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Keywords: Speech Act, Performatives, Illocutionary Acts, , Identity, Motherhood

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A Speech Act Analysis of Tillie Olsen's I Stand Here Ironing: Exploring the Dynamics of Emotions and Identity through Language



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Abstract

This research employs speech act theory to analyze Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* (1961), with a focus on how the narrator's speech acts convey the emotional and psychological dynamics of motherhood. It investigates assertive, directive, and expressive acts to unveil the narrator's struggles with guilt, self-blame and endless maternal love, as well as how socio-economic factors constrain and limit them. By examining illocutionary and perlocutionary forces, the research reveals how language constructs the narrator's identity and mother-daughter relationship using performatives. Indirect speech acts hold primary position by expressing unspoken, hidden emotions and societal pressures influencing the mother's self-identity. The study provides a sophisticated understanding of linguistic expressions of emotions through this analysis. The research concludes by focusing on Olsen's narrative and how it uses speech to create meaning, with a focus on motherhood, sacrifice, and responsibility.

Keywords: *Speech Act, Performatives, Illocutionary Acts, , Identity, Motherhood*

Introduction

I Stand Here Ironing (1961) by Tillie Olsen is a contemplation on motherhood, guilt and the interplay between personal and cultural expectations. It is a novel written in the voice of a mother's introspection, about the bond between her and her daughter, Emily, who grew up in difficult conditions (poor, resource-poor). As she recounts previous events, her speech becomes an internal monologue, in which she exhibits complex feelings such as guilt, anger, love and self-criticism. It is a very personal story but also a story of social responsibility, the pressures on women, challenges of fitting into roles and, especially, the "ideal" mother. Narrative is a prolonged present-day meditation that gives us an opportunity to examine how the protagonist's speech acts show her emotional state, identity and mother-daughter relationships. In *I Stand Here Ironing*, speech is more than an element of the narrative, it is central to the protagonist's reckoning with the past, and to the articulation of her psychological turmoil. This study applies speech act theory, as articulated by J.L. Austin (1962) and elaborated by John Searle (1969) to examine the protagonist's speech acts. Speech act theory focuses on how language is used not only to describe things but to do things, such as to assert, question, command or express feelings. It states that language is not only descriptive but also performative, as speakers complete actions through speech. In this narrative, the mother's monologue is a continuous display of psychological and emotional expressions, which all affect her relationship with Emily, and reveal the nuances of her motherhood.

This article aims to explore how the narrator's speech acts create meaning in the narrative, particularly through speech's performative aspects. This article will examine the mother's speech in terms of the



illocutionary acts, or intentions, of her statements to explain her self-conflicts, sense of guilt and attempts to resolve her sense of maternal failure. Moreover, the article will discuss the perlocutionary consequences of these acts: the effect of the narrator's language on an audience and how these consequences add to the emotional and thematic resonance of the story. The study will focus on the indirect speech acts in the narrative that subtly convey the narrator's emotions and desires, thus adding to the intricacy of her relationship with her daughter. In addition, the article examines how Olsen's narrative structure (with a meditative, non-chronological structure) is aligned with the speech act theory. The mother's verbal contemplations take place in the present while meditating on past events, thus allowing an analysis of the interactions between her words and memories, with the hermeneutic process of self-evaluation. This structure enhances the emotional impact of the narrative, given the mother's discourse not only recounts the past, but is also a process of reflection, making her speech an act of confession and catharsis. This research seeks to explore the various speech acts in the narrative and the way these actions converge to affect the protagonist's self-identity and relationship with her daughter. Exploring the protagonist's discourse highlights the narrative's themes namely, the conflict between motherhood and self-sacrifice, the guilt of the absence of support, and the role of women in society that often neglects their individuality. The objective of this research is to gain a better insight into the role of language as a performative tool in the emotional and thematic dimensions of Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing*.

Research Questions

1. How does the speech act of the narrator in *I Stand Here Ironing* (1961) reflect her internal struggle with her internal issues of motherhood, guilt and responsibility?
2. In what way do the speaker's indirect speech actions reveal the narrator's inner turmoil and the complexities of her motherhood?
3. How do the indirect speech acts in the narrative convey the implicit social and emotional factors which influence the narrator's parenting experience, especially with regard to social class and gender roles?

