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Assertives as a method for revealing mysticism

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Abstract--This paper is aimed to explain how the assertive speech acts can be used to reveal mysticism concepts in some selected poems of one of the greatest American poets who is Henry David Thoreau. The used method of analysis in this study is the qualitative one. The procedures that is followed to show how assertives are used to reveal mysticism, involve comparing the occurrences and percentage to another speech acts that is being identified through the selected poems. The comparison is to explain how the nature of assertive determines its distribution within the selected poems. Therefore, the results of the analysis show that high distribution of assertive in comparison with directives is related to the nature of assertives that helps the poets in expressing anything related to the case or truth of mystic concepts. The result of the study reveal that assertive speech acts can be functioned to explain mysticism concept as assertive speech act explain mysticism concept in the selected text to be analyzed in this study.

Keywords--mysticism, speech act, illocution, assertives, directives.

Introduction

Evelyn Underhill (2002:10-11) starts his discussion of mysticism with a brief introduction. He states that mysticism means exploring the world is one of the main human property since seeking the truth of the universe is the occupying job of many of many people but there are some individuals who have more lust to seek truth namely the philosophers. This quest is aimed to explore the meaning of the world. The quester of truth pays much more efforts and sacrifices to satisfy his lust for truth. Such exhausted experience is the only way to realize the value of the life as this experience qualifies those seekers of truth to interact with

unknown world that lies outside the boundaries of sense. This means that the pursuit of truth means to abandon the material world to find the truth. This account makes mysticism as a concept that is related to anything nebulous, esoteric, supernatural, spiritual (Merkur ,1999:153).

Poetry represents the basic medium for expressing mystic experience. Thus, it is a difficult task to understanding the texts of mystic poetry as mysticism underlies wide range of conceptual issues like symbolism, allegorism, philosophy and magic (Moore, 2005: 6357). This makes the process of defining mysticism is a subject of debate. As a result, Mystic poetry proves to be hard to grasp the prepositions and beliefs that underlies it. Anyone choose to deal with mystic poetry, must have on his own behalf some means or a tool that enables him to identify these beliefs or prepositions within mystic poetry. Speech act theory represents a very useful tool to analyze the texts of mystic poetry as it helps the different speech acts used. speech acts theory is one of the most outstanding theories to account for the way by which the interlocutors of any communicative event, archive an act. Therefore, speech act theory can help in explaining how the mystic poet tries to effect the worlds by means of mystic texts.

Aims of the Study

In accordance with the background of the study, this study aims to:

- Identifying the violations of assertive speech acts in both Thoreau's *Inspiration* and Whitman's *Song of Myself*;
- Counting the occurrences of both assertives and directives in selected poems;
- Comparing the occurrences and percentage of both assertives and directives
- Explaining how the assertive speech acts can contribute in explaining the expressed beliefs and prepositions.

Literature Review

Speech Act Theory

With the mid of 21th century the view to language has changed as language has been studied not as a daily activity but as a phenomenon by which an individual can perform an action. The key figure of such an approach was the British philosopher John Austin (1962). Speech act theory was not the main interest for linguist only but it tempted scholars from other disciplines to account to some issue that has a relation to language such as psychologists who uses speech act theory to account for language acquisition as in Schmidt and Richards' s study (1980).

Austin's how to do things with words' is considered as the first brick in building speech act theory practically. Austin's work represents an attempt to account for the relationship between meaning the linguistic form. This relationship is achieved when the speaker relates what he intends to express to what he says or more clearly relates his intention to the linguistic form (Oisho, 2006:2). Associating the intention of the speaker with the linguistic form is considered the basic activity throughout the daily communication in acts like promising,

threatening, persuading. Another benefit of this association is that the speaker can communicate meaning other than the literal meaning for the linguistic form that s/he uses (Austin, 1962:2).

Another pioneer of speech act theory is John Searle (1969) who claim that one property of speech act is the intentionality which implies the responsibility for the intention that the speaker tries to express. In this way, Searle adds a mental basis for speech acts theory (Randolph, 2017:102). Up to this point, speech act represents the relation between the form the function of the linguistic form and this linguistic form has a number of function such as statement, command, command. The association between the function of an utterance can be described as the real intention of the utterance utterer which can be either direct association or indirect. Then, this association has two types. The first type is the direct one when the there is a matching between the form of an utterance and its function as when someone says "Give me a glass of water", in this example the function and form of the utterance indicates a request and the hearer pays no effort to get its meaning since s/he can use its literal meaning. But this cannot be true with second type of association which is the indirect. With indirect association, the utterance shows no matching between its form and its function and the speaker intends to achieve nonliteral meaning (Yule, 1996:133). Searle (1969:59) states that such an utterance indicates more than one illocutionary act.

