J.L. Austin's Speech Acts on the Notion of Intentionality

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Abstract: The aim of this discussion is to expose Austin's Speech Acts Theory, while revealing the Theory of Intentionality in order to supplement and moderate the insecurity in speech acts insofar as its inconsistencies or infelicities are concerned. It would highlight the engagement of a speaker to a performance of speech which involves saying and acting of words while intending himself to fulfil what he said. Such performance of speech acts is, for John Langshaw Austin, constitutive of the performance of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. This kind of conception that Austin had initiated elevates now a mere statement or constatives to higher class performatives. The latter is a conjunction of speech (to say) and action (to act). And so, such speech acts is not only limited to the speaker-utterance sphere, but is being directed and performed socially. Intentionality now supplements the directedness of a speech act which entails that prior to achieving satisfaction of the act is the consideration of the effectivity of purposive intentional thoughts of the speaker. In short, these thoughts are being put into words (speech), and relating such thoughts through speech into the world.

Keywords: Austin, Constatives, Illocutionary Acts, Infelicities, Intentionality, Locutionary Acts, Performatives, Perlocutionary Acts and Speech Acts.

We have been taught in the primary school basic grammar. Verb suggests action and performance; a noun, which could be substituted by a pronoun, represents the name of a person, place, and thing; adjective suits to describe something; subject and predicate compose a sentence, etc. These are what our grammar teachers basically fed us. Though basic, they are the essentials in learning how to communicate one's thoughts by means of a simple sentence - a sentence which is part and parcel of language and which carries complete thought.[1]

We construct sentences by following certain conventions and patterns so as to use different punctuation marks like period, question mark, and exclamation point. And so, we learned how to differentiate a query from an assertion, we understand instructions and express exclamations. Nonetheless, British philosopher John Langshaw Austin proposed the speech act theory in order to distinguish a mere statement from what he called a performative utterance. Henceforth, a sentence from a unit of language carrying thoughts has been simplified as a "tool" for making a statement.[2] Austin gave new life to a simple word and statement and was able to name a new term: performative. In this light, he conjoined speech (to say) and action (to act) into such performative sentence - an utterance which has certain directedness and is looking

towards a goal, an achievement, and a successfulness of what one said. It seems that he conjoined saying and acting in order to imply that for every deliberation of an utterance is a corresponding action which also entails responsibility. In this regard, this paper is dedicated to elucidate further J.L Austin's theory of performative utterance and locate his utilization of the theory of intentionality.

Austin's Speech Acts Theory

Before delving to the performatives proper, let us first consider Austin's notion of the constative or a mere statement. A term was born akin to the notion of a basic statement and somehow isolated from Austin's favorite, the performative. Constative only reports, or describes state of affairs and facts.[3] And it is only susceptible to the truth-value it carries: so as to be either true or false. Whereas performative involves saying and doing, constative only implicates saying and stating. The latter is as if a lifeless utterance which does not entail a respond to neither the speaker nor the hearer. Moreover, it is stagnant and is valid only to when it was uttered. In short it is intermittent and not protracted.

Now, Austin gave life to an utterance through his notion of the performative. It is susceptible as to being felicitous (happy) or infelicitous (unhappy), or in simple terms, success or failure. It is purposively intended towards a successful utterance. This is likewise the starting point of speech acts proper wherein Austin has elevated the classification of a mere sentence to a higher class akin to the masqueraders. It does not simply carry information, but moreover, it includes action. Performative are also called performatory or performative sentence which still includes the imperative 'perform' which denotes action. And to make it shorter and sound nicer, he preferred to call it performative.

What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'…it indicates the issuing of the utterance is performing of an action- it is not normally thought of as just saying something.[4]

Nonetheless, in this paper, we would call it performative utterance (and constatives sentence) rather than performative sentence (and constatives utterance) to justify the demarcation between performatives and constatives. Besides, Austin likewise clarified that performative utterance is a 'non-constative' utterance.[5]

Performatives (a) do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true' or 'false'; (b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be describe as saying something.[6]

These two characteristics make a performative strongly different from that of the constative. However, inferior from performative, constative is qualified to become performative. A consideration could be, a simple statement or assertion still carries thoughts and intentions (belief for instance) of the speaker. Yet performative could not step down as to becoming a constative.

