

Language and Behavior: A Philosophy of Linguistic Habits in Everyday Life

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Abstract

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a performative force that shapes patterns of thought, behavior, and social interaction in everyday life. This study aims to examine how habitual language use influences actions, emotional responses, social relations, and identity through a philosophy of language perspective, particularly speech act theory (Austin and Searle), pragmatics, and linguistic constructivism. This research employs a qualitative design using philosophical discourse analysis. Data were collected from everyday spoken and digital interactions through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of recurring linguistic expressions. Data validity was ensured through triangulation across sources and contexts. The findings indicate that repeated linguistic patterns possess performative power that actively constructs behavioral tendencies, emotional orientations, social norms, and self-identity. Language does not merely reflect reality but participates in shaping and directing it. These findings highlight the urgency of ethical awareness in everyday language use, especially in digital communication, to foster more reflective, respectful, and constructive social interactions.

Keywords: *Philosophy of Language; Linguistic Habits; Speech Acts; Everyday Discourse*

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1. Introduction

Language is often perceived merely as a tool for conveying information. However, in everyday social life, language plays a much deeper role in shaping how individuals think, feel, and act. Daily interactions whether occurring in families, educational settings, workplaces, or digital environments are saturated with habitual expressions that gradually influence behavior and social relations (Bakti et al., 2021). From the perspective of the philosophy of language, language is not only descriptive but performative. Austin and Searle argue that utterances function as actions that generate effects beyond their propositional content. Through speech acts, language can create commitments, express attitudes, establish social norms, and influence behavior (Afrianti, 2021). When such utterances are repeated in everyday life, they solidify into linguistic habits that subtly but powerfully shape human conduct.

The performative dimension of language demonstrates that communication is inseparable from social action. According to speech act theory, every utterance carries illocutionary force and may produce perlocutionary effects that influence listeners' responses, emotions, and future behavior. Expressions such as promises, apologies, compliments, criticism, or commands do not merely transfer information but actively construct interpersonal relationships and social expectations. Austin's theory emphasizes that language has the power to "do things,"

meaning that speaking itself constitutes a form of action rather than a neutral representation of reality. Repeated exposure to certain linguistic patterns eventually contributes to the normalization of particular attitudes and behavioral tendencies within society

Furthermore, the relationship between language and human behavior can also be understood through linguistic constructivism, which views social reality as continuously produced through communicative practices. Individuals develop their identities, beliefs, and emotional orientations through recurring patterns of discourse encountered in everyday interaction. Language influences not only how people communicate with others but also how they interpret themselves and the world around them. The cyclical interaction between language, thought, and social behavior reveals that communication practices shape collective understanding and social meaning over time. Consequently, repeated linguistic habits may reinforce cooperation, empathy, solidarity, or, conversely, hostility and exclusion depending on the communicative environment in which they emerge

In contemporary society, the influence of language is intensified by digital communication. Social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online discussion forums enable language to circulate rapidly across geographical and cultural boundaries. The speed and accessibility of digital communication amplify the performative effects of language because expressions shared online can immediately influence public opinion, emotional reactions, and collective behavior. The habitual use of sarcastic, aggressive, or dismissive language in online spaces often contributes to the normalization of cyber hostility and toxic interaction patterns. Conversely, supportive and empathetic communication may strengthen solidarity and emotional support among users. Digital communication therefore functions not merely as technological mediation but as an active environment in which linguistic habits shape social realities and behavioral norms

Language also plays a crucial role in ethical formation and character development. Everyday linguistic choices such as politeness, respect, empathy, and acknowledgment significantly influence the quality of social interaction. Ethical language use encourages constructive communication, mutual understanding, and social harmony, while harmful linguistic habits may generate symbolic violence, marginalization, and emotional distress. Studies on language ethics emphasize that communicative behavior directly affects cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of human life. Habitual exposure to respectful and empathetic discourse can foster positive social character, whereas repeated verbal aggression may normalize intolerance and destructive interaction patterns within communities

Moreover, the ethical implications of language become increasingly significant in multicultural and digitally connected societies where communication occurs across diverse social backgrounds. Words carry ideological, emotional, and cultural meanings that may affect individuals differently depending on context and interpretation. Because language has the ability to shape perceptions and social realities, speakers possess ethical responsibility for the consequences of their utterances. Everyday communication therefore cannot be considered ethically neutral. Simple expressions such as labeling, stereotyping, sarcasm, or verbal dismissal may gradually reinforce discrimination and social exclusion when repeatedly normalized within public discourse. This demonstrates that ordinary language practices deserve critical philosophical reflection because they contribute to the construction of social behavior and moral culture.