Austin (1962:64) chooses to analyze the components of the speech acts in order to define the real intention that underlies any utterance which are they: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act refers to uttering some words by means of certain construction or structure, in another words, locutionary act refers to the direct association between the form and function of an utterance. Illocutionary act indicates the intended meaning that the speaker tries to communicate which cannot be recognized by depending on the form of an utterance.

Searle Classification of Speech Acts

The first taxonomy of speech act can be ascribed to Austin as he distinguished five main types of speech acts and they are: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives (Wardhaugh,1986: 286) Searle (1969: 16) assumes that speech act is the minimal unit of communication. Mey (2001: 120) states that Searle modifies what Austin's speech acts taxonomy categories as follows assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Searle adds another dimension to Austin's speech act taxonomy which is the direction of fit between the word and the world for each type of speech act as well as the role of speaker as follows (Yule, 1996: 55):

No	Speech Act Type	Direction of Fit	Speaker's Role
1	Assertives	Words fit the world	Speaker believes X
2	Directives	World fits words	Speaker wants X
3	Commissives	World fits words	Speaker intends X
4	Expressives	Words fit the world	Speaker feels X
5	Declaratives	Words change the world

Assertive Speech Act

Utterances that are classified as assertives are to make the speaker to commit him/herself to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. In order to explain a belief through the established proposition, the speaker must fit his words to the surrounding context in an assertive. Verbs like "assert," "complain," "state," "affirm," "report," "conclude," etc. are included in this class (Saeed, 1997:214). Searle (1979:15) points out that assertives combine both Austin's expositives and verdictives, as they denote the same illocutionary point but different illocutionary forces. In other words, they indicate what the speaker believes to be the case or not. Thus, they can be tested empirically by means of the simplest test for representatives whether they can be verified as true or false (Ibid).

Directive Speech Act

Directive speech act is another type of Searle taxonomy which its illocutionary point that makes the speaker to direct the hearer towards doing (or not doing) something; therefore, the speaker tries to designate a world-to-words direction of fit. The speaker wishes or wants the hearer to do (or not to do) something (Searle 1979: 14).

Mysticism

"Mysticism" is derived from the Greek origin $\mu\upsilon\omega$, which means "I conceal", and its derivative $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$, *mystikos*, meaning 'an initiate'. Although the verb $\mu\upsilon\omega$ has multiple meanings which include meanings like induct, "initiate" "make someone aware of something", "train", "familiarize", and "give first experience of something" but they are all related to 'truth' or 'knowledge'. Mysticism has history that to the early seventeenth-century. Cristobal (2009: 50-52) has a different opinion about the history of mysticism as he suggests that it is the product of the theology written by Pseudo-Dionysius in the fifth century which entered the Christian theology According to Gristobal, mysticism refers to a special kind of communion with God in unusual experiences involving the entire psyche, the whole person.

Another definition to mysticism is provided by Johnston (1997: 24) who states that it signifies 'contemplation'. A group of scholars including Mcgrinn (1992: 226), Moore (2005: 6357), and King (2002: 15), attempt to define mysticism within religious framework this time, they point out that mysticism means to be unified with God or the absolute. Therefore, such definition is comprehensive to include all religions from indigenous religions and folk religions like shamanism to organized religions or faiths and modern spirituality. Moore (Ibid) adds that one results for the union with the Absolute is a state of spiritual ecstasy of consciousness. Up to this point, mysticism is defined within the framework of what is being known as '*unio mystica*' or the spiritual marriage. Mcgrinn (Ibid) provides an idea to the most developed version of defining the concept of mysticism when he states that mysticism is not merely being unified with God but it involves being aware about this union. Mcgrinn continues his account for mysticism by referring that the union with God means experiencing both the

sensation of God or the Absolute as an external object and new ways of knowing loving based on states of awareness that makes God present in all acts of the mystic individual.

Method

Data Collection

It is hypothesized that only the speech act that its nature support expressing mysticism will be identified more than other types of speech acts. This study applies a qualitative descriptive method as it tries to identify both types of specified speech acts in Henry David Thoreau's *Inspiration*, *Concise* and *Prayer* and how assertive speech act in comparison with directive type aids revealing mystic concept through selected texts. Directive Speech is chosen as comparison criterion to show that only the speech acts that its nature facilitates expressing mystic concepts will be recognized with a high number of occurrences through the sample of the study. This makes assertive speech act as the most suitable speech act to reveal mystic concepts in the sample of the study due to nature of assertives. Thus, assertives can be regarded as a good representative of mystic concepts in the sample of mystic poetry.