Literature Review

Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* (1961) has been hailed as a beautiful story of motherhood, guilt and identity. In the voice of a mother, reflecting on her difficult life, Olsen delves deeply into the issues of emotional hardship, social norms and motherhood. An examination of the performative nature of language in the construction of the narrator's personal history and emotional experience has been less examined than the numerous literary analyses of the text. This literary analysis offers a foundation for understanding the emotional and psychological intricacies of Olsen's story by drawing on relevant research in speech act theory and its use in literature. J.L. Austin's seminal study of speech act theory in 1962 lays the foundation for considering how language is used to perform actions and transmit meaning. Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words* made a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and highlighted the powerful consequences of speech on both the speaker and the hearer. Over the last few years, speech act theory has become more popular in the study of literature as scholars have recognised how the performative nature of language affects character formation and thematic meaning (Warner, 2023). By examining how characters "do things" with their words, it is possible for literary scholars to show the emotional and psychological underpinning of a story. In *I Stand Here Ironing*, the protagonist's monologue is a constant stream of speech acts that convey guilt, regret and psychological trauma. As a result, it makes an excellent fit for a speech act analysis. Butler (2021) claims language in literature can be used as a performative tool that contributes to the creation of social and individual subjectivities. This suggests that speech act theory can be applied to analyse the way language constitutes subjectivity and relationships, especially in terms of gender and power. Using the concepts of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, the performative nature of the mother's speech in Olsen's story may be explored to understand how she defines her role as a mother, and how she communicates her

struggles to the reader. Parenting has been a key concern in feminist literary analysis, and *I Stand Here Ironing* has been analysed from a feminist standpoint to explore the limits and expectations placed on women by patriarchy. Many academics, such as Rich (2021), have emphasised the socially constructed and contradictory nature of women's motherhood. Olsen's mother's inner conflict in her essay is emblematic of the tensions between being a good mother and socioeconomic constraints. The mother's speech is full of expressions of guilt, self-blaming and reconciliation and are crucial to her emotional well-being. Alongside revealing these internal struggles, the speech acts in her monologue also highlight other socioeconomic factors. This reinforces the feminist argument that women's obligations as mothers are often dictated by social norms that they internalise and verbalise (Showalter, 1985).

The feminist analysis of the motherhood role as identity and oppression is consistent with the mother's guilty and self-blaming statements, which are delivered through expressive and aggressive speech acts. Olsen's protagonist speaks as a way of expressing her internal turmoil and self-justification, thinking about her shortcomings as a mother. Women's identities are often shaped by conflicting demands on them, which lead to a disintegrated sense of identity, argue Olkowski and Weiss (2006). This fragmentation is evident in the protagonist's speech, as she both attempts to forgive herself and makes statements that reflect regret. The narrative presents the narrator as a failed mother, and as a character who is trying to make sense of her life and actions by constructing her identity through speech acts. Indirect speaking acts, as first suggested by Searle in 1969, are integral to *I Stand Here Ironing*. Indirect speech acts are speech acts that do not explicitly communicate the speaker's intentions through the words that are spoken. Instead, it is the listener's responsibility to infer the speaker's emotional or psychological state, based on context or speech pattern. This aspect of speech act theory is particularly useful to interpret the multiple meanings of Olsen's novel. The narrator frequently uses indirect speech acts, such as when she expresses regret or guilt, but not through pleading for forgiveness. These speech acts enrich the story's emotional dimension and allow the reader to perceive the emotional distress that the narrator struggles to convey. Scholars have examined the literary use of indirect speaking acts to emphasise the psychological difficulties and emotional turmoil of characters (Searle, 1975; Clark, 1996). In *I Stand Here Ironing*, the narrator surreptitiously elicits the emotional tensions by employing indirect speaking acts that are often laced with regret and yearning. For example, the mother's thoughts on how she failed Emily do not explicitly reveal her desire to be able to make amends; instead, her emotions are revealed through the tone of her speech. These "hidden activities" enhance the emotional effect of the text by facilitating reader understanding of the narrator's emotional turmoil. A number of studies that examine the performative aspect of speech in literature have examined the role of illocutionary acts in the emotional arc of *I Stand Here Ironing*. By focusing on illocutionary acts, or the intended meaning of the speaker's words, scholars can understand how language is used to express complex emotions. The novel by Olsen is deeply dependent on the mother's emotional catharsis that is triggered by her illocutionary acts ranging from guilt accusations to expressions of love. According to Austin (1962), illocutionary acts play an important role in our understanding of language as the doing of things. The mother's speech in *I Stand Here Ironing* is not merely reflective, but also has an impact on the narrator's emotional state. It's an emotional performative process that helps the narrator to deal with her feelings of inferiority and guilt. The illocutionary acts are ongoing process of emotional catharsis with the self and the daughter, as well as in the narrative of the events.