Furthermore, performative utterance is significantly applicable on ceremonies or ceremonial acts, baptism (naming a child) and marriage (uttering "I do") for that instance. With that the utterance is not merely limited during that particular instance, but is protracted and sustained onwards. Austin has limited the examples into four specific instances:

(e.a)" I do", as uttered in wedding or marriage ceremony;

(e.b) "I name the ship the Queen Elizabeth", as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem;

(e.c) "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother", in accordance and occurrence in will;

(e.d) "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow", uttered in the act of betting.[7]

Nevertheless, such examples are characterized as explicit performatives thereby the "I" and the imperatives (bet, promise, bequeath) is obviously visible in the utterance, whereas, implicit or primary performatives are otherwise.[8] For instance,

(1) I will go to your house tomorrow. (An implicit example)

(2) I promise, I will go to your house tomorrow. (An explicit example)

Moving on, to be definite, Austin had classified the performatives into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

Locutionary act is the traditional way of doing things with words. It is the expression of content, in the matter of meaning, cognitive and/or the expressive aspect of speech.[9] Moreover, it comprises the phonetic act, the phatic act, and the rhetic act. Uttering a phone or certain noises is called the performance of a phonetic act. This is not a speech totally, it is just a sound. On the other hand, when the utterance does not merely involves phone, thereby a mere utterance noise becomes word or vocable, a phatic act was henceforth performed. A simple noise now creates intonation, thereby following certain conventions in grammar in order to conform to a certain vocabulary to where it specifically belongs. Now, this follows the performance of the rhetic acts, which entails that such sounds

and vocables are not simply limited to what kind of vocabulary it belongs to, but is being uttered communicably and socially. The utterance of the so called rheme constitutes a more or less definite 'sense' and a more or less definite 'reference'.[10]

Meanwhile, let us take the performance of an utterance into the next level by discussing illocutionary act. Illocutionary act is the very act performed in speaking.[11] The meaning of words are undoubtedly relevant. But in an illocution another relevant factor is being expressed, the force, this time, is the so called illocutionary force. It is suggested that while focusing on the force (which involves the context) rather than simply on the meaning (the content), eliminates language variations (regional, national, continental, etc), on the other hand, creates a sort of misunderstanding. A speech is not merely about what he means in saying", but more importantly "how he means in sayin." And so, illocutionary acts are likewise asserting, promising, ordering, requesting, etc.[12]

Nonetheless, the locutionary acts carry the explicit meaning of an utterance and the illocutionary bears the implied meaning. Consider the following examples:

I will go to your house tomorrow. (I might)

I will go to your house tomorrow. (I promise)

I will go to your house tomorrow. (Be ready)

I will go to your house tomorrow. (Please)

The first phrase portrays the locutionary force, while the second phrase is the implied or hidden meaning, henceforth, depicting the illocutionary force.

Furthermore, an utterance having a sense of deliberation and purpose[13] leads to fulfilment. And so, the product or achievement by saying something refers to the perlocutionary act. While illocutionary acts is a relation between the speech and the speaking agent, perlocutionary act is an affair among the speech, the speaking agent, and the receiver of the speech or utterance. Perlocutions are all about the (purposive intentional) impact of an utterance not simply to the so called hearer but appropriately to the responder of the speech. The achievement of the perlocutionary acts is the verification of the affectivity of the speaker to the hearer and so he must attain a successful deliberation of utterance. He must not aggravate[14] the hearer but rather he must motivate and affect the latter to respond on what he said. Thus, some instances of perlocutionary act are convincing, persuading, deterring, surprising, etc.[15] In this light, the achievement of the utterance "I will go to your house tomorrow" is that the speaker having convinced the receiver will stay in the house for he is coming tomorrow.

