

Analysis of A Dream of Red Mansions Character Dialogue based on Speech Act Theory

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ABSTRACT

Based on the speech act theory of J·L·Austin and J·R·Searle, this paper takes some dialogues in Luo Guanzhong's *A Dream of Red Mansions* as the research object, and analyzes the dialogues of the characters in the novel from the two dimensions of direct speech act and introduction speech act, so as to understand the implied meaning of the characters in the novel, the connotation and value of the work more deeply, which is helpful for readers to better understand the plot and character characteristics of *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

KEYWORDS

Speech Act; *A Dream of Red Mansions*; Character Dialogue.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Dream of Red Mansions is one of the four great masterpieces in China. It is not only a classic work in the history of Chinese literature, but also a valuable cultural heritage in the world. Its language characteristics often make language scholars admire, and it is unique in the language field of ancient literary works. Countless people learn from the way of dialogue. So far, many scholars have studied the language art contained in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. There seems no logic in studying literature with linguistics. However, Linguistics and literature are inseparable. If linguistics is a drop of water, then literature is a sea. Literature is the corpus and object of linguistic research, and linguistics is the basis of literary creation. The two complement each other (Zhou, 2022).

2. A SUMMARY OF SPEECH ACT THEORY

In the 1930s, the British linguist and philosopher John Austin first put forward the theory of speech act and created the trichotomy: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. But Austin did not classify illocutionary acts. Therefore, on the basis of Austin, American linguist and philosopher Searle systematically sorted out the previous studies, classified illocutionary acts into direct speech acts and indirect speech acts, and further developed this theory from the aspects of definition, classification and appropriate conditions of speech acts.

Direct speech act refers to the speech act in which the speaker's intention is directly expressed by the literal meaning of the speech. On the contrary, indirect speech act refers to a speech act in which the speaker's intention cannot be directly expressed by the literal meaning of the discourse by implementing another act (Searle, 2001). The content of the communication between the speaker and the audience is more than what he actually wants to say. Searle divides speech acts into five different types: assertion, indication, commitment, expression and declaration.

Locutionary act is the act of uttering words, phrases, and clauses. It is the act of expressing literal meaning through syntax, vocabulary, and phonemes.

Illocutionary act is the act of expressing the speaker's intention, which is the act of saying something.

Perlocutionary act is the act performed by some words, or the act caused by speaking some words. It is the consequence or change caused by discourse, and it is the act completed by speaking some words.

From Searle's view, there are only five illocutionary points that speakers can achieve on propositions in an utterance, namely: the assertive, commissive, directive, declaratory and expressive illocutionary points. Speakers achieve the assertive point when they represent how things are in the world, the commissive point when they commit themselves to doing something, the directive point when they make an attempt to get hearers to do something, the declaratory point when they do things in the world at the moment of the utterance solely by virtue of saying that they do and the expressive point when they express their attitudes about objects and facts of the world (Vanderkeven and Kubo 2002).

Based on the current state of research, the author takes different classes of people's dialogue in *Dream of Red Mansions* as a research object. This paper will use speech act theory of J·L·Austin and J·R·Searle to analyze different kind of characters in the novel and deep meaning of the work more deeply, thus combine the research of linguistic and literature.

3. SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS IN A DREAM OF RED MANSIONS

Speech act theory is a kind of language philosophy theory that attaches importance to the speaker's intention, meaning and context of words and sentences. Its focus is on the speech act itself. Anything that anyone says in a particular scene is intentional, not aimless. In the literary work *A Dream of Red Mansions*, in order to avoid direct speech or awkward communication, there are several scenes in which people of different classes use indirect speech acts to express their implied meaning in a euphemistic and implicit way.

3.1. Direct Speech Acts

In direct speech act, when the communicative parties directly use the rules related to the sentence, the intention conveyed is relatively easy to understand. If the speaker conveys the conversational intention according to the literal meaning, it is based on the language background knowledge based on the speech act rules, and the listener needs to infer according to this kind of language knowledge when understanding the discourse. Language expression knowledge is the knowledge shared by the established language community. Its rules are relatively definite and stable, and it is easy to use and grasp in verbal communication. See example 1.

