

# Discourse Analysis of Dialogues in Runaway under Speech Act Theory

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## Abstract

**Austin, an English philosopher, was the first to introduce the concept of speech act theory, which has since been refined and applied to a range of domains. The use of speech act theory to examine literary works is quite useful. There are currently just a few articles that apply this theory to Alice Munro's "Runaway". As a result, this article will study the dialogues of the novel's key characters from three perspectives of speech act theory in order to better illustrate the characters' personalities and uncover the text's themes. It will also contribute to the application of speech act theory to literary analysis in practice.**

## Keywords

**Pragmatics; Speech Act Theory; Runaway; Alice Munro.**

## 1. Introduction

Austin, an English philosopher, was the first to introduce the concept of speech act theory, which has since been expanded and applied to a wide range of subjects. When it comes to assessing literary works, the speech act theory is very helpful. Runaway is one of Alice Munro's major works. Carla, the heroine, is miserable in her marriage and attempts to flee, but she is unable to do so and has to return to Clark because she is emotionally and financially reliant on him. There are currently just a handful of articles that apply speech act theory to Alice Monroe's work, Runaway. As a result, this article will study the conversations of the novel's key character figures from three perspectives of speech act theory in order to better understand the characters and expose the text's theme. It will also contribute to the application of speech act theory to literary analysis in practice.

## 2. Speech Act Theory

Austin was the first to suggest the speech act theory. A human sentence, according to Austin, consists of three types of activity: the first is locutionary act, which relates to the act of speaking and the literal meaning of the utterance. The illocutionary act, on the other hand, refers to the discourse's additional meaning produced on the basis of its literal meaning. The third type is the perlocutionary act, which refers to the influence of the discourse on the listener, which changes depending on specific circumstance. The idea can be applied to literary analysis through the lens of these three activities.

## 3. Dialogue Analysis

### 3.1. Analysis of the Dialogue between Carla and Clark

Carla is the main character in Runaway, and her spouse is Clark. Carla has been suppressed by Clark for a long time, and he is constantly angry with her, forcing her to do things she doesn't want to do. The aforementioned can be deduced from the analysis of the following speech segment.

Carla: "We have to go to the laundromat. Even when the towels dry out they smell moldy."

Clark: "We're not changing the subject, Carla." And "I am not going to let you off the hook, Carla."

Carla's locutionary act is that they need to go to the laundry room, and the illocutionary act is that she wants to stop talking about contacting Mrs. Sylvia back because she doesn't want to blackmail Sylvia, and she hopes Clark understands and respects her. Carla's status as a housewife is reflected in the expression "go to the laundromat" and "not wanting to blackmail" demonstrates Carla's kindness and concern. At the same time, her use of the panned action "going to the laundry" to avoid doing what Clark made her do indicates that she has a low position in their marriage to some extent, because she didn't dare say no. The perlocutionary act of this sentence enraged Clark and aggravated their relationship. Clark's locutionary act is that he won't let Carla change the topic, and he must want Carla to perform this thing. The illocutionary act is that he refused Carla's request and urges Carla to blackmail Sylvia once more, firmly and coercively. This demonstrates that he is profit-driven and has become enamored with money. Besides, he is self-centered, disrespectful, and irritable.

Carla becomes more painful and sorrowful after the speech. This is to set the tone for her later appearance to hug Clark but can't help but cry, which is also one of the triggers for her to implement runaway. It illustrates the essay's main point: women have complicated troubles in patriarchal societies, and their unequal status in marriage renders them oppressed and miserable.

Although Carla flees, she feels afraid and ultimately fails. Her compromise is reflected in the following dialogue fragment.

Carla: "Come and get me. please. Come and get me."

Clark: "I will."

Carla's statement's locutionary behavior is that she requires Clark's assistance. The illocutionary acts is that she has given up running away and wants to return to Clark. And she requests that Clark come and get her. The perlocutionary act of it is Clark's offering to pick her up and the improvement in their relationship. Carla's weakness and lack of independence are reflected in her attachment to Clark. Clark's statement's locutionary act is that he will pick Carla up. And he agrees to Carla's request as an illocutionary act. The perlocutionary act is the improvement of their relationship. It is clear that despite Clark's lack of respect for Carla, he is unable to abandon her in any way. To put it another way, he is possessive of Carla, as evidenced by his later talk with Sylvia. Moreover, his discussion prepares him for his next journey to return Sylvia's garments.

Carla surrenders her runaway here and begs Clark to accept her with a low-key begging gesture. It's a metaphor for her re-entry into her predicament. We can see from the context that she gives up her runaway here because she has no self-independent thoughts and is extremely attached to Clark. During her runaway, she keeps trying to tell Clark what she's thinking, and she eventually feels she can't live without him.

### 3.2. Analysis of the Dialogue between Carla and Sylvia

Sylvia's identity in the story is that of a college professor, and she is the only one in this article who has feminist beliefs in the front part of book. She understands Carla's anguish and assists her in fleeing. Carla owes her a debt of gratitude. The following scene depicts Sylvia assisting Carla in her attempt to flee. Carla is the person "she" is referring to.