Results and Discussion

The present study tries to identify two types of speech acts which are assertive and directives in three poems of Thoreau and to count the occurrences of each speech act. the researcher analyzes each stanza of both poems in order to identify all occurrences of each speech act and then to compare the occurrences of both type of speech acts. The following tables present the results of the analysis.

Table 1
Numbers and Frequency of Assertives in Thoreau's *Inspiration*, *Concise* and *Prayer*

No.	The Poem	Occurrence	percentage
1	<i>Inspiration</i>	14	70
2	<i>Concise</i>	5	25
3	<i>Prayer</i>	1	5
Total		20	

This table illustrates that the total number of assertive speech acts in the selected poems is 20. The highest percentage of assertives is in *Inspiration* with a total number of 14 (70%). Then follows *Concise* with total number of occurrences, 5 (25%). Finally, *Prayer* scores the lowest level of occurrence of assertives with only one occurrence.

Table 2
Numbers and Frequency of Directives in Thoreau's *Inspiration*, *Concise* and *Prayer*

No.	The Poem	Occurrence	percentage
1	<i>Inspiration</i>	2	33

2	Concise	3	50
3	Prayer	1	16.6
Total		6	

Table (2) shows the number of occurrences of directives in the selected poems. the total number of occurrence of directives show low level in comparison with assertives for the previously mentioned reason as the most suitable speech act for expressing mysticism with only six occurrences. The occurrences of directives are distributed with 2 for *Inspiration*, 3 for *Concise* and 1 for *Prayer*.

Assertives

Based on the previous literature concerning speech act, the poet makes himself responsible for the propositional state whose illocutionary force is of truth value. the following examples can illustrate how assertive speech act serves as facilitator for understanding

Such fragrance round my couch it makes,
More rich than are Arabian drugs,
That my soul scents its life and wakes
The body up beneath its perfumed rugs.

In this example the speaker commits himself to a proposition which he tries to asserts its validity as true. Therefore, the speaker lists multiple descriptions to state that he experienced. These descriptions make the reader to live an experience that exceed the border of materialistic world. The motivation that make the poet to use such linguistic ornaments is to support visualizing the experience that live. These descriptions are being functioned within an assertive speech act.

Example (2)

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,
And my life practise more than my tongue saith,

In this example from Thoreau's *Concise*, he expresses a paradoxical state of affair by which he commits himself to a proposition that portrays the loss of his physical power at the same time in which he has a superior spiritual power. Thus, such a proposition satisfies the truth of one the most famous concept of non-self as the mystic starts to diminish the ego since the last one represents the point of association with materialistic world. Thus, the poet introduces a troubled situation that combine two paradoxical states that may end with swinging the hand of the strongest which is the 'firm faith' or the 'tongue'. This leads the poet to commit himself to a proposition through functioning an assertive speech act.

Directives

Directive speech act scores lowest number of occurrences due the spiritual nature of the mysticism concept which does not agree with such kind of speech act.

Directives imply that the speaker tries to make his hearer to do something so that he makes his words fit the world as in the following example:

Example (3)

Great God, I ask thee for no meaner pelf
Than that I may not disappoint myself;

In this example, the poet tries make the hearer (God) not to disappoint him in what he asks God for. The poet's hope to have his request represents a relationship of the word-to-world fit. In another example from Thoreau's *Nature*, the poet practices the same activity by making his hearer to provide him with his request as follows:

Example (4)

Give me thy most privy place
Where to run my airy race.

The poet speaks to the nature as human being that he requests her to grant him 'privy place' to have his 'airy race'

Conclusions

The main goal of this study is to show how assertives affect revealing mysticism in three poems of Thoreau which are: Prayer, Concise, and Nature. The study illustrates that there is some sort of affinity in terms of the nature of both mysticism and assertive speech act as they are both aimed to change the world through words. Therefore, assertives score a high level of occurrences with (20) occurrences in comparison with directives. Directives scores only (6) occurrences for the nature of this type of speech act that makes the speaker to practice some authority on the hearer. Thus, the nature of directives does not agree with the nature the nature of mysticism. The yielded result of this study is that assertive can be used to reveal and to understand mystic texts. According to the discussion and literature of this study, assertive speech act as linguistic concept is used as criterion that determines the intended meaning of the analyzed text.

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