Theoretical Framework

The research is based on the theory of speech act which is a theory of language that is used to reveal the meaning of language used to inform and act. This theoretical framework is mainly from the speech act theory from J.L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) that serves as a basis for analyzing the dialogue of Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing*. The focus on the performative nature of language is especially relevant for the analysis of the mother's speech in relation to her inner emotional states and her relationship with her daughter Emily.

This allows for the exploration of the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects of the narrator's speech acts, which presents the social, emotional and psychological elements of the text. The study of language was transformed by the work of J.L. Austin, especially in his book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), in which he argued that there is a descriptive (and also a performative) dimension to utterances. Austin argues that speaking is more than conveying information; it is a variety of activities that can change the world, influence people and express intentions. Austin divided the activities of speaking into three types:

Locutionary acts: The actual speech act, including phonetic sounds, lexical sounds, words and syntax.

Illocutionary acts: The purpose of a speech, such as stating, . questioning, ordering or promising.

Perlocutionary acts: The effect of the speech on the listeners, such as convincing, surprising or amusing.

This research focuses on the illocutionary actions, which mirror the intentions of the narrator's speech-that is, demonstrating the manner in which she communicates not only information about past events but also performs emotional and psychological functions. The illocutionary effect of the narrator's speech is crucial to understanding her inner turmoil, sense of guilt, and quest to come to terms with her past actions. The perlocutionary impact of the speech actions is related to the reader's response and understanding of these utterances. For example, when the mother reflects on her capacities as a parent, her speech actions do not simply describe a failure, but also perform emotional labor, evoking pity, sorrow or even condemnation in the reader. Austin's theory enables the analysis of emotional shifts as crucial to the narrative's effect on the reader and, therefore, changing the attitude towards guilt, love and the role of a mother. In 1969, John Searle extended Austin's model by dividing illocutionary acts into five distinct categories, which correspond to different linguistic uses.

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Assertives. Statements that express facts or opinions about the world around us (e.g., sky is blue").

Directives. Speech actions that seek to motivate the listener to do something (e.g., requests, advice).

Commissives. Speech acts that commit the speaker to perform a certain action (e.g., promises, vows).

Expressives. Speech actions that convey the speaker's feelings (e.g., thank you, sorry, congratulations).

Declarations. Speech acts that bring about a change in the world by their performance (e.g., marrying a couple, quitting a job).

Within the framework of *I Stand Here Ironing* (Olsen, 1961), the speech actions of the mother are largely assertives, expressives and commands. The narrator's discussion of Emily's childhood is rife with assertives as she explains her history and evaluates her role as mother. These acts are important to the narrative structure, as they represent the mother's perspective on her actions and their consequences. The narrator employed assertives to construct a narrative of shame, guilt and regret. The mother's language is also used as an expressive speaking act, as she expresses her emotions - mainly sadness, guilt, and helplessness. Sentences like "I wish I could have been what you needed" speak to the narrator's internal struggle with her emotions and about her struggle with her sense of self as mother. These expressive acts of speaking play an important role in the emotional charge of the narrative. There are moments in the narrative where the narrator implicitly appeals to the reader's understanding or sympathy, or even that of the imagined daughter. The mother's request for forgiveness or reconciliation is an example of one of these implicit appeals for understanding, which are directive speech acts. The narrator solicits understanding from the reader via these indirect directives, albeit not expressly forgiveness. The typology suggested by Searle makes the ends of the narrator's speech more clearly understandable and highlights the performative aspects of various speech acts in the expression of the emotion of the hero and the theme of guilt and parental responsibility within the story. An important component of this analytic framework is the idea of indirect speech actions, where the speaker's intended action is not explicitly

expressed in her speech. In "I Stand Here Ironing," the narrator doesn't always explicitly say that she is feeling regret or a desire for understanding; more often, she may not say it explicitly, but it is there nonetheless in her speech. For instance, at the end of the epigram, the narrator thinks about how little she has been able to do for Emily, and her words suggest that she is seeking understanding or sympathy, but fails to make an explicit request. Paul Grice's (1975) theory of implicature, which builds on Austin's, explains the workings of indirect speech actions here. According to Grice, speakers rely on shared conversational implicatures (social and cultural awareness) to convey meaning indirectly. The narrator's oblique speech actions allow the reader to infer deep emotional truths about her relationship with Emily, without the need for formal verbalisation. The mother's indirect speech actions also contribute to the non-sequentiality of the novel's structure, incorporating fragmented time, with her mind drifting through past and present contemplations. Such a choice allows for the progressive evolution of speech actions, allowing the reader to piece together the protagonist's emotional and psychological states through her speech. As a result, indirect speech actions align with the fractured nature of memories and thought, of mother-daughter dynamics.

