

Speech Events and Speech Situations

The speaker usually expects that the listener or hearer can easily recognize her/his communicative intention through speech acts. The hearer can do that only with the help of certain circumstances surrounding the utterance, these circumstances, according to Yule (1996), are called speech events. Speech situation, speech acts and speech events are interrelated aspects, since most of the time when performing a speech act its interpretation is determined by speech situation and speech events. According to Hymes (1979), the units of interaction are speech situation, speech event and speech act (Cited in Yule, 1996). A speech situation is the context of language use such as ceremonies, fights, classrooms, parties, etc. it is associated with speech but it is not governed by rules of speaking; however, a speech event is governed by rules of speaking and it takes place within a speech situation. Thus, speech events may be a conversation that consists of smaller units of speech acts such as a joke. “A speech event is an activity in which participants interact via language in some conventional way to arrive at some outcome” (Yule, 1996:57). Moreover, speech acts are functional units at the utterance level like thanking, requesting, etc. while speech events are larger units with multiple turns such as job interviews. To explain the relation between speech situations, events, and acts, take the following example:

A: What time is it, please?

B: It is 1 o'clock

A: Thanks

This conversation contains a speech situation which is the bus station, a speech event which is asking about the time, and speech acts which are the acts of requesting, thanking and responding.