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit philosophical analysis of ordinary, everyday linguistic habits by integrating speech act theory, pragmatics, and linguistic constructivism within concrete spoken and digital contexts. Unlike studies that focus primarily on formal or institutional discourse, this research foregrounds habitual, mundane expressions as performative forces that shape behavior, identity, and ethical interaction in daily life. By positioning everyday language as a site of philosophical reflection, this study offers a

distinctive contribution to philosophy of language studies grounded in lived experience. This study aims to analyze how everyday linguistic habits function as performative mechanisms that shape thought patterns, emotional responses, social relations, and identity, while emphasizing the ethical responsibility inherent in language use.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a philosophical discourse analysis approach to explore the relationship between language, meaning, intention, and behavior in everyday contexts. This approach was selected because the study emphasizes interpretation and contextual understanding of habitual linguistic practices rather than numerical measurement. The data were obtained from everyday spoken and digital interactions involving adult informants aged 20–45 years in informal social settings, including family environments, educational contexts, workplaces, and digital communication spaces such as messaging applications and social media platforms. These contexts were chosen because they represent environments where linguistic habits naturally emerge and are continuously reproduced through daily interaction. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period to ensure the recurrence and stability of linguistic patterns. The techniques used included non-participant observation of spoken and digital interactions, semi-structured interviews focusing on communicative intentions and habitual language use, and documentation of recurring utterances, expressions, and communication patterns observed in both offline and online contexts.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing observational findings, interview responses, and documented linguistic expressions to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the interpretation. Recurring linguistic patterns identified across different contexts and informants were treated as indicators of stable communicative habits rather than situational expressions. The data were analyzed using theoretical frameworks from the philosophy of language, particularly speech act theory, pragmatics, and linguistic constructivism. Speech act theory was applied to examine how utterances function performatively in producing social and emotional effects, while pragmatics was used to interpret contextual meaning, communicative intention, and implied messages within interaction. Linguistic constructivism was employed to analyze how repeated language practices contribute to the construction of identity, social relations, and behavioral norms. Through this analytical framework, the study aims to understand how everyday linguistic habits shape thought patterns, emotional responses, interpersonal behavior, and ethical interaction in both spoken and digital communication contexts.

3. Findings and Discussion

Language Habits as Performative Forces in Shaping Behavior

The analysis reveals that habitual language use significantly influences cognitive patterns, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies. Repeated positive expressions tend to foster optimism, resilience, and cooperative behavior, while habitual negative expressions contribute to pessimism, defensiveness, and withdrawal. Language therefore operates not only as a communicative instrument but also as a performative force that gradually shapes an individual's perception of self, emotional orientation, and social interaction. Through continuous repetition, certain expressions become internalized cognitive frameworks that influence how individuals interpret experiences and respond behaviorally to various social situations. Speech act theory explains this phenomenon by arguing that utterances are forms of

action capable of producing psychological and social consequences rather than merely conveying information (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Consequently, language habits function as behavioral mechanisms that continuously construct patterns of thought and interaction.

For example, repeated utterances such as *"I can improve gradually," "I will continue learning,"* or *"Every mistake is part of progress"* function as assertive speech acts that construct positive self-perceptions. Their perlocutionary effects encourage persistence, emotional resilience, and willingness to face challenges. Over time, these expressions contribute to stronger self-efficacy beliefs because individuals repeatedly reinforce perceptions of capability and adaptability through language. Bandura (1997) emphasizes that self-efficacy significantly influences motivation, persistence, and behavioral performance. Research in educational contexts also demonstrates that positive verbal reinforcement contributes to increased learner confidence and participation because supportive language shapes constructive cognitive interpretations of learning experiences (Pramerta, 2021). In this sense, language actively participates in developing behavioral dispositions that influence academic engagement and emotional regulation.

Positive language habits additionally contribute to the formation of healthy interpersonal relationships and collaborative social environments. Expressions such as *"Thank you for your effort," "I appreciate your opinion,"* or *"We can solve this together"* function pragmatically as relational acts that strengthen trust, empathy, and cooperation. Their influence extends beyond immediate interaction because repeated supportive communication gradually establishes social norms characterized by respect and mutual understanding. In organizational and educational settings, communicative environments dominated by constructive language have been associated with stronger engagement, emotional well-being, and collaborative behavior. Therefore, language habits do not merely reflect social relationships but actively construct interactional cultures and collective behavioral orientations.

