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# Speech Acts as a Means of Influence and Social Interaction: Perspectives from Austin and Searle

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***Abstract***

*This study aims to elucidate the theory of speech acts as developed by J.L. Austin and John Searle, two of the most influential linguistic philosophers of the twentieth century. Their work has profoundly shaped contemporary understandings of language and human communication. Austin and Searle challenged the notion that language is merely a sequence of words forming a rigid, artificial system. Instead, they proposed that language functions as a dynamic instrument of interaction, influencing and shaping social reality beyond mere description or reportage. This study employs an analytical and comparative approach, systematically presenting and critically examining the theories of Austin and Searle. A comparative analysis is conducted to identify points of convergence and divergence in their respective perspectives. The study demonstrates that speech acts are central to human social activity, illustrating that words, sentences, and symbols acquire meaning only when properly articulated and rooted in intentionality. Meaning, in this framework, is not an inherent property of linguistic expressions but emerges through the speaker's deliberate use of language. This reflects a cognitive-intentional dimension and a communicative purpose. Contemporary Western philosophers have emphasized the philosophy of language, with J.L. Austin pioneering the theory of speech acts. He conceptualized language not merely as a system of representation but as an act in itself—where speaking is simultaneously doing. His student, John Searle, further refined and expanded this theory, advancing it to a stage of conceptual maturity. Both Austin and Searle examined linguistic acts through an interactive and social lens. However, Searle introduced a more nuanced semantic and symbolic dimension to linguistic analysis, highlighting that speech acts serve as instruments for realizing intention and purpose. His contributions also extended to the concept of indirect speech acts, in which meaning surpasses literal expression.For both philosophers, language is not a passive medium but an active force that shapes and transforms the world around individuals—whether at a personal, social, or even political level. Their work underscores the centrality of interaction and participation in the very fabric of language, reinforcing the notion that meaning does not arise merely from words but through their use in lived experience.*

***Keywords:*** *Speech Acts, Language Use, Performative Action, Intentionality*

## Introduction

comprehend the nature of meaning and the intricate relationship between words and reality. Pioneering figures such as George Edward Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein played pivotal roles in establishing the foundation for this philosophical approach, which subsequently paved the way for the contributions of John Austin, John Searle, and other scholars in the field.

During the early development of analytical philosophy, Moore concentrated on natural language, whereas Russell focused on the logical structure of sentences. Russell's emphasis on logical analysis of language reflected his belief that language should clarify ideas by analyzing their

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structural composition. Wittgenstein, initially aligned with this perspective in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, later rejected the notion that meaning could be derived from logical structures. In Philosophical Investigations, he introduced the concept of "language games," emphasizing that meaning is shaped by usage and social context. This shift in perspective profoundly influenced both Austin and Searle, ultimately laying the groundwork for their development of the theory of speech acts.

Austin pioneered this theory, which Searle subsequently refined, introducing a greater degree of structure and systematization. Both philosophers posited that language is not merely a tool for conveying information; rather, it serves as an instrument for performing actions, shaping reality, and effecting change.

The theory of speech acts underscores the pivotal role that language plays in human interaction. Language is not merely a tool for describing reality or affirming events; rather, it serves as a mechanism for influence and social communication. This theory highlights the significance of the listener's ability to comprehend the speaker's intentions and respond accordingly. Additionally, it emphasizes the emergence of meaning from the communicative context (Haloui, 2011, p. 51). This perspective suggests that understanding speech acts necessitates an awareness of the situational context in which communication occurs, as well as the speaker's intended meaning within that framework.

The meaning of language is not confined solely to its semantic content but is also shaped by its use, particularly in social interactions. When an individual speaks, their words perform an action, such as making a promise, issuing an apology, giving a command, expressing disapproval, or delivering a reprimand. While traditional philosophical approaches to language prioritized its informative function, Austin's speech act theory shifts the focus to the performative dimension of linguistic expressions. For instance, when one asserts, "You are a liar," the utterance functions not only as an assertion but also as an act of accusation. In this context, language transcends mere representation, actively shaping social interactions and relationships.

## Discussion

### Austin and the Theory of Performative Utterances

Initially, Austin distinguished between two types of sentences:

- **Constative Utterances**, which are statements that convey information and can be judged as true or false, such as "The sky is raining" or "The pen is on the table."