Example 1: The old woman (Granny Liu) caught hold of one of these youngsters and asked, "Can you tell me, brother, if Mrs. Zhou is at home?"

This example is the sixth time that Grandma Liu first entered the Grand View Garden and asked the children playing at the back door. It can be seen that Grandma Liu used direct language behavior, because at this time, Grandma Liu's communicative intention was to find the right way. The child has no direct interest in her, and the use of direct language behavior is convenient for immature children to understand. At the same time, although Grandma Liu is not an elder, she does not rely on the old to sell the old. Instead, she calls the two children "brother" and follows the Leech's politeness principle, which is conducive to narrowing the relationship between the speaker and the listener, so that her communicative purpose can be realized smoothly.

Example 2: She (Wang Xifeng) asked Mrs. Zhou if she had notified Lady Wang. "I was waiting for madam's instructions," was the reply. "Go and see how busy she is. If she has visitors, never mind. But if she's free, let her know and see what she says."

This case took place after Grandma Liu first met Wang Xifeng, who was the wife of Jia Lian and the housekeeper of Rongguo Mansion. Zhou Ruijia was the concubine of the wife of the second wife of Jia Mansion (Wang Xifeng's aunt). Although Mrs.Zhou was Wang Xifeng's family, she was only a servant after all. Due to the large gap in status between the two sides, and Wang Xifeng's communicative intention was only to preach, there was no other implication. Therefore, most of the words she said with the servant were imperative language, that is, direct speech act. The side can also be speculated that Wang Xifeng's status is noble.

Although the first case and the second case both use direct language behavior, they are different. For example, Grandma Liu prefers to request, while Wang Xifeng is a command and has a high opinion.

3.2. Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect speech act is a kind of communication mode that actively uses language means to communicate, which is widely used in real social communication. It is embodied in the indirect realization of one main agent behavior through another secondary agent behavior.e.g.Teacher:The classroom is very hot. The surface meaning(locutionary act) of the teacher is that "It is hot", and his implication(illocutionary act) may be "Can you(one of his students) open the electric fan", "Can you turn on the air conditioner?" or Maybe "Can you close the window?"According to the teacher's illocutionary act, students' various reactions(such as keeping silent; leaving to open the fan/air conditioner; closing the window) are perlocutionary acts. Moreover, Searle believes that when the speaker says "Here is hot", he actually implements two illocutionary acts at the same time, one is the statement (Here is hot), and the other is the suggestion (turn on the fan/turn on the air conditioner/close the window). The speaker indirectly implements the main agent behavior (turn on the fan / turn on the air conditioner / close the window) by implementing the secondary agent behavior of the statement (Here is hot).

The following is to analyze the use of indirect speech acts by different characters in A Dream of Red Mansions under different circumstances.

3.2.1. Granny Liu

In A Dream of Red Mansions, Granny Liu entered Jia's house three times, witnessing the whole process of the rise and fall of Jia's house. Everything Granny Liu did and every sentence she said was basically philosophical. In her first entering, in order to ask for help, she is careful, flatter Zhou Rui's family, and flatter Wang Xifeng, hoping to get relief.

See example 3.

Example 3:

"I came specially to see you, sister, and also to inquire after Her ladyship's health. If you could take me to see her, that would be nice. If you can't, I'll just trouble you to pass on my respects."

Grandma Liu appropriately expressed her legitimate will by skillfully using indirect words. She first mentioned "came specially to see you" and added "and also". In fact, Grandma Liu's main communication intention is to seek livelihood help, that is, to expect the generous assistance of the Jia people. In the process of seeking help, Grandma Liu showed a superb language strategy. She does not directly express her dilemma and needs, but adopts a more euphemistic way. The reference to "came...to inquire after Her ladyship's health" implies a request for introduction, further expressing the expectation that "It would be better if it could be introduced". If she can't do it, Granny Liu hoped that Mrs.Zhou can convey her greetings on behalf of her, which can be regarded as secondary communication purposes. In this ingenious way, Granny Liu successfully integrates the main and secondary communication intentions. Mrs.Zhou knew the implication of Granny Liu's words. Considering that her husband used to be helped by Grandma Liu's son-in-law), and in order to show her enthusiasm and status, she decided to lend a helping hand. Therefore, Grandma Liu successfully

achieved her communicative purpose by using the strategy of indirect speech act. Such words not only express their own meaning, but also avoid the embarrassment of making a direct request. This indirect speech act not only reflects Grandma Liu's prudence and tact, but also reflects her respect for Jia Mansion and her sensitive grasp of the occasion of seeking help.