Conversely, habitual negative expressions such as *"I always fail," "I am incapable,"* or *"Nobody understands me"* performatively reinforce limiting self-concepts and defensive emotional patterns. Through repetition, such utterances become internalized assumptions that shape how individuals perceive challenges, relationships, and personal abilities. Negative language habits contribute to maladaptive cognitive frameworks because they continuously direct attention toward inadequacy, rejection, and pessimism. Research in psychology indicates that repetitive negative self-talk is closely associated with anxiety, reduced motivation, and avoidance behavior because language gradually influences emotional interpretation and behavioral expectation (Kross et al., 2014). Consequently, negative utterances not only describe emotional states but actively sustain and intensify them through continuous verbal reinforcement.

The performative effects of language are also highly visible within digital communication environments. Expressions such as *"You always exaggerate," "Nobody cares about your opinion,"* or *"People like you are the problem"* often function as indirect accusations that normalize dismissive and hostile interaction patterns. Pragmatically, these utterances carry meanings beyond their literal structure because they imply emotional judgment and social distancing. In online communication, repetitive hostile language contributes to toxic interactional cultures, emotional polarization, and defensive social behavior. Studies on digital discourse demonstrate that repeated exposure to aggressive communicative practices significantly affects collective attitudes and emotional responses within online communities (Graham & Hardaker, 2017). Therefore, digital language habits strongly influence contemporary social behavior because online interaction continuously reproduces communicative norms through repetition and visibility.

Furthermore, language habits influence emotional regulation and psychological adaptation through internal dialogue or inner speech. Individuals continuously use language

internally to interpret experiences, evaluate situations, and regulate emotions. Positive inner speech generally supports resilience and constructive coping mechanisms, while repetitive negative inner speech intensifies stress and emotional instability. Vygotsky (1986) explains that inner speech develops from social interaction and later functions as a cognitive tool for self-regulation and behavioral organization. This perspective demonstrates that language operates simultaneously as a social instrument and a psychological mechanism that shapes emotional and behavioral responses. Consequently, habitual language use significantly contributes to how individuals construct emotional meaning and respond to social reality.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that language does not merely describe emotions or situations but actively constructs behavioral orientations through repetition. Habitual expressions gradually shape cognitive interpretation, emotional reaction, and social interaction because language continuously reinforces particular ways of perceiving reality. Positive language habits encourage resilience, cooperation, and adaptive behavior, whereas negative language habits reinforce pessimism, defensiveness, and social withdrawal. Through performative utterances and repeated discourse patterns, language becomes a powerful mechanism for shaping both individual behavior and collective social culture.

Philosophical Explanation of Language in Shaping Social Relations and Identity

Speech act theory explains that utterances carry illocutionary and perlocutionary forces that actively shape social reality. Expressions such as “*I promise*” generate moral commitments, “*I apologize*” repairs social bonds, and “*I disagree*” establishes relational boundaries. From this perspective, speaking is fundamentally a form of social action because utterances influence obligations, expectations, and interpersonal relationships. Austin (1962) argues that performative utterances create social consequences through the act of speaking itself, while Searle (1969) further categorizes speech acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations according to their communicative functions. Consequently, language becomes constitutive of social interaction because communication simultaneously produces meaning, social obligation, and behavioral consequence.

Pragmatics further emphasizes that meaning emerges from context, intention, and social relations rather than from literal linguistic structure alone. Indirect utterances frequently perform actions beyond their explicit wording, demonstrating that communication is inseparable from situational interpretation and cultural understanding. For instance, the statement “*It is getting late*” may pragmatically function as a request to end a meeting rather than merely describing time. Similarly, expressions such as “*You might want to reconsider that decision*” may operate indirectly as criticism or warning depending on relational context. Pragmatic theory therefore highlights that speakers and listeners negotiate meaning through shared social assumptions, communicative intention, and contextual interpretation. Meaning is consequently dynamic and interactional rather than fixed within linguistic form alone.

Linguistic constructivism further clarifies that identity is formed through repeated linguistic practices and social discourse. Individuals continuously construct self-concepts through the language they use to describe themselves and others. Expressions such as “*I am independent*,” “*I am a failure*,” or “*We are united*” contribute to the gradual formation of personal and collective identity because repeated linguistic practices shape perception and social belonging. Constructivist perspectives argue that reality is interpreted through discourse and communicative interaction rather than existing as a purely objective structure independent from language (Szabó & Csépes, 2023). Therefore, identity should be understood as a dynamic social construction continuously reproduced through communication and interaction.