(E) **Perlocutionary**	The (purposive intentional) impact of an utterance to the hearer as well as the speaker.[16].
	The receiver of the utterance would not leave, as the speaker had convinced H that S would go to H's house tomorrow
	convincing, persuading, deterring, surprising or misleading

(D) **Illocutionary**	The very act performed in speaking.[17]
	"I promise, I will go to your house tomorrow."
	Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabatives, Expositives
(C) **Locutionary**	Expression of content, in the matter of meaning, cognitive and/or the expressive aspect of speech.[18]
	"I will go to your house tomorrow."
	Phonetic Acts, Phatic Acts, Rhetic Acts
(B) **Performatives**	It indicates the issuing of the utterance is performing of an action- it is not normally thought of as just saying something.[19]
	Explicit: "Can I please go to your house tomorrow?" Implicit: "Can I go to the house tomorrow?"(in the form of a request)
	Locutionary Acts,

	Illocutionary Acts, Perlocutionary Acts
(A) **Constatives**	Only reports, or describes state of affairs and facts.[20]
	Informing that, "I will go to your house tomorrow". This has no assurance that the speaker would go to the hearer's house tomorrow. It does not care any response coming from the hearer (to be convinced) or to the speaker (to perform the act).
	Stating, informing, describing, explaining

The above table is a summary of Austin's Speech Acts. It portrays a continuous process or level of the Speech Acts, which starts on mere constatives. These are followed by the performatives classified into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The perlocutions are expectedly[21] the peak of the speech acts, so as the speaker must achieve the successfulness of his saying and must create an impact (motivation or discourage) to the hearer. Nevertheless, there is line bordering between the performatives and constatives. Yet, constatives could reach as far as being performatives, but not vice-versa.

The Fulfilment: Happy or Unhappy

But how about in the case when a speaker did not succeed in his utterance? Does it mean that his utterance is false? Austin does not associate

performatives to truth and falsity but to happiness and unhappiness which refers to the so called felicity and infelicity of the utterance. Truth and falsity are traditionally applied to statements which states facts and reports.[22] On the other hand, performatives do not absolutely mean to be true or false, but to be satisfactory or not (felicitous or infelicitous). And so, Austin presented such felicity conditions:

> (A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in a certain circumstances, and further;

> (A.2) The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked;

> (B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and;

> (B.2) completely;

> (Γ.1) Where, as often the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further;

> (Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.[23]

These felicity conditions describes that Austin also gave the guides in uttering sentences. One should not just utter a word only because he wants or intends to do so. An utterance must also be subjected to conformity, to conventions, and with certain appropriations. Those appropriations are in regards with certain words, certain persons, and in certain circumstances. As such, you would not ask "Will you marry me?" to someone who is already married in a non-conducive occasion. Otherwise, you would

commit bigamy or covetousness.[24] Moreover, such appropriations are executed procedurally, meaning in order and should be correctly and completely. And eventually, there must be congruity of the procedure (the act) and the speaker. The speaker carrying thoughts and feelings, who intend to express and execute it, must perform it and direct it to completion. Otherwise, the failure of such felicities would be referent to infelicity or the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances.[25]

Non-conformity to one or all of the guides leads to infelicitous performatives. A little less than parasite (parasitic speech acts), performatives could also be sick, and in this case infelicitous. But these infelicity conditions also show intentionality or directedness that has been curved wherein putting utterance into act has been compromise. When felicity A and B are achieved while Γ is disregarded, such infelicity is described to be professed or hollow. It is not void or without effect at all, simply, it is not implemented or consummated. Given the conditions A (A_1 & A_2) to B (B_1 & B_2), that is, there is an appropriation to certain words, persons, and circumstances, and is already applied into procedure or execution. However, conducting the intentions, thoughts and feelings are absent, is associated to an infelicity of Insincerity[26]; an Abuse[27] of the procedure. The performative is acted yet there is a consequence. For instance, a promising without intending, "I have promised but…"[28]

On the other hand, an offence against the felicities A to B is generally called Misfires wherein the purported procedure is disallowed or botched and so, the act is considered to be void or without effect. Misfires could furthermore be classified as to Misinvocation and Misexecutions. Misinvocation and

Misexecutions. These refer to not satisfying felicities A_1 & A_2, and B_1 & B_2 respectively.