According to Searle's speech act theory, Grandma Liu's help-seeking discourse is not only a kind of information transmission, but also a kind of behavior implementation. Her discourse not only contains the predicate behavior of asking for help, that is, expressing her own needs through language, it also embodies the tenor behavior, that is, her words have certain strength and intention, hoping to arouse sympathy and help. These indirect speech acts enhance the acceptability of her request to a certain extent and improve the possibility of successful help-seeking.

All in all, in this example, locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of "come to see you and Her ladyship". Illocutionary act refers to the deep thought of "asking for financial help from Her ladyship". Perlocutionary act refers to the reply and the decision that Mrs. Zhou made to Granny Liu's request.

3.2.2. Wang Xifeng

Wang Xifeng, born in the royal family of the four major families of the prominent Jia, Shi, Wang, Xue, is a first-born lady. Since childhood, she has been raised by his parents as a boy, thus forming a bold and uninhibited, hegemonic character. In the Jia Mansion, Wang Xifeng is an outstanding representative who is proficient in human affairs and good at words. She is extremely skilled in dealing with interpersonal relationships. Whether she is faced with a high-ranking official or an ordinary woman in the countryside, she can deal with it with ease, with decent words and appropriate attitudes. The following will analyze some of Wang Xifeng's indirect speech acts.

See example 4

Example 4:

"Never mind. Come back again after supper. I've...and don't feel in the mood to tell you at the moment." So Jia Rong slowly withdrew.

Granny Liu felt easy enough at last to say, "The reason I brought your nephew here today is that...So I brought your nephew here to ask for your help." She nudged Baner. "Well, what did your dad tell you? ...Was it just to eat sweets?"

Xifeng smiled at this blunt way of talking. "Don't say any more. I understand." She asked Mrs Zhou, "Has granny eaten yet?"

This case was just followed by Granny Liu first entering the grand view garden and see Wang Xifeng. This one back and forth, it seems that the two people only opened their mouths twice, but in fact they have completed several times of exchange of verbal information. At the beginning, Grandma Liu was not willing to open her mouth to show her intention, and used indirect speech acts to indicate that she came to be close and to say hello. So smart and cunning Wang Xifeng actually understood Grandma Liu's intention from the first sentence of his opening, but instead of talking about it, he said that Jia's house was only a signboard, and even interrupted Grandma Liu's words, making Grandma Liu's first communicative intention fail. In the first dialogue between Wang Xifeng and Granny Liu, every word of Wang Xifeng is not only in response to Grandma Liu, but also in the implementation of a specific speech act. For example, when Granny Liu explained the intention, Wang Xifeng did not directly refuse or agree, but used a series of words to show her calm, cautious and polite. These words not only convey Wang Xifeng's attitude, but also reflect her strategy in dealing with such emergencies. She not only implements direct response, but also shows her attitudes and strategies through a series of indirect speech acts. Wang Xifeng showed her caution and maturity by asking Zhou Rui's family. This indirect speech act not only avoids direct conflicts, but also shows Wang Xifeng's wisdom and strategy in dealing with such things.

Then when Granny Liu used the direct speech act to say that her family had no money to rely on, Wang Xifeng once again violated the quality criterion, letting the Zhou family take Grandma Liu to dinner first, instead of directly responding to Grandma Liu's words, and so on. After Wang Xifeng carefully understood the causes and consequences, he loosened his mouth to give money. These several rounds also showed Wang Xifeng's prudence and wisdom from the side. Wang Xifeng would not be willing to take care of Grandma Liu at the beginning. The first reason is that although it is a relative, if the family is involved in the family, the Jia family has long fallen because of the relief of poor relatives. The second reason is also to fully hang up Grandma Liu's appetite. Although these replies did not positively answer Grandma Liu's situation, they always gave her hope. First hit a stick and then give a sweet jujube, so that Grandma Liu's heart is grateful and grateful. Let her understand that this money is hard-won, and the reputation of Jia's mansion is also pleasant to hear. Outsiders see Jia Fu is also very decent.

