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**Reflocutionary (Non)speech Acts in Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj)*: A Cognitive Pragmatic Study**

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**Abstract**

This paper is extracted from the Ph.D. dissertation titled "Reflocutionary (Non)speech Acts in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj)*: A Cognitive Pragmatic Study". The current paper aims at applying reflocutionary acts to Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj)*. This sort of act is related to the speaker's reaction of his/her own illocutionary act, and the impact of the addressee's perlocutionary act on the speaker as a continuing chain of actions. Thus, it investigates this act from a cognitive pragmatic perspective, so as to elaborate how it is carried out. Moreover, this paper applies reflocutionary non-speech acts to *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj)* highlighting the power of silence in parallel with that of words. Additionally, the paper presents different forms of reflocutionary both speech and non-speech acts found through the analysis of Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj (The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj)*.

**Keywords:** Illocutionary; Perlocutionary; Reflocutionary; Non-speech



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الأفعال (غير) الكلامية في مسرحية مأساة الحلاج لصالح عبد الصبور:

دراسة تداولية معرفية

مستخلص الدراسة

محمد فاروق محمد بدر  
مدرس مساعد لغويات  
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية  
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هذه الدراسة مستمدة من رسالة الدكتوراه "أفعال (اللا)كلام الانعكاسية في مسرحيتي موت بائع متجول لأرثر ميلر ومأساة الحلاج لصالح عبد الصبور: دراسة تداولية معرفية". تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تطبيق الأفعال الانعكاسية على مسرحية مأساة الحلاج لصالح عبد الصبور. يرتبط هذا الصنف من الأفعال بتأثير الكلام على المتحدث نفسه/نفسها، وكذا تأثير رد فعل المستمع عليه/عليها حتى يكمل دائرة الحوار المتصل بين المتحدث والمستمع. وتتناول هذه الورقة الأفعال الانعكاسية من منظور تداولي معرفي لتوضيح الجوانب النفسية والعقلية اللازمة لإنجاز هذا القسم من الأفعال. كما تقدم هذه الورقة الصمت كفعل مؤثر بشكل ربما يفوق تأثير الكلام. لذلك تطبق هذه الورقة الأفعال الانعكاسية سواء الكلامية وغير الكلامية على مسرحية مأساة الحلاج لصالح عبد الصبور.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الفعل الإنجازي؛ الفعل التأثيري؛ الفعل الانعكاسي: أفعال اللاكلام

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**Reflocutionary (Non)speech Acts in Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj* (*The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj*): A Cognitive Pragmatic Study**

## **Introduction**

This paper attempts to investigate what is beyond the perlocutionary acts. The problem is that perlocutionary acts deal with the effect of an illocutionary acts, uttered by the speaker, on the addressee. Yet, the fact that an utterance can have an effect on the speaker himself/herself has not been tackled before. Although this paper is based on Austin's classification of speech acts to locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, it adds a fourth sort to such three acts, that is reflocutionary acts.

Like illocutionaries and perlocutionaries, reflocutionaries can be performed through both speech and non-speech acts. Still, reflocutionaries are different in that they can be involved within the interlocutor's mind and/or psyche; that is, they can be fulfilled by feelings and emotions. Being angry, regretful, worried, afraid, impressed, satisfied, nervous, hateful, lustful, disappointed, etc. are all classified as reflocutionary non-speech acts until they are uttered and turn to be speech acts. Thus, such acts are merely a form of non-speech acts that can be carried out, or rather experienced, by the interlocutors via their own speech or the other partner's one/s. Being appropriate for this study, the descriptive and analytical methods will be followed to apply reflocutionary acts to the selected play.

This paper follows the descriptive and analytical methods in order to apply reflocutionary acts to the selected play. Thus, it describes an action or event from the play, and explores the reflocutionary both speech and non-speech acts found in that action or event.

### **1. Pragmatics and cognitive pragmatics**

Pragmatics is essentially related to the study of meanings inferred or conveyed in an utterance. According to Abu-Hassoub and Mazid (2020), it is significant to realize that pragmatic context is not the reality that surrounds a communicative event, but how

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participants in the event perceive this reality (p. 80). Moreover, the requirement for an empirical foundation for pragmatic theory is emphasized by Dijk (2018). He focuses on the need for cognitive models for the organization, performance, comprehension, and memorization of speech acts in addition to the typical linguistic and philosophical criteria of a more abstract kind (p. 137). Thus, cognitive pragmatics is suggested to be the appropriate approach to studying speech acts. According to Bara (2017), cognitive pragmatics is indeed defined as encompassing “the study of the mental states of people who are engaged in communication” (p.279). Thus, cognitive pragmatics is concerned with investigating the mental or cognitive principles, processes or structures through which the language is used within communicative contexts or within the act of interaction among participants.