Misinvocation is subdivided into Misapplication (or infelicity A_2), wherein the act is disallowed because the procedure is contested and could not be applied; the other subdivision has not yet named by Austin yet we would call it 'Misprocedure' (or infelicity A_1) which an abbreviation for "missing procedure" since this category of Misinvocation is lacking or not purely having procedure at all. In the case of 'Misprocedure', there is no conventional procedure ever existed and accepted. It becomes infelicitous when the utterance is not accepted singly not of the speaker, but significantly of other persons.[29] For example, the utterance of "I love you" by a Chinese woman to a Filipino man. Although their relationship is not accepted by her Chinese family because of certain conventions, her love for him is not recognized by her family[30]. Moreover, in the case of Misapplication, the utterance exists and is accepted, however, it becomes infelicitous when the circumstances in which it was invoked or the person who invoked it were inappropriate.[31] And so, the procedure has been misapplied. This is evident in the deliverance of command or request of a person who is not in proper position. For instance, a secretary commanding her boss to answer the phone.

Meanwhile, in Misexecution, the purported act is vitiated because of a flaw (referring to felicity B.1) or hitch (referring to felicity B.2) in the conduct of ceremony.[32] In order to destroy infelicities B_1 and B_2, it requires the participation of all the participants, in that case the speaker and the audience. Utterance becomes infelicitous when a flaw in the ritual is (obviously) involved however the audience took it and the act is abortive.[33] This is normally visible in the instance of betting. For example,
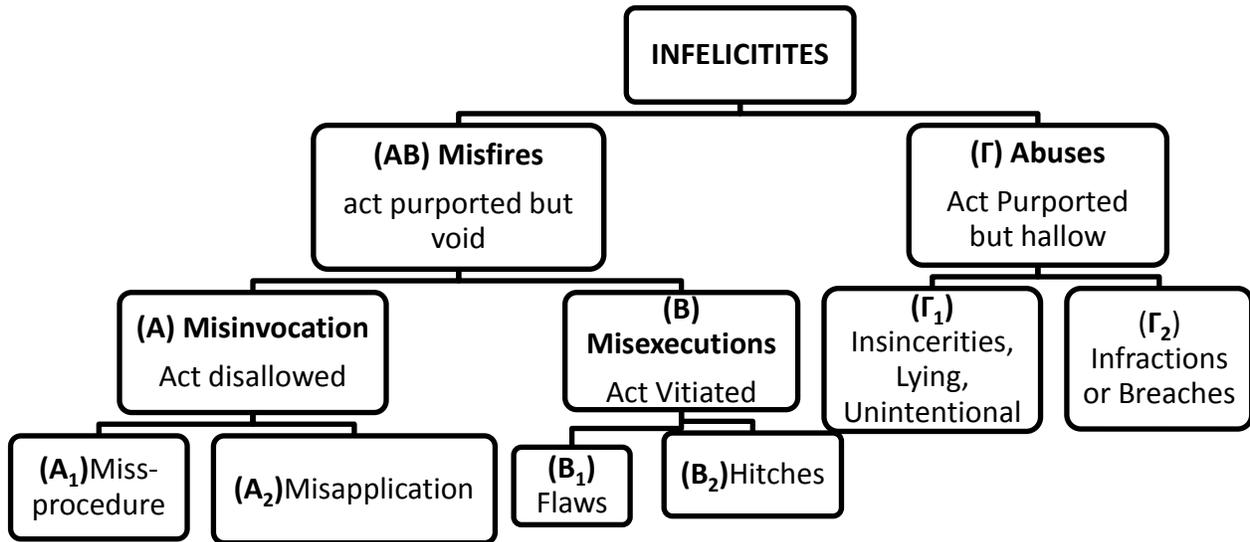
the utterance "I bet you sixpence" (as used by Austin) could be unhappy if it is taken by a hearer though he knew that the speaker does not have any penny. Acting upon such utterance could likewise be aborted. Moreover, as contrast to explicit performatives, there are also classes which are implicit or primitive wherein the procedure in question is not sufficiently explicitly invoked.[34] Implicit or primitive performatives could likewise be associated to infelicities B_1 & B_2 as being faulty or incomplete performatives respectively. Hence, I would consider infelicities B_1 & B_2 types to be raw performatives- a performative or utterance that has not fully implemented or acted.