A key tenet of speech act theory is that speech actions play a critical role in identity formation. Butler (1997) claims that language embodies the identity it refers to, an idea that is relevant to the analysis of literature, because characters' identities are constituted and defined through language. In "I Stand Here Ironing", the mother's identity is informed by her discourse. Each statement of guilt, regret, and love defines her as a mother and reflects the social and personal pressures that define her role. For instance, when the mother reflects on her failures, her speech not only reflects her feelings of failure but constitutes the "failed" mother. The performative quality of language accentuates the social and emotional constraints that mothers like her face the constraints they internalize and display through language. In addition, performative speech (Butler, 1993) suggests language not only communicates but also creates. The narrator speaks her story, creating herself through speech acts that betray her complex emotions of motherhood, guilt and love. In conclusion, this research uses the combined approach of J.L. Utilize Austin's theory of speech acts and John Searle's list of illocutionary acts to explore speech acts in I Stand Here Ironing. This research intends to explore language use in Olsen's work as performative rather than descriptive, by emphasizing compelling, expressive, and directive speech acts, along with indirect speech acts that mold the psychological and emotional identities of the narrator. The idea of performative identity draws attention to the narrator's speech acts that continually create her as a mother, exemplifying the tensions between individual and societal expectations. This conceptual model provides a comprehensive perspective for interpreting the intricate themes of guilt, identity, and women's roles within the story.

The Narrator's Speech Act: Context and Function

Tillie Olsen's I Stand Here Ironing is an introspective monologue by the narrator, who is a mother considering her decisions regarding the upbringing of her daughter, Emily. The narrator reflects on the challenges faced and her mother guilt in raising Emily, with her speech actions playing a critical role in expressing her dilemmas and self-evaluations. The use of language, particularly speech actions, allows the narrator to explore her maternal role and reveals the emotional and social complexities of her circumstances. The speech actions in the narrative can be analysed to understand their impact upon the narrator's identity and to communicate themes of mother guilt, regret and the impact of socio-economic circumstances on family life. We can employ speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) to divide the narrator's speech into three distinct categories: assertives, directives and expressives. All types of speech acts are crucial to the expression of the narrator's mental and emotional complexity, but also reflect the social context of motherhood and the complexities of her relationship with Emily.

Assertive Speech Acts: Speech of Guilt and Reflection

The narrator mostly uses assertive speech acts to discuss previous events and evaluate her role in Emily's life. Assertives (Searle, 1969) are speech actions used to represent the world or communicate the speaker's beliefs about a particular situation. These acts play an important role in the narrator's reflection and often evoke regret and guilt, demonstrating her ongoing evaluation of her actions and their impact on Emily. In this way, the narrator's assertives serve to create a narrative of self-reflection and reproach, expressing her feelings about her failures as a mother.

The following is an example of an aggressive speech act:

"I stand here ironing, and what you asked me moves tormentedly in my mind. I would never have known you were so vulnerable had I not been the one to bring you into this world." (Olsen, 1961)

This is a powerful declaration of the narrator's guilt and shame. The narrator acknowledges her role in Emily's emotional and psychological development, and that she lacked awareness of Emily's emotional vulnerability due to her failure to provide sufficient support and care. This phrase has an illocutionary remit of repentance, given the narrator's recognition of the pain of her past neglects. The perlocutionary effect on the reader is significant. This sentence is empathetic, engaging the reader with the narrator's emotional pain and the rigours of parenting. By explicitly stating her guilt, the narrator brings to the fore the emotional complexities of motherhood, particularly the implied and unacknowledged emotional burdens of responsibility that mothers carry. The reader may sympathise with the narrator, as her utterances reveal a conflicted sense of self and an appreciation of the complexities of mother-daughter relations and the challenges of raising a child in less-than-ideal circumstances (Lavin, 2002). The performative speaking act is not only descriptive but transformative, as it shapes the reader's perception of the mother's personality and state of mind. The shame and guilt displayed by the narrator in her aggressive statements exemplify her ongoing self-evaluation, an essential element of narrative structure.

