

Language, Power, and Communication: A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts in Manju Kapoor's *Custody*

Prachishri Mishra

Research Scholar, Department of English, Utkal University

Abstract

Language is not merely a medium of communication but also a means of performing actions, expressing emotions, and negotiating social relationships. Speech Act Theory, developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle, emphasizes that utterances perform functions such as asserting, requesting, promising, questioning, apologizing, and commanding within particular contexts. While early theorists considered literary discourse outside the scope of pragmatic analysis, contemporary approaches recognize that fictional dialogues also function as performative acts capable of conveying meaning, power, and intention. In this context, literary texts provide significant material for analysing how language operates within social and emotional frameworks. The present study examines the use and function of speech acts in the selected novel through a pragmatic perspective. The research focuses on identifying different categories of speech acts such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations as proposed by John Searle. The study analyses how these speech acts contribute to character development, thematic expression, and the portrayal of interpersonal relationships within the narrative. Manju Kapoor's *Custody* presents complex family relationships, marital conflict, emotional alienation, and legal disputes that create intense communicative interactions among the characters. Through dialogues, the novel reflects issues of power, authority, resistance, emotional trauma, and gender inequality within contemporary Indian society. The study explores how characters use language strategically to express dominance, persuasion, anger, affection, and psychological conflict. It also examines the role of silence, indirect communication, and implied meaning in shaping relationships and social dynamics. The research highlights that speech acts in literary discourse are not merely fictional conversations but meaningful communicative actions that reveal deeper psychological and socio-cultural realities. By applying Speech Act Theory to *Custody*, the study demonstrates the relevance of pragmatics in literary analysis and contributes to interdisciplinary research connecting linguistics and literature. Ultimately, the paper argues that language in the novel functions as a powerful tool for constructing identity, negotiating relationships, and reflecting social structures.

Key words: Speech Act, literary discourse. Interpersonal communication

I. Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in shaping human interaction, social relationships, and cultural identity. Beyond conveying information, language performs actions, expresses emotions, establishes authority, and negotiates power within social contexts. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, studies how meaning is constructed and interpreted in communication beyond the literal meaning of words. Among the major areas of pragmatics, Speech Act Theory examines how utterances function as actions in particular communicative situations. Introduced by J. L. Austin and further developed by John Searle, Speech Act Theory argues that language is not merely descriptive but performative in nature. Through speech acts such as requesting, promising, warning, apologizing, questioning, and commanding, speakers perform social actions that influence interpersonal relationships and social structures. Literary texts, particularly novels and dramatic narratives, provide rich material for pragmatic analysis because dialogues within literature often reveal hidden intentions, power dynamics, emotional conflicts, and cultural values. Manju Kapoor, one of the prominent contemporary Indian English novelists, is widely recognized for her exploration of gender relations, family structures, female identity, and social transformation in Indian society. Her novels critically examine the emotional and psychological struggles of women negotiating patriarchal expectations within domestic and social spaces. Kapoor's writing is deeply rooted in realism and presents complex interpersonal relationships through natural conversational patterns and emotionally charged dialogues. Her novel *Custody* presents a compelling narrative of marital conflict, emotional alienation, legal disputes, and the psychological consequences of broken relationships. Through its realistic portrayal of family tensions and personal conflicts, the novel offers significant scope for pragmatic analysis, particularly through the framework of Speech Act Theory.

The present study aims to examine how speech acts function within the dialogues of the novel and how they contribute to character development, thematic construction, and the representation of social relationships. The study investigates the ways characters use language to express authority, resistance, manipulation, affection,

anger, persuasion, and emotional conflict. Since communication in literary discourse often carries implied meanings and contextual nuances, a pragmatic approach helps uncover the deeper intentions behind the characters' utterances. The analysis focuses on identifying various types of speech acts such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations as classified by John Searle. These categories help explain how language operates as social action within the narrative structure of the novel.

The novel *Custody* reflects the tensions of contemporary urban Indian society where changing social values often conflict with traditional family expectations. The breakdown of marriage and the legal battle over child custody create emotionally intense interactions among the characters. Through these interactions, Kapoor portrays the complexities of communication within strained relationships. Dialogues in the novel frequently reveal hidden emotions, suppressed desires, psychological trauma, and power struggles. For instance, commands and accusations may function as expressions of dominance, while silence, indirect speech, and emotional appeals may signify resistance or vulnerability. Therefore, analysing speech acts in the novel allows a deeper understanding of how language reflects social hierarchy, gender relations, and emotional negotiation.