- **Performative Utterances**, which go beyond simply expressing an idea or state and are realized through the act of saying them. For example, when we say, "I promise to visit you tomorrow," this utterance performs the act of promising. It cannot be judged as true or false but as successful or unsuccessful.

Austin sought to show that performative utterances are subject to criticism based on conformity or violation, though considerations of truth or falsehood may affect some performative acts. For instance, if someone says performatively, "I warn you that the fire will burn you" when they are not near the fire, this statement, as an act of warning, contains a problem. It is not a failure, misuse, or any other form of violation but simply an error. Austin's analysis led him to ultimately differentiate between performative and constative expressions: the former is an utterance capable of performing a specific action and is not subject to criticism in terms of truth and falsehood, but in terms of appropriateness and violation or success and failure (Austin, 1955, p. 94). On the

other hand, the latter is a statement that provides a description or report of a situation, describing reality or expressing facts.

Austin argued that "the meaning of a sentence is determined by its use in performing certain speech acts" (Austin, 1955, p. 5). When I utter any sentence (under the appropriate circumstances), it is not a description of something I have done, will do, or a statement that I am doing, but "it is to do it" (Austin, 1955, p. 6). These utterances are not made to describe or depict something; they are neither true nor false. Examples of such performative utterances include: "I take this woman as my wife," "I name this ship Elizabeth," "I give and present my watch to my brother," "I bet that it will rain tomorrow" (Austin, 1955, p. 5).

These utterances perform the very actions they describe, and their meaning is inherently tied to the act of their utterance, rather than to a truth value or a factual claim.

This demonstrates that language is not merely a tool for communication and conveying meanings, but that it also performs actual actions in the world. This implies that using language can change reality and have real effects within it. One might say that by uttering a certain sentence, I perform an act; however, this is not entirely correct. Austin stipulates that the utterance must occur under "appropriate circumstances." Therefore, Austin established rules, the violation of which would render the utterance inappropriate, thus resulting in "infelicities." These rules include: There must be an accepted conventional procedure with a specific conventional effect. The procedure must include specific words to be uttered by the relevant parties in specific circumstances. For example, saying to someone unrelated to the religious prohibitions against eating pork: "Do not eat pork, for it is forbidden," would violate this rule. The individuals involved must be in appropriate conditions to perform the required act. For example, telling a referee to sit on the bench in a game is a violation, as it is inappropriate given the referee's role and context. All participants must execute the procedure correctly and completely. An example of a violation would be saying, "I bet ten dinars that it will rain tomorrow," and the bet is not accepted. The procedure must be designed by people who possess specific thoughts or emotions. Therefore, participants in the procedure must genuinely hold those thoughts and emotions, and they must act based on this intention. In fact, they must act accordingly (Austin, 1955, p. 27). A violation of this would be taking money from someone and saying, "I promise to return it," without intending to do so.

Thus, failure to adhere to these rules or some of them makes the performative act unsuccessful. "Accuracy and ethics both support the clear statement: Our word binds us" (Austin, 1955, p. 16). Austin assigns different terms to the violations that may occur with these rules: *Misfires* (a complete failure of the performative act), *Abuses* (or *Misapplications*), where the performative act occurs but in an incorrect manner.

(Austin, 1955, 55). For example, the phrase "I name this ship..." may fail, or the phrase "I make a promise..." may be misused. However, I cannot say that this performative utterance is "true or false," because the moment I utter the phrase, I have already performed an action: "I have named the ship" and "I have made a promise."

We can also illustrate failure or a violation of the first rule with the following example: if a Christian husband were to say to his Christian wife, "I divorce you"—in the Islamic manner—he would have failed in performing the act of divorce. In this case, we may not recognize any legal consequence at all, as the marriage remains intact. This could involve a rejection of what is known as the "procedure law as a whole" (Austin, 1955, 77). Even if the speaker is entirely

serious in his statement, the non-acceptance of the act usually comes from someone other than the speaker.

As we have previously explained, Austin initially distinguished between constative (descriptive) and performative utterances, but he later abandoned this distinction. This is because some constative utterances may also serve a performative function. For instance, the phrase "I declare you guilty" is not merely a constative statement but also a performative act (an official pronouncement of guilt). Furthermore, Austin came to view all sentences as capable of performing speech acts. This led him to develop the **Speech Act Theory**, in which he classified speech acts into three levels:

**The Levels of Speech Acts According to Austin**

- **Locutionary Act:** This refers to the act of uttering words with a specific meaning and reference. For example, saying "The door is open" while pointing to a particular door. In other words, it involves producing a grammatically correct and semantically meaningful sentence with a clear referent.