## **2. Speech Acts**

Speech Act Theory is central for the use language not only to perform apologies, requests and promises via words, but also to gain good relationships with others. According to Goddard (1998) the study of speech acts is an important interdisciplinary area between linguistics and philosophy (p. 136). Both J. L. Austin and John R. Searle were very interested in the way language can be described as action, and Speech Act theory is an account of what language is used for. Richards (1989) states that the speaker's intention must be known in order to determine whether his/her utterance is appropriate (p. 176). Moreover, as Reichert (1977) adds, when someone speaks meaningfully to another, he/she is doing something more than uttering an audible string of words, and more than affecting the listener (p. 34).

Sadiq (2022) illustrates that Austin explains what can be achieved through utterances. Speech acts were classified into three sorts: locutionary act (utterance meaning), illocutionary act (pragmatic function intended), and perlocutionary act (what the utterance achieves or leads to) (p. 60). Yet, what may come after the perlocutionary act of the hearer has been ambiguous. It seemed that such classification represented only one line that had a beginning

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and an early end with the perlocutionary act. Gu (1993) in his paper titled “The impasse of perlocution” has criticized the way of reviewing perlocutionary acts. He has investigated perlocutions through Causation Theory which he sees the reason for such impasse; then, through “Multiplicity Thesis”, and “Infinity Thesis”, but found that they are not sufficient in developing the perlocutionary acts. Neither the “Intention Irrelevance Thesis” nor the “Effect equals Act Fallacy” have managed to investigate the perlocutions in a satisfactory way. Gu maintains that, “We go beyond pragmatics or linguistic communication if the comprehension of illocutionary force is followed with perlocutionary effects” (pp. 405-428).

### **2.1. Perlocutionary and reflocutionary acts**

Huang (2007) illustrates that perlocutionary acts, unlike illocutionary acts, are not always intended by the speaker. Second, perlocutionary acts are not under the full control of the speaker. Thirdly, perlocutionary effects are usually not evident until after the utterance has been made. Fourthly perlocutionary effects are often indeterminate. Finally, perlocutionary effects are less conventionally tied to linguistic forms (pp. 103-104).

Still, there are some points that are not covered under the general topic of perlocutionary acts. What comes beyond perlocutions has not fairly been discussed. What can be said if the speaker be affected by his/her own illocution? Moreover, what term can be used for the effect of a perlocution? It can be noticed that there is a missing point in the ought-to-be circle of speech acts. A conversation between people does not end at the point of a perlocutionary act. Rather, a perlocution can be just the beginning of other speech or, even, non-speech acts. This is the subject of the following lines.

### **3. Non-speech Acts**

It can be said that speech is the most powerful tool of communication; however, it is not the only means of expressing and/or even experiencing the effects of communication. Language is first of all a communication system. Still, communication does not occur only by

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using or producing speech acts. After all, coughs, shouts, yawns, sighs, gestures, touches and a large range of movements can be used as intentional communicative acts. These non-speech devices are called paralinguistic devices. Some reflocutionaries, too, can include such non-speech devices, since they can be related to the mind of the speaker. Moreover, since reflocutionary acts are related to the speaker's mind after uttering a speech, they deal with thoughts and feelings inside his/her mind as reflections and effects of his/her own said utterances. Such thoughts and feelings are, first of all, non-speech acts; although they can be speech acts if uttered and expressed.

#### 4. Analysis

Salah Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj* includes different forms of reflocutionary acts. The first form of reflocutionaries manifests the *power of a word*. Dealing with the effects of an illocutionary act on the speaker himself/herself, reflocutionary speech and non-speech acts commit the speaker to pay attention to his/her words before uttering them; so that he/she can meet the needs of his/her addressee/s and of himself/herself as well. In *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*, it has been read that words can revive souls. This is manifested by Al-Hallaj's cognitive reflocutionary act of *retracting* from uttering a general illocutionary act of expressing his desire to resurrect "the dead" into defining it with "soul".

Moreover, the turn-taking, between Al-Hallaj and the second prisoner, of asking rhetorical questions about which is more powerful, words or anger can be regarded as a genuine proof of the Speech Act Theory itself. It has been revealed that the proverb saying "Actions speak louder than words" is inaccurate. For Al-Hallaj, words would be more powerful than deeds, and even would speak louder than swords. Additionally, Al-Hallaj uses the counter-questioning technique to tell the prisoner that anger will not reform oppressors if words cannot. Al-Hallaj engages in yet another sincere cognitive reflocutionary non-speech act of *crying*. Because it stems from inner experience rather than

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the prisoner's speech acts, it is reasonable to understand this act as reflocutionary rather than perlocutionary. Al-Hallaj's tears, however, are not a sign of sadness as the prisoner and any other addressee would anticipate; rather, it is a sign of confusion, "I do not weep out of grief, my son, but out of [confusion]". Al-Hallaj is confused because he does not know which weapon to use to face the oppressors; a word or a sword.