Conditions $\Gamma.1$ & $\Gamma.2$ also have infelicity such that the utterance, according to Austin, becomes Insincere ($\Gamma.1$), and Infraction or Breach ($\Gamma.2$) when the performative is unhappy. In this light, fundamentals regarding procedures and appropriations are being set aside for a while to divert on a more 'personal' criterion considering the speaker's feelings, thoughts, and intentions and also the necessarily subsequent actualization of the performative. Nevertheless, infelicity $\Gamma.1$ does not solely account on Insincerity (in regards to feelings), but in addition this also includes unhappy performative as Lying (in regards to thoughts) and Unintentional (in regards to intentions).[35] Utterances like "I congratulate you", "I advise you to", and "I promise" are just some of the examples which includes the feelings, thoughts and intentions of the speaker. However, when these were uttered convincingly (that is 'as if' only) but not happily, such utterances report to infelicities. At this instance, the meaning of a given utterance is no longer in question. Rather, the force or the content which is incorporated in the utterance is now being considered. Therefore, infelicity $\Gamma.1$ suggests that the words in a given utterance are present, yet the thought of the agent is absent. On the other hand, $\Gamma.2$ forbids the 'instalment basis' of uttering the performatives, otherwise this may lead to Infraction or Breach infelicity. Consider the utterance of "I do" in a marriage ceremony. The commitment of a husband and wife is not to be taken fractionally or stagnantly. The utterance must also be in process and consistent throughout the couple's family life.

The fulfilment of such utterance is synonymous also to the notion of "palabra de honor" or the standing and fulfilling one's word. And so he would utter, "you have my word". The same is true for Austin when he said that our word is our bond.[36] Thoughts in the mind would be excreted through speech, and his speech is equivalent to an act which would essentially be satisfying. "So you thought, so you speak, so you act".

Summary illustration of Austin's infelicities:

INFELICITITES

(AB) Misfires
act purported but void

(Γ) Abuses
Act Purported but hallow

(A) Misinvocation
Act disallowed

(B) Misexecutions
Act Vitiated

(Γ₁) Insincerities, Lying, Unintentional

(Γ₂) Infractions or Breaches

(A₁) Miss-procedure

(A₂) Misapplication

(B₁) Flaws

(B₂) Hitches

Performatives on Special Cases

Nevertheless, there is such untouchable class in the speech acts, which was excluded by Austin from being felicitous and infelicitous. Such would be referent to the parasitic or using of language in special cases or occasion which could be associated to utterances heard in artistic allies (in theatrical and role plays as well as in dramas and poetries). Parasitic speech acts[37] are very much applicable (only) to the creative world of the arts. Here, the act of the artist in expressing feelings and emotions are being taken into account. Parasitic is a 'non-serious' or 'non-full normal use 'of language[38] and is distinguished by Austin from the explicit performatives (promising, commanding, betting, naming, etc.).

Furthermore, "playing[39] things with words" goes on special occasion of utilizing language, much so in the case of parasitism (this is just a simple assertion). In process, parasitic could also be a speech act, however in an unusual manner, to be exact, in a fictional manner[40]. This would henceforth suggest the 'Ideal' and 'Real' use of performative. Ideal in the case of parasitic speech acts as operative in artistic and literary expressions. While Real or non-fiction in the sense of the authentic speech acts of Austin which is best applied on common social communication. In this manner, both of them becomes effective, although into two distinct scenarios. In parasitic speech act, imagination and sensation are being much utilized which is of a more passive aspect. But nonetheless, it should always be remembered that performatives denotes performance (in an utterance), a more active aspect. "Playing things with words" is thus a special, and moreover, a creative aspect of using the language of performative.

Speaking is diverse. Perhaps not necessarily would it entail to have the visibility[41] (by that I mean the visible presence) of the speaker (for example, while having a conversation through phone) but significantly what it requires is the

"presence of the speaker" (not necessarily physically but at least thoughtfully) because speaking necessitates committing oneself (the speaker) to his utterance. Saying something is not simply an outward and visible sign of conveying a message of fact. It is an inward and spiritual act of including oneself as part of the utterance.[42] Likewise,

> For one who says 'promising' is not merely a matter of uttering words! It is an inward and spiritual act! is apt to appear as a solid moralist standing out against a generation of superficial theorizers[43]