Austin described this as the act of "saying something"—**The Performance of a Locutionary Act** (Austin, 1962, 98, 99). The locutionary act consists of three components:

  - **Phonetic Act:** The physical act of producing sounds or words.
  - **Phatic Act:** The use of linguistic symbols or words, encompassing the semantic meaning of words and sentences in a given context.
  - **Rhaetic Act:** The grammatical structuring of the sentence according to linguistic rules.

- **Illocutionary Act:** This refers to the speaker's intent or purpose when uttering a sentence, such as making a command, a promise, or an apology. The illocutionary act is the function the utterance performs in communication, carrying the intended meaning beyond mere wording.

- **Perlocutionary Act:** This concerns the effect or response that the speaker's words have on the listener—how speech influences others. This can include persuasion, intimidation, or encouragement. The effect of a perlocutionary act cannot be predetermined; it can only be assessed after the listener's reaction. For example, saying "Please wait" is an attempt to persuade someone to wait. Here, we are not merely making a statement but performing an action through the act of speaking itself.

In these cases, and others like them, the utterance takes the form of pronouncing certain words, meaning that we are not merely describing, stating, or affirming something when we perform a **performative act**. Instead, what we say is neither true nor false—it is the execution of an act itself (Austin, 1962). In many instances, we perform actions not only through spoken or written words but through other means as well, such as consummating a marriage through cohabitation or placing money into a betting machine to make a wager.

From this perspective, we can see that language has three distinct meanings or dimensions in its use. These classifications reveal that language is more than just a means of communication; it is a tool that can actively shape reality and influence human behavior in significant ways. Austin emphasized the role of **convention and agreement** in determining the meaning of an utterance. He was particularly concerned with **"how language is used"** or **"what we do when we say**

**something,"** which covers broader issues such as humorous speech (which is not a serious use of language) or expressions of boasting or swearing, which are not uses of language in the strict sense, but rather expressions within language.

Austin was primarily interested in **illocutionary and locutionary acts** and paid little attention to these non-serious uses of language. He believed that the meaning of a word or utterance could be clarified by referring to the **speech acts** performed when the words were spoken—because **to say something is to do something**. This perspective highlights the **pragmatic function of language** and demonstrates how speech acts define the way language is employed.

Here, we find that language has three meanings or dimensions in the **use of a sentence** or the **use of language**. These classifications reveal that language is more than just a means of communication; it can serve as a tool for **actual influence on the world** and for changing human behavior in comprehensive contexts. Austin emphasized the role of **agreement and convention** in determining the intended meaning of an act.

The question of **"how language is used"** or **"what we do when we say something"** encompasses other issues, such as the use of language for humor—which is not a serious use of language—as well as oaths or boasting, which are expressions that involve the use of language but are not, in themselves, **uses of language** in the strict sense. In such cases, speech does not constitute an act.

Austin devoted particular attention to **locutionary and illocutionary acts**, while showing little concern for these non-serious uses of language. He believed that the meaning of a word or utterance could be clarified by referring to the **speech acts** performed when it was spoken—because **to say something is to do something**. This act, in turn, demonstrates the way language is used.

On the other hand, Austin's theory of speech acts is fundamentally based on **intentionality**; the speaker's intent plays a central role. For instance, when I say **"I apologize"** or **"I regret"** in response to an action I have taken that has harmed another person, I must genuinely mean what I say. In this way, we see that a speaker **performs an act**—or even multiple acts—through the utterance of a sentence.

However, the act itself must not be confused with the sentence—or with the linguistic expression, in whatever form—it is used to perform (Azarimenko, 1987, 6).

### Austin's Implications and Searle's Felicity Conditions

*First: Austin's Implications*

Austin identified three ways in which a given statement entails the truth of other statements:

#### Conventional Implication

This type of implication is based on **customary and conventional linguistic rules**, where certain speech acts require the truth of specific information to be meaningful or effective. For example, when someone says, **"I promise to come tomorrow,"** this implies that their attendance is possible; otherwise, the promise would be meaningless.