"Drinking to a true friend," she said, uncomfortably. "I probably shouldn't even take a sip, but I will." "Me too," said Sylvia with a pretense of gaiety.

Carla's locutionary act in this case was that she wanted to drink to a true friend. She expresses her gratitude to Sylvia whom she considers a dear friend, which is the illocutionary act. However, the paragraph before the segment says that Carla's hands shake when she realizes

she can leave, which reflects both exhilaration and dread of her. So she's a little uneasy here, and the another inference of this line could be that she's using booze to mask her inner worries. Sylvia's approving of her and the improvement of their connection are the perlocutionary act. Sylvia's locutionary act is "I drink, too." and "I'm a close buddy of yours." The illocutionary act, however, is that she is feigning happiness while truly being concerned, as we can see from the expression "with a pretense of gaiety." But she uses the utterance to soothe Carla.

Carla is the embodiment of simplicity and kindness in this piece, and she is also a person who has spent a long time in the family life and still has some expectations and fears about the outside world. Sylvia is a female character that possesses compassion, understanding, and excellent communication abilities. Her feminist view is exemplified by her ability to report her awareness of Carla's anguish and try her best to help her flee. However, Sylvia's feminist beliefs faded as the text progressed. Finally, Clark and she form a unifying front. This part may be reflected in the substance of the following segment of an epistle. To some extent, the substance of the letters is also the content of the dialogue, which is a protracted dialogue with a time delay. Sylvia: United in their humanity-that is the only way I can describe it. We parted almost as friends.

Sylvia's locutionary act indicates that she and Clark are now on the same team, as friends. The illocutionary act shows that she has changed her mind from her former idea that Carla needed to be free in order to be happy, to the idea that Carla may have genuine sentiments and satisfaction in her marriage. Carla burns the letter after she saw it and is dissatisfied with it, which is the perlocutionary act. The full failure of Carla's runaway is symbolized by Sylvia's shift in attitude. As the text's only feminist loses belief, no one is able to help Carla escape any longer. It reiterates the essay's central issue, namely, the predicament of women in patriarchal societies, and the need for women to achieve economic and intellectual independence in order to achieve freedom and happiness.

### 3.3. Analysis of the Dialogue between Clark and Sylvia

Sylvia: "She is a human being," and "Besides being your wife."

Clark: "My goodness, is that so? My wife is a human being? Really? Thank you for the information. But don't try getting smart with me."

Sylvia's locutionary act is that she wants to remind Clark that Carla is still a person. The illocutionary act is an accusation of Carla's behavior in restricting Carla and a fight for the unfair treatment of Carla. It reveals that the reason she helped Carla leave was because Carla did not receive the respect and love that that everyone deserves. Clark becomes outraged, which is the perlocutionary act. This demonstrates Sylvia's strong feminist thinking at this point, which corresponds to her identity of a knowledgeable college professor. Carla's pain is well understood by her, and she feels deeply for her. Clark's locutionary act indicates that he does not consider Carla to be a person, and that he does not want Sylvia to be in charge of his family's affairs. The illocutionary act is that he feels that Carla is his property and that he does not need to respect her. He also hates Sylvia's meddling in Carla's life and does not want Carla to go. Clark's man-centeredness, impatience, and irritation are shown in this. He is a self-serving and selfish individual. This also lays the stage for him to break one of Carla's spiritual pillar, the goat Flora. He uses it to warn Carla not to run away again.

Later, the young goat Flora appears, and the two's bond improves. The following exchange occurs.

"So good night," she said. "Good night, Flora."

He raised a hand and turned away. "Good night."

The locutionary act of both of them is to wish each other good night, and the illocutionary act is a greeting and a farewell. The perlocutionary act is the softening of the two's relationship. The

change in their relationship means that they are now in agreement with each other. Sylvia's position begins to align with Clark's: Carla may be happy despite being suppressed. Carla has lost the only person who understood her anguish and stood by her in her rebellion, her quest for happiness and independence, and her defense of her dignity and rights. She's back to being suppressed. Without support, without her own mental and financial independence, Carla will always be in a state of pain and without a place to detach. This once again confirms the plight of women that Monroe wants to express.

#### 4. Conclusion

The speech act theory of linguistics is very helpful for analyzing literary works. *Runaway* is one of Alice Munro's major works. The heroine, Carla, feels repressed in her marriage and fights against it by escaping, but eventually fails and returns to her repressed married life due to her emotional and financial dependence on her husband Clark.

This paper uses three perspectives of speech act theory to analyze the dialogues of the main characters in the novel in order to better demonstrate the characters and reveal the intent of the text, namely, showing that women encounter difficulties in a patriarchal society and their unequal status with men in marriage, which makes them oppressed and unfortunate but unable to change their lives. May this paper make a contribution to the practical application of speech act theory in literary analysis.

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