The study is also significant from a feminist perspective because communication in patriarchal societies is often shaped by unequal power relations. Women's voices are frequently controlled, interrupted, or marginalized within domestic spaces, and literary dialogues reveal these dynamics through patterns of speech and silence. In *Custody*, female characters negotiate identity, autonomy, and emotional survival through language. Their speech acts become important tools for expressing agency and challenging patriarchal authority. Thus, the pragmatic analysis of dialogues not only examines linguistic functions but also highlights the socio-cultural realities represented in the novel.

Furthermore, the research contributes to interdisciplinary literary and linguistic studies by demonstrating the relevance of pragmatic theory in literary analysis. While traditional literary criticism often focuses on themes, characterization, and narrative techniques, pragmatic analysis emphasizes communication strategies and contextual meaning. By applying Speech Act Theory to *Custody*, the study seeks to bridge literature and linguistics and provide insights into how language constructs relationships, conflict, and identity within fictional discourse.

The present paper explores the relationship between language, intention, and social interaction in Manju Kapoor's *Custody*. Through the framework of Speech Act Theory, the study aims to analyse how dialogues function as instruments of power, emotion, and negotiation within the narrative. The research ultimately demonstrates that speech acts in literary discourse are not merely conversational exchanges but significant communicative actions that reveal deeper psychological, cultural, and ideological meanings.

Objectives

- To identify and classify the different types of speech acts used in Manju Kapoor's *Custody* based on John Searle's Speech Act Theory.
- To analyze how speech acts contribute to the portrayal of interpersonal relationships, power dynamics, and emotional conflicts in the novel.
- To examine the role of pragmatic strategies in revealing themes of gender, identity, authority, and social interaction in *Custody*.

Research Statement

The present study investigates the use and function of speech acts in Manju Kapoor's *Custody* through the framework of pragmatic analysis. The research examines how characters employ different categories of speech acts—such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations—to communicate emotions, negotiate relationships, express authority, and construct social identities. The study further explores how language in the novel reflects interpersonal conflicts, gender relations, psychological tensions, and power dynamics within contemporary Indian society. By applying Speech Act Theory to literary discourse, the research aims to demonstrate that dialogues in *Custody* function not merely as fictional conversations but as meaningful communicative acts that contribute to thematic development and character representation.

Literature Review

Dialogues in novels serve multiple communicative and narrative purposes depending on the context, the relationships between characters, and the intentions underlying the utterances. Literary conversations are not merely casual exchanges of words; they function as important devices for shaping characterization, advancing the storyline, and expressing thematic concerns. As Page observes, dialogue in fiction contributes significantly to plot development, characterization, and the presentation of social, moral, and ideological debates (55). Through conversations, readers gain insight into the emotional states, motivations, and conflicts of fictional characters, making them appear realistic and psychologically complex.

In literary narratives, every utterance carries a particular purpose and contributes to the larger structure of the text. Although characters seem to speak independently within the fictional world, their dialogues are carefully constructed by the author to communicate specific meanings and achieve narrative objectives. Therefore, conversations in novels often contain layers of intention that extend beyond their literal meaning. Through speech, characters reveal emotions, negotiate relationships, assert authority, conceal truths, express resistance, and influence the actions of others. At the same time, authors employ dialogues strategically to provide information, create tension, develop themes, and shape readers' understanding of the narrative. Consequently, speech acts in literature possess both communicative and artistic significance.

The analysis of speech acts in novels is particularly valuable because literary language is often rich in implied meanings, indirect expressions, and contextual nuances. By examining the nature of these speech acts, readers can better understand not only the intentions of the characters but also the broader thematic concerns of the author. Speech Act Theory, developed by John Searle (1969), provides an effective framework for analysing how language functions as action within communication. Searle classifies speech acts into five major categories based on the speaker's intention and communicative purpose: assertives or representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

Assertive or representative speech acts are utterances through which speakers express beliefs, opinions, or statements about reality. In these acts, the speaker commits to the truth of the proposition being conveyed. Such speech acts include stating, informing, suggesting, denying, concluding, criticizing, predicting, and reporting. Through assertive acts, speakers represent their understanding or interpretation of situations and events. In literary discourse, these speech acts help establish narrative context, reveal character perspectives, and communicate ideological positions within the text.

