

speech act theory and coherence

Speech act theory and coherence are related concepts in linguistics, but they focus on different aspects of communication. **Speech act theory** is about what we **do** with language, while **coherence** is about how our language **makes sense** as a whole.

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory, developed by philosophers like J.L. Austin and John Searle, proposes that every utterance has an action or "illocutionary force" behind it. We don't just say things; we use language to **perform actions**. These actions are known as **speech acts**.

A speech act has three parts:

- **Locutionary Act:** The literal act of saying something (the words themselves).
 - *Example:* "It's cold in here."
- **Illocutionary Act:** The speaker's intention or purpose behind the utterance.
 - *Example:* The speaker intends to make a request for someone to close the window.
- **Perlocutionary Act:** The actual effect or result of the utterance on the listener.
 - *Example:* The listener closes the window.

Speech act theory helps us understand that language isn't just about conveying information; it's a tool for performing actions like requesting, promising, commanding, and apologizing.

Coherence

Coherence is the quality of a text or conversation that makes it logically connected and easy to follow. It's the "glue" that holds discourse together. A coherent text is one where the ideas flow logically, and the overall message is clear, even if the connections aren't explicitly stated. Coherence is achieved through both **formal links** (like conjunctions and pronouns) and **contextual links** (like shared knowledge and cultural assumptions).

The Relationship

The relationship between speech act theory and coherence is that speech acts contribute to coherence. The ability to recognize the illocutionary force of an utterance is essential for making sense of a conversation.

- **Understanding the Action:** If you don't understand the intended speech act, the conversation won't be coherent. For example, if someone says, "It's getting late," and you interpret it as a simple statement of fact instead of a suggestion to leave (a different speech act), you'll miss the point of the conversation, and it will seem incoherent.

- **Sequential Coherence:** Speech acts also follow a logical sequence. A question is coherent if it's followed by an answer. A request is coherent if it's followed by a response (like acceptance or refusal). The coherence of a conversation often depends on the appropriate sequencing of speech act