Furthermore, the power of a word in *causing death* has appeared in different contexts by different speakers throughout the course of Abd El-Sabour's *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*. Yet, it has been tackled from a different perspective, that is, *Reflocutionaries and speech events*. Depending on the speaker's motivations, nature, psychological and mental condition, beliefs, culture, and ideology, a single statement or proposition may have a variety of illocutionaries and reflocutionaries. Additionally, cognitive pragmatics aims to show how mental processes are recognized in communication as well as how mental abilities function in determining the impact of mental states, guiding evidentiary processes, revealing the process of deliberative mental interpretation, and showing how the human mind functions through word interpretation. This is killing with words, as demonstrated by the same claim made by many speakers in *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*.

Feeling responsible for killing Al-Hallaj, whether by words, or by silence, has been performed via reflocutionary acts by the group of poor people, the group of Sufis, and by Al-Hallaj's friend, Shibli. Thence, the notion of motive beyond performing a reflocutionary act has been introduced, in order to highlight another cognitive point of *justifying* deeds and/or words. Whether for the poor group's need for gold, the Sufis love for Al-Hallaj and his words, or for Shibli's desire of not revealing divine secrets, all of them feel responsible for Al-Hallaj's death. Moreover, as a result, all of them have performed the reflocutionary act of self-blaming on killing Al-Hallaj. Again, the power of silence, or reflocutionary non-speech acts, in *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj* has been highlighted like what happened in *Death of a Salesman*. In

*Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*, silence for Shibli, Al-Hallaj's friend, represents ecstasy. Hence, he performs a cognitive reflocutionary act of praising silence, "I take pleasure in my silence".

**Reflocutionaries and felicity preconditions** have been analyzed in *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*. The speech acts of asking questions, inquiring information, giving a piece of information, advising, guiding, and other speech acts necessitate the lack of information or previous knowledge of what is given or needed. When someone asks a question he/she knows its answer, then he/she performs an infelicitous speech act which lacks the sincerity condition needed to perform a felicitous speech act. The two prisoners, in *Ma'sat Al-Hallaj*, wonder about Al-Hallaj's reason for not asking them about their names. Still, he carries out a cognitive reflocutionary act of telling them who they are to him. He already knows them as his companions in the prison, and this is the reason for not asking them. This leads to another point, that some logic words to be said in the chain of actions are not uttered because they are already known in mind; and therefore, they may result in other reflocutionary acts. Moreover, the application of reflocutionary acts has foregrounded the significance of *metaphor* in understanding cognitive reflocutionary acts and vice versa.

Then, **reflocutionaries and prejudgment** have been investigated through the entire scene of the trial which represents a prejudgment or even a conspiracy against Al-Hallaj:

أ- أبو عمر: ... انظر، هل جاءوا بالرجل المفسد؟

الحاجب: سمعا يا مولاي  
 ((يخرج))  
 ابن سريج: ((في صوت خفيض))  
 أبا عمر، قل لي، ناشدت ضميرك  
 أفلا يعني وصفك للحلاج ..  
 بالمفسد، وعدو الله  
 قبل النظر المتروي في مسألته  
 أن قد صدر الحكم ..  
 ولا جدوى عندئذ أن يعقد مجلسنا؟  
 أبو عمر: هل تسخر يا ابن سريج؟



هذا رجل دفع السلطان به في أيدينا

موسوما بالعصيان

وعلينا أن نتخير للمعصية جزاء عدلا. (مأساة الحلاج، ص ص. 86-87)

A. ABU OMAR: ...Look, have they brought the corrupt man?

DOORMAN: Well heard, my Lord

(Exits)

IBN SURAIJ: (In a soft low voice)

Oh, Aba Omar, tell me something, I plead your conscience

Does not your description of Al-Hallaj

As corrupt, and enemy of God

Before looking carefully into his case

That the verdict has been issued..

And that there is no point of holding our session.

ABU OMAR: Are you deriding me, Ibn Suraij?

This is a man the Sultan has sent us

Branded with disobedience

And we have to choose a just retribution for this disobedience. (*The*

*Tragedy of Al-Hallaj*, p. 87)

Reflocutionary acts of *justifying*, *prejudging*, *declining*, *censuring*, *defending*, *requesting*, *refusing*, *condemning*, *oppressing*, *insulting*, and *retracting* are clear, and by which the incidents of the scene are apparent. Besides, a classification of reflocutionary acts into *simple* and *complex* is used in terms of cognitive pragmatics. Al-Hallaj's words during the trial can fairly be interpreted as a statement of polytheism, for they carry a simple or direct meaning of disbelief. However, the indirect or complex, in terms of cognitive pragmatics, speech act of expressing complete faith has been the really intended act by Al-Hallaj, which has been clarified by the group of Sufis, "This is the drunkenness of Sufis. The heart is full and overflow. Love overcame intent". Such interpretation carries a cultural and religious background of culture-specific speech acts.

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