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) initially maintained that Speech Act Theory primarily concerns ordinary language used in real communicative situations rather than literary discourse. Austin particularly viewed literary language as non-serious, indirect, and "parasitic" because it operates outside the immediate practical context of everyday communication (Miller 60). According to this perspective, speech acts achieve their full function only within authentic social interactions involving an actual speaker and listener. Therefore, literary utterances were often considered less suitable for pragmatic analysis.

However, this view was later challenged by Jacques Derrida, who questioned the idea of a "pure" or completely stable speech act. As Miller explains, Derrida argues that meaning is never fixed because language acquires different interpretations depending on context and reception (93). Once an utterance is produced, it becomes open to multiple meanings beyond the speaker's original intention. Since meaning constantly shifts across contexts, it is difficult to define any speech act as entirely standard or pure. Derrida's argument broadens the scope of Speech Act Theory by emphasizing that literary discourse also performs communicative functions and generates meaningful actions through language.

In this context, the dialogues and utterances found in novels can be analysed as performative acts similar to those in real-life communication. Although fictional conversations do not involve physically present speakers and listeners, they still communicate intentions, emotions, authority, persuasion, conflict, and social relationships. Literary characters use language to command, question, accuse, promise, express feelings, and negotiate power, thereby performing various speech acts within the narrative structure. Consequently, speech acts in literature are equally significant for pragmatic analysis because they reveal deeper meanings, character psychology, and socio-cultural dynamics embedded in the text.

Searle's five categories of speech acts demonstrate the different kinds of actions that individuals perform through language during communication. In literary discourse, characters use speech not only to exchange information but also to express emotions, influence others, make commitments, and create social effects. Thus, dialogues in novels function as meaningful communicative acts that reveal relationships, intentions, attitudes, and psychological conditions. Through speech, fictional characters describe situations, express feelings and opinions, commit themselves to future actions, attempt to persuade or direct others, and sometimes even bring about institutional or social changes through their utterances.

In many cases, a single utterance may perform more than one function simultaneously because speech acts often contain multiple layers of meaning. The analysis of these categories helps readers understand how language conveys communicative intention and social meaning within literary interactions. As Yule explains, speech act analysis is useful because it demonstrates how language performs different social functions and how particular utterances are conventionally used to achieve specific purposes (58). Therefore, Speech Act Theory provides an important framework for examining communication in novels and understanding how characters use language strategically within different contexts.

Searle's classification of speech acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations also emphasizes that successful communication depends upon certain contextual conditions. These conditions, known as felicity or appropriateness conditions, were first introduced by Austin (1962) and later

expanded by Searle (1969). For a speech act to achieve its intended effect, specific requirements must be fulfilled within the communicative situation.

The first is the propositional content condition, which relates to the content of the utterance and the action being expressed. It ensures that the statement appropriately corresponds to the intended act. The second is the preparatory condition, which concerns the situational context and whether the circumstances are suitable for performing the speech act. The third is the sincerity condition, which focuses on the speaker's genuine feelings, intentions, or psychological state while making the utterance. The fourth is the essential condition, which requires that the speaker accepts responsibility for performing the act through the utterance itself. Together, these conditions determine whether a speech act functions effectively within communication.

The five categories of speech acts identified by Searle represent the major communicative functions of language in both everyday interaction and literary discourse. Representative or assertive speech acts express what the speaker believes to be true. Through these acts, speakers describe situations, provide information, report events, or express opinions. In assertives, language is used to make words correspond to reality.

Directive speech acts are used when speakers attempt to influence the actions of others. These include requests, commands, advice, warnings, and suggestions. Through directives, speakers express their desires and encourage listeners to perform specific actions.

Commissive speech acts commit speakers to future actions or responsibilities. Promises, threats, refusals, vows, and pledges fall under this category. These acts reflect the speaker's intention to carry out or avoid certain actions in the future.

Expressive speech acts reveal the emotional and psychological state of the speaker. Utterances such as apologies, compliments, congratulations, praise, or expressions of sorrow communicate feelings, attitudes, and personal reactions toward a situation.

Finally, declaration speech acts are utterances that bring about immediate changes in social or institutional reality. Acts such as pronouncing a couple husband and wife, sentencing a criminal, conferring a title, or announcing an official decision alter the status of individuals through the authority of language itself.