#### Causal Implication

This implication relies on the **causal relationship** between speech and actions. The truth of the first statement **leads to** the truth of the second, though it is not a strict logical entailment. For

instance, if the chairperson of a meeting declares, **"I announce the beginning of the meeting,"** this utterance brings about a change in reality—the meeting officially commences.

**Performative Implication**

This type of implication is tied to the **successful execution** of a speech act according to linguistic and social conventions. Some speech acts acquire their full meaning only when **specific conditions** are met. For example, if a judge states, **"I declare the defendant not guilty,"** this utterance is only a successful speech act if the judge has the **legal authority** and the statement is made in an official legal setting.

Such performative expressions can be applied in various contexts. For instance, one would not say, **"I promise to return your money"** without the intention of doing so. However, according to Austin, **"We must consider the importance of one statement's truth in relation to another, without this necessarily being a case of strict logical entailment, as favored by obsessive logicians."** (Austin, 1955, p. 60)

*Second: Searle's Felicity Conditions*

Searle developed a **more detailed** framework to determine what makes a speech act **successful or unsuccessful**, identifying four primary **felicity conditions**:

**Propositional Condition**

The speech act must be associated with **a clear logical or semantic content**. For instance, a promise cannot exist unless it refers to **a future action** that the speaker commits to performing.

**Preparatory Condition**

The **speaker and listener must be in a position** that allows the speech act to be completed. For example, an individual who is not **legally authorized** cannot sign a valid contract.

**Sincerity Condition**

The speaker must genuinely **intend** what they are saying. For example, an apology is not valid unless it is accompanied by **genuine remorse**.

**Essential Condition**

The speech act must **have an effect on reality** in accordance with **socially recognized conventions**. For example, a divorce is not legally valid merely because a person says, **"I divorce you"**—it must be conducted according to **religious and civil laws**.

According to Searle, **if these conditions are not met, the speech act is rendered infelicitous or unsuccessful**.

**Austin and Searle's Classification of Illocutionary Acts**

Illocutionary acts are those performed by the speaker simply through the act of utterance, meaning that speech itself constitutes action.

Austin observed that a vast number of expressions—even those in the indicative mood, which are often regarded as statements—cannot be straightforwardly classified as either true or false. For instance, the utterance *"I promise to meet you at two o'clock"* is not a report about a promise nor a mere statement of fact; rather, it *is* the act of making a promise. In short, illocutionary expressions apply to a wide range of utterances and have acquired a general meaning, leading to

the collapse of Austin's initial binary division between performative and constative utterances. Consequently, he revisited the ways in which saying something is simultaneously the act of performing it.

Austin categorized illocutionary acts into five classes:

1. **Verdictives**: These acts involve issuing judgments and evaluations based on certain criteria or evidence, expressing an assessment of reality or a value. They are typically performed by individuals in an official capacity. Examples include: *"I judge you to be innocent," "I declare this team the winner," "I rate this research as excellent."*

2. **Execrative**: These involve the issuance of orders, decisions, or directives, often grounded in authority or power. The performative force of such acts lies in their ability to impose obligations or confer rights. Examples include: *"I order you to leave," "I appoint you as president."*

3. **Commissive**: These acts commit the speaker to a future course of action, including promises, vows, and oaths. They involve the speaker's obligation to perform or refrain from an action. Examples include: *"I pledge to repay my debt," "I swear to abstain from lying," "I promise to help you."*

4. **Behabitives**: These acts express psychological or social attitudes toward particular events or persons. They are linked to social conduct and interactions, such as expressions of gratitude, apologies, or objections. Examples include: *"I thank you for your help," "I express my regret," "I apologize for my mistake."*

5. **Expositive**: These acts clarify meanings, explain arguments, or affirm claims. They function to establish connections between utterances and reasoning or between statements and conversational context. Examples include: *"I argue that," "I refute your claim," "I infer from this evidence."*

Austin acknowledged that this classification was provisional rather than definitive, conceding that these categories often overlap. Searle, building upon Austin's work, noted that Austin had proposed these five categories as a preliminary framework for discussion rather than as a final classification. He stated: *"I am not presenting any of this as final. At the very least, I believe it provides an excellent foundation for discussion, but I also believe that the classification requires serious revision, as it contains many weaknesses."* (Searle, 1976, p. 7) Consequently, Searle developed a more systematic classification of illocutionary acts, refining Austin's initial framework into five more clearly delineated categories:

