer shared knowledge and presuppositions in the use of language, speaker-meaning would have been more contentious than it seems to be. Factually, discourse cooperative behaviour is determined by individuality and culture-specific forces (cross-cultural pragmatics) (Note 1). Patrick Griffiths (2006, p. 7) avers that 'sender meaning is the meaning that the speaker or writer intends to convey by means of an utterance. Sender meaning is something that addressees are continually having to make informed guesses about. Addressees can give indications, in their own next utterance, of their interpretation (or by performing other actions ….' Consider the sentence below, which will suffice in the explanation of the uncertain nature of speaker-meaning/sender-meaning:

> Example 5
>
> Beware of dogs that do not bark.

If the sentence in Example 5 is written on the gate of a house as an inscription, what is meant can only be guessed by using appropriate inference strategies, including world-knowledge-induced inferences; the following facts obtains in the decoder's mind:

- Animals make different sounds.
- While cocks crow, dogs bark.
- It is strange if a dog crows.
- It is strange if a cock barks.
- It is strange if a dog does not bark.

The above inferences make the utterance 'Beware of dogs that do not bark' suspicious, even though the encoder may not have any evil intentions. If the occupants sell things inside the house and want patronage, the primary illocutionary act of the utterance is 'requestive' while the secondary illocutionary act is 'assertive' (which are speech act categories in Bach and Harnish's (ibid) speech act

taxonomy); the encoder requests the decoder to enter the house without fear and buy things. But if the occupants do not sell things in the house, the primary illocutionary act of the utterance is 'warning' while the secondary illocutionary act is 'assertive'.

5. Conclusion

This study examines strengths and weaknesses of Bach and Harnish's speech act theory. Considering the 'strong points' of the theory in terms of elucidating critical dimensions of discourse across genres, it can be concluded that the theory is quite instructive. It is not to be viewed as a prescriptive theoretical framework. It is an elaborate description of the features of human communication with speech act as its core. It presents rational discourse issues and dimensions so that natural human communication can be understood from diverse perspectives. As noted by scholars of language and linguistics, most pragmatic theories are neo-Gricean; they are influenced by H.P. Grice's postulations, even though they advance knowledge on Grice's theory. Kasia M. Jaszczolt, (ibid, p. 105) assert that 'Grice's Co-operative Principle and its maxims do not purport to give a cognitive access into individual speakers and their intentions; instead, they constitute an attempted summary of rational behaviour, model speakers, using a theoretical construct of an intention (of different levels of embedding) … Meaning, post-Gricean approaches made considerable progress in researching the domain that Grice's philosophical writing did not delve into, namely the addressee's cognitive processes that govern comprehension. Post-Gricean developments have also made considerable progress in modeling a rational speaker's cognitive processes associated with predicting the very act of collaboration in constructing meaning …'

In spite of Bach and Harnish's perspectives on speech acts, it is worthy of note that knowledge of the grammar or structure of language (linguistic competence) fosters pragmatic communication (communicative competence). Bach and Harnish's speech act theory reveals that speech acts are intentionally targeted at addressees for known illocutionary goals. This view is in tandem with David Harrah, cited in Savas L. Tsohatzidis (1994, p. 375) who opines that 'most speech acts seem to be focused and directed. They are intended as coming from the agent and going to the receivers or audience. They are intended to have a certain point, and they are intended to be construed as having a certain point.' MCBs and other notions in Bach and Harnish's theory reveal that human communication is naturally a cooperative behaviour (cf. Grice, 1975). However, Grice's pragmatic theory is more extensive and incisive in the discussion of the cooperative nature of conversation, and in the elucidation of implicature as non-literal meaning (Note 2).

This study appraises Bach and Harnish's speech act theory with an integrative approach, and concludes that the theory is helpful in the understanding of language use, as enabled by the theoretical concepts therein. However, the theory does not completely explain what speakers do with language in instances of actual language use.

Notes

Note 1. This explains why addressees or receivers of an utterance continually attempt to guess what speaker-meaning or sender-meaning is, in such utterances.

Note 2. For example, Grice (1975, p. 48) makes critical submission on features distinguishing the Cooperative Principles:

> 1) The participants have some common immediate aim;
>
> 2) The contributions of the participants should be dovetailed, mutually dependent;
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> 3) There is some sort of undertaking (which may be explicit but which is often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transaction should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate." Although Bach and Harnish's speech act theory states that if S speaks in a non-literal language, H should be carried along, the literature acknowledges that non-literal propositions can be cancelled in a sentence. For example, Grice (1989, p. 31) submits that conversational implicatures have the following characteristics:
>
> a. They are cancellable e.g. when one finds situations in which the utterance of the form of words could not carry the implicature;
>
> b. They are non-detachable: It will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which lacks the implicature in question, except where some special feature of the substituted version is itself relevant to the determination of an implication (in virtue of one of the maxims of Manner).
>
> c. They are calculable: The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument (the implicature if present at all) it will not count as a conversational implicature.

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