Also, we cannot just categorize or even call the parasitic to be an utterance. It is just simply associated to the term text. The essential formula of Austin's performatives is: I + Presence + Active[44]. These three must essentially work in certain appropriations and with asymmetry.[45] The formula, henceforth, entails the active engagement of the speaker to his utterance. And so, uttering the performatives is an "event" and by that a "continuous event". An utterance is not only confined into the present instance of uttering it but is carried out 'futurally' as depicted in the four explicit performatives, "I do", "I bet", "I name", "I promise". Performatives indulge the speaker to commit to his utterance. And eventually he ought to perform and achieve it, because his utterance does not only carry information, but it contains responsibility. While uttering marriage vows or betting for something, one is not merely reporting or stating rather one is deliberating an utterance and in that circumstance of marrying or betting. Hence, in performative utterances, the speaker is part of his utterance and the utterance has the assurance of the presence of the speaker. In short, it means that language is an engagement. The utterance has a sense of direction and deliberation. It is having a purposive intention

to lead his utterance to fulfilment, to success, and to satisfaction which could be received by both speaker and hearer or respondent. Performative is an event and its end is a satisfying 'event'.

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1 Copi, I and Cohen, C. *Introduction to Logic 11th edition.* (2002: Pearson Education, Asia Pte Ltd.), 76.

2 Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words.* (1962: Oxford University Press). see footnotes, 1.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid, 6-7.

5 Ibid, 139. C.f. Garner, R. "Utterances and Acts in the Philosophy of J.L Austin". *Noûs, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Aug., 1968)* accessed: September 30, 2013. < http://www.jstor.org/stable/2214718>, 210.

6 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 5.

7 Ibid.,

8 Ibid, 69.

9 Kemp, G. *What is this Thing Called Philosophy of Language?* (2011: Routledge), 90.

10 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 92-93.

11 Kemp, *loc cit.*

12 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 108.

13 An action has some sort of *deliberating* and *purpose.* See Austin, J.L.'s "Three Ways of Spilling Ink" in *Philosophical Papers,* 273.

14 Austin, *Philosophical Papers. loc cit.*

15 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words,* 108.

16 Ibid.

17 Kemp, G. *loc cit.*

18 Ibid.

19 Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words,* 6-7.

20 Ibid, 1.

21 I mean expectedly because along the way, an utterance could be bent or broken.

22 Ibid, 12.

23 Ibid, 14-15.

24 Ibid, 16-17.

25 Ibid, 14.

26 Could be equated as $(A_{1\&2}.B_{1\&2})\sim\Gamma_1$

27 Could be equated as $(A_{1\&2}.B_{1\&2})\sim\Gamma_{1\&2}$

28 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words,* 15-19.

29 Ibid, p.27.

30 Her love to him neither exists nor accepted in so far as the conventions of her family are concerned.

31 Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*, p.28.

32 Ibid*,* 17-18.

33 Ibid, 35-36.

34 Ibid, 33.

35 Ibid, 39.

36 Ibid, 10.

37 *Parasitic* are excluded by Austin. However, Kevin Halion in his paper entitled "Parasitic Speech Acts: Austin, Searle and Derrida" has considered it as speech acts. Hence, *parasitic speech acts*. Nonetheless, *parasitic speech acts* are still unique since it is a special use or case of not only language but specifically of *performatives*. Halion while investigating the *parasitic* has utilized the view of Derrida as an answer to the "fixed" or "contextualize" notion of language as proposed by Austin and eventually by Searle.

38 Garcia, Leni dIR. 'Speech Acts and Poetry'. (2008: *Philosophia vol 37, 2*), 193.

39 "Playing" here has nothing to do with Wittgenstein's Language game theory. I just used such word to depict the difference between 'real' and 'ideal' speech acts, insofar as the parasitic speech acts is concerned. "Playing" is in association with creatively putting one's thoughts into words.

40 Searle, J. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. (1979: Cambridge University Press), xi.

41 For there is such thing as the *absence of the speaker-writer* or "*sender*" from her "*text*" because of the such notion of iteration. This aspect is therefore associated to *detachability-* a *detachment or disengagement*. Refer to Halion, K. "Parasitic Speech Acts: Austin, Searle, Derrida". *Philosophy Today, Summer 1992,* 163-166.

42 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 9-10.

43 Ibid, 10.

44 Austin has used Present but I would rather preferred Presence to complement to the notion of the presence of the speaker. See Austin's "Lecture VI" *How to Do Things with Word,* 67-68.

45 Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*, 68.

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