1. **Assertive**: These commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. Every assertion expresses a belief, and the act is judged based on its correspondence to reality. Examples include: *"The sky is clear," "The economy is in decline."*

2. **Directives**: These are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to perform a specific action, including commands, requests, or suggestions. The standard of success for these acts is not their truth value but the extent to which the hearer complies. Examples include: *"Open the door," "Please take a seat," "You should study harder."*

3. **Commissive**: These commit the speaker to a future action, similar to Austin's category of the same name. The speaker assumes responsibility for fulfilling the promise or undertaking

the action. Examples include: *"I promise to help you," "I will send the report tomorrow," "I swear to be loyal."*

4. **Expressive**: These serve to express the speaker's psychological state or emotions, such as gratitude, apologies, or congratulations. Unlike assertive, they do not have truth conditions; rather, their sincerity is measured by the speaker's genuine feelings. Examples include: *"I am sorry," "Congratulations on your success," "I appreciate your help."*

5. **Declaratives**: These acts bring about a change in the external world merely by being uttered. Their success depends on the existence of an institutional or social framework that grants the speaker the authority to effect such changes. Examples include: *"I resign," "You are now husband and wife," "You are promoted."* Searle emphasized that declaratives are unique among speech acts in that they directly alter reality through their successful performance.

A key distinction between Austin and Searle's classifications lies in their foundational criteria. Austin's taxonomy was grounded in the social function of speech acts and their contextual role within linguistic conventions, yet he did not provide a clear-cut standard for differentiating between categories. Searle, on the other hand, adopted a more structured and methodical approach, focusing on the speaker's intent and the linguistic function of each illocutionary act.

**Meaning and Intention:**

Austin was less precise than Searle in explaining the role of intention as a decisive factor in achieving a speech act. In contrast, Searle asserts that the speaker's intention is the fundamental element that differentiates meaning, as the conditions of the speech act—such as the sincerity condition, the preparatory condition, and the essential condition—determine whether the utterance successfully performs the intended act.

Searle distinguishes between two types of linguistic intentionality: semantic intentionality and utterance intentionality. He argues that these two types have often been conflated. He clarifies that the first refers to *"that property of the mind which enables it to be directed toward or about objects or states of affairs in the world independently of them"* (Searle, 2000, p. 142). The second, by contrast, pertains specifically to language: *"a property that belongs to sentences, propositions, and certain other linguistic entities"* (Searle, 2000, p. 142). This distinction leads to the opposition between speaker-intended meaning and the meaning inherent in words or sentences themselves. In other words, an utterance does not inherently possess meaning; rather, its meaning is determined by the intention of the speaker. As Searle puts it: *"We grasp the meaning intended by the speaker in light of intentional representations, not merely linguistic structures"* (Searle, 2009, p. 204).

Searle further argues that there is a fundamental difference between intentional states and speech acts, as the latter are not inherently intentional. A speech act is dependent on its material realization: *"Performing a speech act involves producing certain physical entities, such as the sounds emitted by the mouth or the marks inscribed on paper, whereas beliefs, fears, and hopes are intentional by their very nature"* (Searle, 2009, p. 50). That is, we attribute intentionality to them.

**How Do We Transition from the Physical to the Semantic?**

How does the mind confer meaning upon abstract signs and sounds?

According to Searle, *"Sentences and words have meanings as parts of the sentence. The meaning of the sentence is determined by the meanings of the words and the syntactical arrangement of these words within the sentence. However, what the speaker means by uttering the sentence depends, within certain limits, on their intentions"* (Searle, 2006, p. 206). We cannot merely utter something and mean whatever we wish. Words, sentences, symbols, and signs acquire meaning—provided they are articulated properly—through an intentionality derived from the speaker's mental states. *"An utterance is true or false depending on whether the world aligns with what the speaker intentionally represents when issuing the utterance"* (Searle, 2006, p. 209).

The essence of meaning is bound to truth conditions. When I say, "It is raining," and I mean it sincerely, I am committing to the truth of my statement, whether it is true or false. *"Both the truthful speaker and the deceptive speaker are committed to telling the truth. However, the liar fails to fulfill this commitment"* (Searle, 2006, p. 211). Thus, when I intend to express a statement, I am committing to its veracity, regardless of whether I am truthful or deceptive.