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Directive Speech Acts: Appeals for Comprehension

The narrator uses directed speech actions to express his thoughts more than he does with assertive statements although these speech patterns occur less frequently. Searle (1969) describes directions as speech actions which exist to make listeners execute specific tasks through their use of asking or demanding or requesting. The narrator of "I Stand Here Ironing" uses indirect commands to achieve understanding and empathy and forgiveness while he fails to make these requests known through direct questions or commands.

The following statement provides a demonstration of this concept:

"Please, understand that there was no time. You were the one who came into this world, and I could not control the circumstances." (Olsen, 1961)

The narrator does not directly address Emily but appears to speak to an imaginary audience who might be either the reader or herself. The storyteller requests comprehension of his story through an implied request for readers to understand the story he tells. She makes a request for empathy through her statement because she wants listeners and readers to know her actions resulted from life pressures which included both poverty and time limitations. The narrator wants the audience to feel compassion for her situation because she wants them to understand her situation. The term "understand" refers to narrator longing for forgiveness but also a profound acknowledgment of her emotional and practical constraints. The perlocutionary impact may involve acknowledging the intricacies of parental responsibility, which includes the capacity to handle external pressures and the emotional strain that these responsibilities create for mothers.

The narrator uses directive speech to express her need for emotional support and better comprehension of her feelings because motherhood requires emotional investment that she cannot share with others. The

research shows that mothers experience emotional distress while raising children yet their efforts remain unrecognized and unassisted.

Expressive Speech Acts: Recognizing Emotions

The narrator in the story express her emotional state through forceful speech and directive speech because these two types of speech reveal her inner feelings. Expressives are speaking acts that convey the speaker's emotional condition or response to a circumstance. The group includes all three basic activities of apologizing and congratulating and expressing feelings of regret and sadness and happiness. The narrator of *I Stand Here Ironing* uses expressive speech to show her deep emotional pain and her feelings of frustration and sorrow and self-blame. The narrative contains its most powerful emotional statement through this particular phrase.

"I wish I could have been what you needed, but I was not that woman." (Olsen, [1961](#))

The statement expresses the narrator's feelings of inadequacy and her emotional distress about her role as a mother. The statement expresses two emotions through its illocutionary power which shows the speaker's regret and self-blame. The narrator conceals her failure to satisfy her daughter's emotional and physical needs which Emily required. The narrator's emotional distress declaration through which she expresses her dissatisfaction with her motherhood role functions as a vital element. The storyteller's words about his experiences with life lead the reader to feel either sadness or sympathy for him. The line "I was not that woman" reveals the narrator's intense self-disappointment, and her acknowledgment of failure may elicit sympathy from the reader regarding the emotional burden of parenting. The reader develops a sense of shared human experience through observing how mothers face their universal challenges because people expect them to be perfect while they make difficult choices between their limitations. The expressive speech acts enable readers to connect with the narrator's emotional state, which expresses her mental condition and her complex relationship with motherhood (Friedman, [1999](#)). These poignant statements are important to the narrative's emotional resonance and its thematic investigation of guilt, sacrifice, and identity. In her confession, the narrator seeks to comprehend her shortcomings and establish a feeling of self-awareness.

The Function of Speech Acts in Defining the Mother-Daughter Relationship

The narrative of *I Stand Here Ironing* uses spoken actions to create an elaborate connection which shows multiple dimensions between the narrator and her daughter Emily. Through her assertive speech the mother reveals her emotional connection to Emily which contains elements of love guilt regret and mixed feelings. The narrator shows her maternal shortcomings while she accepts that external factors such as poverty and limited time and cultural standards affected her decisions and conduct. The narrator's inner fight between her two roles as mother and her role as mother shows through her use of violent and emotional speaking methods. Her indirect speech act statements reveal her true feelings while she keeps her mother-daughter relationship secret because her spoken words make her hidden feelings apparent. The implicit statements about her internal battle lead readers to understand her emotional complexity which exists between her and Emily.

