ABSTRACT

Literary language or the work of art, expresses the most intense impression of life in an aesthetic way. To create individual mark and to meet the need of aesthetic implication, writers opt for linguistic deviations by departing from the normal usage of language. In-fact it is deviation that enhances the artistic value of the work of art. Many times, to enhance artistic grandeur of work of art, writers break the rules of language (grammar). Such deviations lead to confusion and encourage learners to analyse text linguistically. Work of art is an inclusive term & it includes novels, dramas, poetry, movies etc. We can observe such deviations in novels, too. In Indian context, English novels are not easy to understand and if these novels are with deviations then it becomes a task to understand. To understand novels fully and to get the intended meaning it is bound to study and observe the speech act notion in the dialogues of the novels. Speech acts are actions performed via words. A study of speech acts always explores the speaker’s communicative intention behind the production of the utterances. The principles of Speech Act Theory can be applicable for the novels and for fictions as well. In this kind of oral discourse the writer tries to convey his ideas, desires, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes etc. through the linguistic expressions produced by the characters. Both direct and indirect speech acts used by the characters in the novels, expose the writer’s communicative intentions.

The scope of Speech Act Theory is very vast. Therefore, for practical reasons the study is limited to the analysis of the speech acts in the selected novels. This kind of study will develop a new and different model of studying language through novels.

Linguists talk about speech acts in detail through their speech act theories. Philosophers and linguist like J. L Austin, Searle, Grice, Leech, George Yule and many others brought revolution in the field of Linguistics by
introducing Pragmatics as a different branch of language study. According to Yule –

‘Actions performed via utterances are generally called as speech acts’

This study will reveal how novels can be used as an effective tool to learn and adopt new dimensions towards linguistics rather than using it only as a source of entertainment.

The present study focuses on the process of data collection, examination and interpretation of the significant utterances in the selected novels. The primary data for the present study consists of selected highly marked speech acts in the five novels of Khushwant Singh, – *Burial at Sea*, *I shall not hear the nightingale*, *Sunset Club*, *Delhi : A Novel*, *The Company of Women* etc. All the novels presents human relationship in a very unusual and original style, which is not only uninhibited and erotic, but also enormously enchanting and engrossing. Thus, the present study examines the highly marked utterances used in selected novels in order to discuss at length the various issues and problems through the angle of the theory of speech acts.

The meticulous study of the principles of pragmatics in general and the theory of speech acts proposed by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle in particular forms the theoretical framework as backbone for the present study.

The focus of the present study is only on the five major types such as assertives, commissives, expressives, directives and declaratives in the context of the conversations.

It was Austin who for the first time drew our attention towards the speech act theory. He sets forth a new direction to how people unconsciously use words to do things. Austin produced some conditions which performatives must fulfill if they are to be successful. He named them as ‘Felicity Conditions’. Austin also distinguishes the locutionary, illocutionary and per locutionary speech acts which is his most valuable contribution. Further he classifies brilliantly the performatives as verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives, according to the illocutionary force. Austin’s
ideas about the speech act theory is later broadened and systematized by Searle. Searle made some conditions which are indispensable for the production of any felicitous speech acts. They are propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential condition. He develops Austin’s classification of utterances according to the illocutionary force as: assertives, directives, declaratives, commissives and expressives.

Speech act can be performed directly or indirectly. Direct speech acts are those which we have a direct relationship between the structure and function of an utterance and indirect speech acts are those which have an indirect relationship between the structure and function of an utterance. E.g. if a friend says to another ‘it is 11 o’clock’, is a declarative form and functions as an assertive because the speaker makes an attempt to give the listener an information about the time. But if the same sentence is made by a hostel warden to his/her students at night, then indirectly s/he is ordering the students to switch off the lights and go to bed. Thus the indirect speech acts are depend on us how we pick up the relevant clues from the intonational and the thematic force, together with the context of the utterance in order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the speaker’s meaning. It gives option to the listeners. In most cases to maintain the politeness people prefer to express their feelings indirectly. E.g. a board with the words ‘Work in Progress’ is indirectly requesting the motorists to be careful or to go slow rather than ordering or imposing on them to do the same. Thus, the analysis of indirect speech act is a way of studying how more gets communicated than is actually said.

Speech act theory deals with linguistic communication. When the speaker conveys something he or she always intends to have an effect on the listeners, so that the listener can recognize the speaker’s intention behind the use of the linguistic expressions. People use numerous speech acts in their day to day life. From morning up to night we make various attempts to interpret what
people are trying to say and what kind of speech act they are performing. In the process of communication, people prefer to use indirect speech acts as to maintain the politeness strategy. By saving ‘the face’, the image that one has in public, they try to make a favourable impression on their listeners. Similarly, in a novel the author tries to make clear his/her intentions through the utterances uttered by the characters. The best way to interpret and comprehend a novel is to treat the utterances as speech acts. A study of the linguistic expressions in terms of speech acts would help the readers to facilitate their perception and appreciation of the novel. Various philosophers and linguists have done a lot to express different views related to speech act theory but a very little has been done in the application of this theory upon any work of literature particularly the Indian Writings in English. It is not only an attempt to apply the indirect speech act theory to the novel but also an attempt to add a new perspective to the series of research done in pragmatics in general and the speech act theory in particular.

By applying the speech act theory to the selected utterances reveal how these utterances, occur in different contexts, and can contribute to our understanding. While dealing with some of the euphemistic expressions, proverbs, rhetorical questions etc. it shows how these terms help the speaker to state things indirectly. It also reveals the fact that indirect speech act can perform many other functions which probably the direct speech act cannot. This analysis will help us to go into a deeper level of meaning to interpret the novel in a different way. Such kind of study will definitely help researchers, teachers as well as students as it reduced the gap between what the author has written and what he has meant. It will make the study of literature an enjoyable activity by establishing a link between pragmatics and literature.