Example5:

"Well," she cried with a laugh, "this is the first time I've set eyes on such a ravishing beauty. Her whole air is so distinguished! She doesn't take after her father, son-in-law of our Old Ancestress, but looks more like a Jia. No wonder our Old Ancestress couldn't put you out of her mind and was for ever talking or thinking about you. But poor ill-fated little cousin, losing your mother so young!" With that she dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief.

This scene is taken from Wang Xifeng's first appearance, and it is also the scene where Lin Daiyu first saw Wang Xifeng. In this sentence, the locutionary act refers to Wang Xifeng's praise of Lin Daiyu's appearance, expressing his appreciation of Daiyu. Wang Xifeng's words are not only a comprehensive praise for Lin Daiyu, but also a well-designed speech act aimed at achieving multiple communicative purposes. Wang Xifeng's praise can be described as an all-round and dead-end praise for Lin Daiyu. From Daiyu's appearance to temperament, from self-cultivation to behavior, to dress up and hairpin jewelry, all of them are praised by her. This detailed and comprehensive praise is particularly prominent and comprehensive in all the praises of Lin Daiyu in the book.

"Her whole air is so distinguished! She doesn't take after her father, son-in-law of our Old Ancestress, but looks more like a Jia." Especially, This sentence in Wang Xifeng's praise not only subtly extends the praise to Jia Mu, but also indirectly praises Jia Mu's good education through the praise of Lin Daiyu's temperament. This kind of praise from individual to family not only makes Lin Daiyu listen comfortably, but also makes Jia Mu feel comforted and proud.

In addition, while praising Daiyu, Wang Xifeng did not snub the girls of Jia's own family. By saying that Daiyu is like the granddaughter of Jia's mother, she not only lets the people present feel her kindness, but also indirectly praises Jia Yuanchun who has already entered the palace. This kind of praise strategy not only embodies Wang Xifeng's wit and smoothness, but also shows her ingenuity and thoughtfulness in dealing with family relations. What's more, Wang Xifeng tactfully courted her most complimentary person, Jia Mu, in her praise. Although she did not mention the name of Jia Mu, she praised Jia Mu in every sentence. This kind of unobtrusive way of flattery not only makes Jia Mu feel useful, but also avoids the embarrassment that too straightforward flattery may bring.

Finally, Wang Xifeng's sensational ending is even more icing on the cake. Grievances can not be forgotten by the ancestors every day. "No wonder our Old Ancestress couldn't put you out of her mind and was for ever talking or thinking about you. But poor ill-fated little cousin, losing your mother so young!" This sentence not only expresses her sadness for Jia Min's new death, but also highlights her recognition and resonance of Jia Min's deep emotions. This kind of emotional resonance and recognition not only makes Jia Mu like her more, but also makes the whole atmosphere more harmonious and harmonious.

Generally speaking, Wang Xifeng's speech is a typical indirect speech act. From the perspective of speech act theory, this is not only a kind of predicate behavior, that is, to describe Daiyu's appearance

through vocabulary and sentence patterns, but also a kind of tenor behavior, because this sentence has obvious intention of praise and pleasing, aiming to close the relationship with Daiyu. When Wang Xifeng further praises Lin Daiyu's style, her words are not only a description of Daiyu's language, but also a product of performing specific speech acts. Through these discourses, she successfully achieved her communicative purpose in the specific speech community of Jia family, that is, to show her close relationship with Dai Yu to the public, and also to show her shrewdness and keen insight to Jia Mu.

3.2.3. Lin Daiyu

In addition to Grandma Liu and Wang Xifeng, Lin Daiyu can also be said to be the largest number of indirect language behaviors used in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and his emotions are subtle and his attitudes are implicit. When interpreting its communicative behavior, the listener needs to comprehensively consider the place of discourse (i.e.context), the participant of the topic and Dai Yu's own attitude towards pure emotion. In particular, when Baoyu is present, Lin Daiyu's indirect speech act is often sneered at when dealing with people in a different way, either alerting Baoyu or causticizing Baochai, giving birth to diverse connotations. See Example 6.