Now, when I intend to communicate with someone, I intend to generate an understanding in them—an understanding that resides in the meaning I wish the listener to grasp. A speech act is considered correct and truthful if language is used in a manner that conforms to a system of rules and expectations agreed upon by the members of a linguistic community for the proper and effective use of language. For instance, when someone uses a particular word to refer to a specific object, the linguistic truth is derived from how well the word aligns with its conventional use according to the grammatical and semantic rules of the language.

Searle also points out that some speech acts influence the listener without necessarily taking the form of a proposition, as seen in informal expressions such as the Jordanian colloquial greeting *"Ya Hala."* In this, he extends his analysis beyond his mentor's.

Searle defines intentionality as the mind's capacity to direct itself toward or represent objects—meaning that the boundaries of meaning are established by the limitations of the mind. He differentiates three valid directions in analyzing intentionality:

1. **Intentionality from Mind to World** – This involves mental states that aim to correspond to or represent external reality. For instance, when someone believes that it is raining, their belief is true if it is indeed raining. Here, the mind seeks to represent the world accurately.

2. **Intentionality from World to Mind** – This concerns situations in which the external world seeks to influence or match mental states. This is a characteristic of directives and commitments. For example, when a judge passes a sentence, that sentence creates a new reality—such as the conviction of someone—thereby shaping the external world in accordance with the judge's mental state (Searle, 2006, p. 221).

3. **Double Direction of Fit** – This involves an interactive exchange between the mind and the world, where each seeks to align with the other. A clear example is *"a promise,"* where the person making the promise commits themselves to an action, which in turn influences their behavior and the external reality. This can also be seen in declarations, such as when a meeting chairperson announces, *"The meeting is postponed."* In this case, the very utterance of the statement creates a new reality, in which the meeting is postponed.

Finally, there is the **absence of directionality**, which pertains to expressive acts. These are mental states that do not aim to represent or alter reality, such as emotions and fears. For example, love and fear are focused on the subjective experience of the individual, without attempting to represent or change the external world (Searle, 2006, p. 222).

**Searle considered the implicit intention to be the crucial element in speech acts, asserting that the alignment between an utterance and the world forms the basis for understanding the implicit purpose within the utterance. He emphasized a psychological interpretation of speech acts, rooted in beliefs, intentions, or purposes.**

In the end, we find that Searle's theory of speech acts sheds light on human social activity, linking language to the philosophy of action and then to the philosophy of mind. In contrast, Austin did not delineate the directions of intentionality in the manner that Searle did.

## Summary

Austin developed the theory of Speech Acts, conceptualizing the sentence as both a statement and an act. His student, Searle, further developed and refined this theory, contributing to its maturation and providing methodological clarity. Both philosophers gained prominence for their work on the philosophy of ordinary language, human communication, and the role of language in shaping the social world, particularly its impact on everyday life. They both emphasized that language functions as a political instrument capable of controlling thoughts and behaviors, as well as influencing identities and communities. Furthermore, they argued that linguistic communication is not merely an exchange of information, but a dynamic process that produces tangible effects on both personal and social levels. Both also highlighted the significance of interaction and participation in language, showing how these elements can reshape meaning and influence dialogues and social relationships.

Consistent with Wittgenstein’s philosophy, Austin and Searle viewed language as a game in which speakers engage to reach mutual understanding and co-construct meaning.

The study concludes that there are notable differences between the two philosophers in their treatment of speech acts. These differences can be outlined as follows: Austin focused on examining how linguistic acts function to produce social and communicative effects, whereas Searle concentrated on the semantic and symbolic dimensions of speech acts and their profound implications. In terms of linguistic quality, Austin primarily addressed non-committal speech acts that affect the social status of individuals, while Searle explored speech acts as instruments for achieving specific intentions, purposes, and semantic consequences. Austin's linguistic analysis was grounded in an interactive and social perspective, whereas Searle incorporated the semantic and symbolic elements into his approach. Regarding intention, Searle placed greater emphasis on understanding the speaker's intention and the underlying purpose of speech acts, whereas Austin concentrated on their social and functional impact. While Austin investigated how speech acts such as "I declare" or "I promise" perform actions in the external world, Searle focused on the use of language for social communication and meaning construction, asserting that language reflects a social and cultural system, and that meaning is contingent upon the speaker's intention.

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