Language also plays a significant role in shaping collective identity and cultural belonging. Shared linguistic practices create symbolic boundaries that distinguish communities, institutions, and nations. National discourse, educational language policies, and

media communication all participate in constructing collective understandings of identity, morality, and social values. Studies on language policy demonstrate that language functions as a symbol of unity and cultural continuity because it reflects shared historical experience and collective ideology (Imran & Natsir, 2024). Through repeated discourse, communities establish norms of inclusion and exclusion while simultaneously reinforcing cultural traditions and social expectations. Consequently, language becomes central to the formation of social solidarity and collective consciousness.

Moreover, philosophical perspectives influenced by Michel Foucault emphasize that language is closely related to power and knowledge production. Discourse determines which ideas become socially accepted as truth and which perspectives are marginalized. Through institutional language, societies regulate behavior, establish norms, and shape perceptions of normality and deviance. Educational institutions, governments, and media organizations continuously produce discourse that influences how individuals understand authority, morality, and identity. Foucault therefore views language not simply as representation but as a mechanism of social regulation and ideological construction. This perspective further reinforces the argument that language actively constructs social reality through repeated discursive practice rather than merely describing an external world.

Additionally, sociocultural theory explains that language mediates human interaction and cognitive development because social communication gradually becomes internalized as thought. Vygotsky (1986) argues that higher mental processes originate in social interaction before becoming individual cognitive functions. Through communication, individuals learn social norms, emotional regulation, and cultural values that later shape personal identity and behavior. Language therefore functions as a mediational tool connecting social experience with psychological development. This perspective demonstrates that identity formation and social participation are inseparable from communicative processes because individuals develop self-understanding through interaction with others.

Together, these philosophical perspectives demonstrate that language is constitutive rather than merely representational. Speech act theory explains how utterances perform actions, pragmatics reveals how meaning depends on context and interaction, constructivism illustrates how discourse shapes identity, and sociocultural theory emphasizes language as a mediator of cognitive and social development. Consequently, language should not be understood simply as a passive medium for expressing thought. Instead, language actively constructs perception, regulates social relationships, shapes identity, and influences behavioral orientation through continuous communicative practice.

4. Conclusion and suggestion

Conclusion

This study concludes that language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a performative force that shapes human behavior, emotional responses, social interaction, and identity formation. Everyday linguistic practices gradually influence how individuals think, perceive reality, and relate to others. Positive language use encourages empathy, constructive behavior, and healthy social relationships, while negative language may reinforce harmful emotional patterns and destructive social behavior. In contemporary society, particularly within digital environments, language has become increasingly influential because words and expressions can spread rapidly and shape collective attitudes, emotions, and public discourse. This finding supports the view that language actively participates in constructing social reality rather than merely reflecting it.

Furthermore, philosophical theories such as speech act theory, pragmatics, and linguistic constructivism provide a strong explanation for understanding the transformative power of language. Speech act theory explains that language performs actions through utterances, while pragmatics emphasizes the importance of context, intention, and social relations in shaping meaning (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Meanwhile, linguistic constructivism highlights how language contributes to the formation of knowledge, identity, and social understanding (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The study therefore emphasizes the importance of reflective and ethical language awareness in everyday communication because language carries social, emotional, and cultural consequences that influence both individual consciousness and collective human experience.

Suggestions

Future researchers are encouraged to further explore the performative power of language within specific speech communities such as families, educational institutions, workplaces, and digital communities. Studies may focus on how repeated linguistic practices influence emotional development, behavior, and identity formation across different social contexts. Researchers are also recommended to examine linguistic resistance, namely how reflective, ethical, and empathetic language can be used to challenge harmful communication patterns and promote healthier social interaction. Interdisciplinary approaches involving linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and media studies may provide deeper understanding regarding the relationship between language and human behavior.

For educators and society, this study highlights the importance of developing ethical and reflective communication practices in both offline and online environments. Educational institutions are encouraged to integrate pragmatic awareness, speech act understanding, and ethical language use into language learning activities to help students recognize the impact of their words on emotions, behavior, and social relationships. In addition, digital media users should become more mindful, empathetic, and responsible in their communication practices because language significantly influences public discourse and interpersonal interaction. By promoting respectful and constructive language use, society may contribute to creating healthier, more compassionate, and socially responsible communication environments.

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