Thus, Searle's classification highlights how speech functions not only as communication but also as social action. In literary texts, these speech acts contribute to characterization, thematic development, emotional expression, and the representation of power relations and social interactions. The present study adopts a library-based research approach, as it primarily relies on textual analysis of Manju Kapoor's *Custody* along with relevant secondary sources related to pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, and literary criticism. The data for analysis is collected from the primary literary text and supported by scholarly books, journal articles, and critical studies that contribute to the theoretical and analytical framework of the research. Since the study focuses on examining linguistic expressions and communicative functions within literary discourse, textual interpretation forms the central method of investigation.

The research employs an analytical research design because it aims to critically examine and interpret existing textual material rather than generate new empirical data. According to Kothari (2004), analytical research involves the systematic evaluation of already available facts and information in order to develop deeper understanding and critical interpretation. In this context, the study analyses the dialogues and utterances in *Custody* to identify various categories of speech acts and their communicative significance within the narrative structure.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are incorporated into the research methodology. The qualitative aspect focuses on interpreting the meanings, intentions, emotional expressions, and contextual functions of speech acts used by the characters in the novel. It examines how language reflects interpersonal relationships, gender dynamics, power structures, and psychological conflict. The quantitative aspect involves identifying and categorizing speech acts according to Searle's classification in order to observe patterns of language use within the text.

The analytical framework of the study enables a critical understanding of how speech acts function as communicative strategies in literary discourse. By examining the linguistic behaviour of characters, the research seeks to explain how language contributes to thematic development, characterization, and the representation of social realities. Thus, the study is interpretative and evaluative in nature, aiming to establish meaningful relationships between pragmatic theory and literary communication.

II. Methodology

The present study adopts a library-based research approach, as it primarily relies on textual analysis of Manju Kapoor's *Custody* along with relevant secondary sources related to pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, and literary criticism. The data for analysis is collected from the primary literary text and supported by scholarly books, journal articles, and critical studies that contribute to the theoretical and analytical framework of the research. Since the study focuses on examining linguistic expressions and communicative functions within literary discourse, textual interpretation forms the central method of investigation.

The research employs an analytical research design because it aims to critically examine and interpret existing textual material rather than generate new empirical data. According to Kothari (2004), analytical research involves the systematic evaluation of already available facts and information in order to develop deeper understanding and critical interpretation. In this context, the study analyses the dialogues and utterances in *Custody* to identify various categories of speech acts and their communicative significance within the narrative structure.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are incorporated into the research methodology. The qualitative aspect focuses on interpreting the meanings, intentions, emotional expressions, and contextual functions of speech acts used by the characters in the novel. It examines how language reflects interpersonal relationships, gender dynamics, power structures, and psychological conflict. The quantitative aspect involves identifying and categorizing speech acts according to Searle's classification in order to observe patterns of language use within the text.

The analytical framework of the study enables a critical understanding of how speech acts function as communicative strategies in literary discourse. By examining the linguistic behaviour of characters, the research seeks to explain how language contributes to thematic development, characterization, and the representation of social realities. Thus, the study is interpretative and evaluative in nature, aiming to establish meaningful relationships between pragmatic theory and literary communication.

III. Data Analysis

In literary discourse, speech acts function as important communicative tools that reveal characters' intentions, emotions, relationships, and psychological conditions. In Manju Kapoor's *Custody*, dialogues are deeply connected to themes of marital conflict, emotional alienation, authority, gender inequality, and family tension. The characters' utterances do not merely convey information; they perform actions that shape the narrative and influence interpersonal relationships. John Searle's classification of speech acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations provides an effective framework for analysing how communication operates in the novel.

Representative or assertive speech acts are statements through which speakers express beliefs, opinions, observations, or judgments about reality. In these utterances, the speaker commits to the truth of what is being said. In the novel representative speech acts frequently expose emotional dissatisfaction and family conflict. For example, when a character remarks:

"This marriage has destroyed our peace."

The statement functions as an assertive because it reflects the speaker's belief about the failure of the marital relationship. Similarly, the statement:

"The children are suffering because of our arguments."

It represents the speaker's understanding of the emotional consequences of parental conflict. Through such assertions, characters interpret their experiences and communicate their perception of reality. These speech acts contribute significantly to characterization and thematic development in the novel.