Example 6:

Mrs Zhou greeted her with a smile as she entered and said, "Madam Xue asked me to bring you these flowers to wear."...Daiyu glanced briefly at them in Baoyu's head. "Am I the only one getting these?" She asked. "Or have the other girls been given some too?" "Each of the young laides has some. These two are for you, miss." "I might have known." Daiyu smiled bitterly, "I wouldn't get mine till the others had taken their pick." Mrs. Zhou had nothing to say this...

In the seventh chapter of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Zhou Ruijia was ordered to send flowers to Xue Baochai and his sisters. Finally, two palace flowers were sent to Dai Yu. Lin Daiyu listened to her way of coming, and then he demeaned his aunt's relative Mrs. Zhou. Zhou Ruijia obviously heard Lin Daiyu's dissatisfaction and stopped communication. Lin Daiyu, Jia Baoyu, Xue Baochai, Mrs Zhou are participants, involving in this conversation.

According to Austin's speech act theory, Lin Daiyu's response is a typical expressive behavior. Her words are not only a statement of the fact that she is the last to receive flowers, but also through this statement to implement a specific behavior - to express dissatisfaction and criticism of Mrs. Zhou behavior. Her words are full of doubts about the order of Zhou Rui's flower delivery and direct challenges to this unfair treatment. Also, from Searle's speech act theory, Lin Daiyu's response shows a complex indirect speech act. She did not directly accuse Mrs. Zhou of being impolite, but expressed her dissatisfaction by asking and laughing. This indirect speech act not only avoids direct conflicts, but also enables Zhou Ruijia to understand her real intention. At the same time, her response also implies a profound understanding of the internal power structure and interpersonal relationship of Jia's family. In this way, she maintains her dignity and status.

The implication of Lin Daiyu's words is staggering. There are at least three connotations. First, satirize Zhou Ruijia's snobbery and smoothness. Lin Daiyu's parents died when she was a child, and she lived in Jia's mansion. She was sensitive and suspicious. In addition, the character is relatively lonely and high, with Daiyu's upbringing and courtesy, this Yin and Yang she should be the reason why she has long been disgusted with her. Perhaps Zhou Rui's family has done similar things before. Lin Daiyu has no power and no power. For the secular snobbish eyes, it is normal not to look at her. Secondly, intentionally speaking to Baoyu. It is suggested that Baochai is to take Baoyu you as the second choice, do not be deceived, and rush to pick up other people 's leftovers. Thirdly, indicating Lin Daiyu's own position. Others she can give way, can be seen as invisible, but her feelings with Baoyu, she does not want to give up like these flowers, she wants to do their best to maintain, reflecting Daiyu's determination and courage and her thoughtful and persistent love.

Through the speech act theory analysis of Lin Daiyu's response, it can be concluded that her response is not only a simple language expression, but also a complex speech act. She expresses her dissatisfaction and criticism through direct or indirect ways, maintains her dignity and status, and also reveals the complex interpersonal relationships and power struggles within Jia's family. This analysis method helps us to understand Lin Daiyu's character image and inner world more deeply, as well as the rich characterization and plot development in *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper takes the dialogues of the characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions* as the research object. Through careful induction and collation, it is found that there are a large number of direct speech acts and indirect speech acts in the dialogues of the characters in the novel. Due to the differences in the degree of relationship, social status and personality of the characters, the characters will use different speech acts on different people in different occasions. The use of direct speech acts can better convey information and make the characters appear on paper. The use of indirect speech acts is more polite and covert, which can make the shaping of characters more natural and three-dimensional, and play an emphasis role to better express and reveal the theme of the novel. The combination of speech act theory and irony analysis is helpful for the audience to better understand the plot and character characteristics of the novel *Dream of Red Mansions*. Finally, through the analysis, it is found that linguistics and literary research can be combined to explore the implicit connotation in literary works by using pragmatic theory. Therefore, learning and studying pragmatics can not only increase the breadth of knowledge, but also broaden our thinking and analyze literary works from a new perspective, so as to better understand the theme and deep meaning of works.

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