Directive speech acts are utterances intended to influence or control the actions of another person. These include commands, requests, suggestions, warnings, and questions. In *Custody*, directive acts often reveal unequal power relations within domestic and legal settings. For instance, when a husband tells his wife:

"Stop interfering in my decisions"

Here, the utterance functions as a directive because it attempts to control her behaviour. Likewise, a statement such as:

"Take the children inside immediately"

It demonstrates authority and urgency. These directives highlight tensions within family relationships and expose patriarchal expectations regarding obedience and control. The frequent use of commands and instructions in the novel reflects struggles for dominance and authority among the characters.

Commissive speech acts involve commitments to future actions. Through promises, threats, refusals, or assurances, speakers bind themselves to a future course of conduct. In *Custody*, commissive acts often emerge during emotionally charged moments involving family disputes and legal conflicts. For example, a character's statement:

"I will never leave my children behind"

This functions as a commissive because it expresses determination and commitment toward future action. Similarly, the utterance:

"You will regret this decision"

It can be interpreted as a threat that commits the speaker to future retaliation or emotional confrontation. These speech acts reveal the characters' intentions, emotional intensity, and attempts to influence future events.

Expressive speech acts communicate the speaker's psychological and emotional state. They reveal feelings such as sorrow, anger, gratitude, apology, disappointment, or happiness. In Manju Kapoor's *Custody*, expressive acts

are particularly important because the novel centers on emotional conflict and strained interpersonal relationships. For example, when a character says;

“I am tired of this humiliation,”

The utterance expresses frustration and emotional exhaustion. Similarly, the statement, “I am sorry for hurting the children,” reflects guilt and remorse. Through expressive speech acts, the novel reveals the inner emotional struggles of the characters and their responses to personal trauma and conflict. These utterances deepen the psychological realism of the narrative and allow readers to understand the emotional complexities within the family structure.

Declaration speech acts are unique because they bring about an immediate change in social or institutional reality through the act of speaking itself. These speech acts usually require authority or institutional power. In *Custody*, declarations can be observed particularly within legal and social contexts. For example, when a legal authority announces:

“The custody of the children will remain with the mother,”

The utterance itself changes the legal and social status of the family arrangement. Similarly, statements made during court proceedings or official decisions alter the conditions of the characters’ lives. Unlike other speech acts, declarations do not merely describe reality; they actively create a new state of affairs through institutional authority.

The use of these five categories of speech acts in *Custody* demonstrates how language functions as social action within literary discourse. Through assertives, characters express beliefs and observations; through directives, they attempt to control others; through commissives, they commit themselves to future actions; through expressives, they reveal emotional states; and through declarations, institutional realities are transformed. Each speech act contributes to the narrative structure, characterization, and thematic depth of the novel.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of speech acts depends upon contextual and communicative conditions. Austin’s concept of felicity conditions explains that for a speech act to achieve its intended purpose, certain conditions must be fulfilled. In *Custody*, emotional sincerity, social authority, and contextual appropriateness determine whether communication succeeds or fails. For example, apologies without genuine remorse may be rejected, while promises made during conflict may lack credibility. Similarly, legal declarations carry authority only because they are performed within recognized institutional settings.

Through Speech Act Theory, *Custody* can therefore be understood not only as a literary narrative but also as a complex representation of communication, power, emotion, and social interaction. The characters’ dialogues reveal how language becomes a means of negotiation, resistance, emotional expression, and authority within contemporary family relationships.

The analysis of dialogues in Manju Kapoor’s *Custody* demonstrates that the characters’ utterances can be effectively interpreted through John Searle’s five major categories of speech acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The conversations in the novel reveal that language functions not merely as a medium of communication but also as a form of social and psychological action. Through their speech, characters negotiate relationships, express emotions, exercise authority, and respond to conflict within the complex framework of family and marital tensions.

The study further indicates that each major category of speech act includes several subordinate communicative functions or illocutionary forces that vary according to the context and the felicity conditions of the utterance. These contextual conditions influence how meaning is interpreted and determine the communicative purpose of the speech act within a particular interaction. As a result, the same category of speech act may perform multiple functions depending on the emotional state, intention, and social position of the speaker.

For the purpose of analysis, selected dialogues and conversational excerpts from *Custody* were examined to identify the pragmatic significance of speech acts within the narrative. The findings reveal the extensive use of all five categories of speech acts throughout the novel. Representative speech acts are used by characters to express beliefs, observations, and opinions regarding marriage, family conflict, and emotional suffering. Directive speech acts frequently appear in situations involving authority, control, requests, and attempts to influence the behaviour of others. Commissive speech acts emerge when characters make promises, threats, refusals, or commitments concerning future actions and responsibilities. Expressive speech acts are especially significant in the novel because they reveal emotional states such as frustration, anger, guilt, disappointment, and affection. Declaration speech acts occur primarily in legal and institutional contexts, particularly in matters related to custody decisions and family arrangements, where utterances themselves bring about social or legal changes.

The analysis shows that characters in *Custody* use language to represent reality, communicate personal feelings and attitudes, commit themselves to future actions, direct others’ behaviour, and create institutional consequences through speech. Thus, the novel demonstrates how speech acts contribute to the development of themes, characterization, emotional conflict, and social relationships. Through pragmatic analysis, it becomes evident that dialogues in *Custody* are deeply connected to issues of power, identity, gender relations, and interpersonal negotiation within contemporary Indian society

IV. Conclusion

The primary objective of the present study was to examine the functions and communicative significance of speech acts in Manju Kapoor's *Custody*. The analysis reveals that each category of speech act employed in the novel performs a distinct role within the context of the narrative and contributes significantly to the portrayal of interpersonal relationships, emotional conflict, and social dynamics. Through the use of speech acts, the characters communicate beliefs, intentions, emotions, authority, and psychological tensions that shape the progression of the story.

The study demonstrates that representative or assertive speech acts are frequently used by the characters to express opinions, beliefs, judgments, and perceptions of reality. Through these utterances, characters attempt to justify their actions, defend their perspectives, and describe the circumstances surrounding marital conflict, family breakdown, and emotional suffering. These speech acts allow the characters to present the world as they personally perceive and interpret it.

Expressive speech acts play a particularly important role in *Custody* because the novel is deeply concerned with emotional and psychological experiences. Characters use expressive utterances to communicate feelings such as anger, frustration, disappointment, guilt, sympathy, affection, and emotional pain. Through apologies, complaints, criticism, and emotional reactions, the inner psychological condition of the speakers becomes visible to the reader. These speech acts contribute to the emotional depth and realism of the narrative.

Directive speech acts are used by characters to influence the actions and behaviour of others. Commands, requests, warnings, advice, and questions frequently occur in situations involving domestic disputes, parental authority, and interpersonal tension. These directives often reflect unequal power relations within family and marital structures and reveal attempts to control or negotiate relationships.

Commissive speech acts in the novel express the speakers' intentions and commitments toward future actions. Characters make promises, threats, refusals, and assurances that reflect their emotional states and future expectations. Through commissive acts, the speakers bind themselves to certain actions, thereby intensifying the emotional and dramatic conflict within the narrative.

Declaration speech acts appear mainly within institutional and legal contexts in *Custody*, especially in matters related to family arrangements and child custody. Such utterances create immediate changes in social or legal circumstances through the authority attached to them. These declarations demonstrate how language can function as an instrument of institutional power and social transformation.

Overall, the study establishes that each category of speech act serves a specific communicative purpose in *Custody*. Manju Kapoor strategically employs different speech acts to reveal character psychology, construct social relationships, and communicate thematic concerns related to gender, family conflict, authority, and emotional struggle. The novel therefore illustrates how language operates not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful tool for expressing identity, negotiating power, and shaping human relationships.

Works Cited

- [1]. Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed., edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, Harvard UP, 1975.
- [2]. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- [3]. Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Translated by Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, Northwestern UP, 1988.
- [4]. Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Harvard UP, 1980.
- [5]. Grice, H. Paul. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Harvard UP, 1989.
- [6]. Kapoor, Manju. *Custody*. Random House India, 2011.
- [7]. Kothari, C. R. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. 2nd ed., New Age International Publishers, 2004.
- [8]. Leech, Geoffrey. *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman, 1983.
- [9]. Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge UP, 1983.
- [10]. Mey, Jacob L. *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, 2001.
- [11]. Miller, J. Hillis. *Speech Acts in Literature*. Stanford UP, 2001.
- [12]. Page, Norman. *Speech in the English Novel*. 2nd ed., Macmillan, 1988.
- [13]. Searle, John R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge UP, 1969.
- [14]. Searle, John R. "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts." *Language in Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1976, pp. 1–23.
- [15]. Yule, George. *Pragmatics*. Oxford UP, 1996.