Indirect Speech Acts: Implicit Communication

The use of indirect speech occurs when speakers need to express their true intentions through spoken words which fail to convey their actual message. Grice's ([1975](#)) theory of implicature states that speakers use shared knowledge together with contextual information and established conversational patterns to convey their messages through hidden meanings. The narrator in *I Stand Here Ironing* uses indirect speech to express deep emotional feelings which she maintains as unspoken despite their presence in her spoken words and their accompanying tone. The narrator achieves her first indirect speech act when she reflects on her limited ability to provide care for Emily.

"I wish I could have given you more, but we were poor, and there was always too much to do." (Olsen, 1961)

This oblique speaking act does not overtly express guilt or remorse, yet the message is evident. The narrator concedes that her financial circumstances and the burdens of everyday life hindered her ability to offer Emily the affection and attention she required. The speaker expresses his regret about his failure to meet Emily's needs because he used the wrong methods to achieve his goals. The perlocutionary effect on the reader elicits empathy, as it encourages recognition of the social and economic constraints that limited the narrator's capacity to fulfill the role of an ideal mother. The narrator used indirect speech to show how personal and social forces shape maternal behavior which explains that she could not take care of Emily because of external pressures which were mostly out of her control. The narrator's speech shows how structural factors including poverty and gender expectations with inadequate assistance systems lead mothers to make their choices which later result in emotional distress. This corresponds with Siegworth's (2003) examination of how women's voices in literature frequently illuminate both the emotional and societal aspects of their problems, as maternal figures endeavor to reconcile love and responsibility among formidable hurdles.

The narrator uses indirect speech acts throughout the story when she shows how her daughter behaved while she believes she failed to teach Emily properly. The narrator asserts:

"I did not know how to love you in the right way, but I was always there. There was no one else." (Olsen, 1961)

The narrator does not directly assign herself responsibility for Emily's failure through this statement. She expresses her feelings of incompetence through the statement which she uses to show her inability to meet Emily's emotional needs through the complete statement. The narrator shows regret and self-doubt through the emotional intensity of this sentence which shows she could not provide Emily with the emotional support he needed at all times. The narrator demonstrates her ongoing commitment through the term "always" which indicates she lacks confidence about whether her dedication meets appropriate standards. The reader experiences uncertainty because of the indirect speech act which creates perlocutionary effects that make them feel uncertain about the narrator's ability to meet Emily's needs with her full effort. The mother-daughter relationship shows its complex nature through this ambiguity because mothers believe their love and hard work will create emotional bonds with their daughters. The statement's indirectness shows the narrator's inner conflict because she recognizes her faults but maintains that she performed at her best during tough times. The narrator uses indirect speech acts to show her thoughts about Emily's rebelliousness during her childhood and how their bond broke apart as she grew older.

"You were a wild one, and I could not make you calm. I could only hold you in my arms when you came, and pray that it would be enough." (Olsen, 1961)

The narrator presents his first description of Emily through this indirect statement which shows his powerlessness to dominate her while treating her defiance as her most visible challenge. The illocutionary power of this sentence shows the narrator's dissatisfaction with his failure to control Emily's behavior which he attempted to control but could not succeed in doing. The expression "I could only hold you" means the mother accepted her limitations because her physical presence was her only way to show love. The story creates a perlocutionary effect that makes readers experience a dual emotional response of sadness and empathy through which they understand the narrator's restrictions and the complicated feelings he must handle. The speaker uses indirect language to request emotional intimacy which shows his lack of power to control his relationship with Emily and his entire existence.

The indirect speech used in the story demonstrates how invisible forces shape the mother-daughter bond between characters. Tannen (2007) explains that people use indirect speech during conversations to show their complex emotional states while showing how power dynamics and relationship tensions and hidden emotional work show their emotional state. The narrator's indirect speaking actions in *I Stand Here Ironing* force readers

to deduce the hidden emotions and regrets and unspoken desires that she keeps to herself. The reader experiences deep emotional ties to the story which reveals its complex emotional parts while showing how the narrator struggles with her role as a mother.

The narrator uses indirect speech acts to show herself as a person who thinks about her life while feeling complex emotions because she struggles to accept her past decisions and the difficulties of being a mother. The narrator's use of indirect speech gives readers a chance to see all the different ways she feels about Emily which include her love and desire and her feelings of frustration and guilt. The narrator's inner emotional world exists in conflict with the social economic restrictions and gender-based expectations that define her role as a parent in society.

Conclusion

The narrator uses speech actions in Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* to express her emotions while she attempts to understand her identity as a mother. The narrator establishes three main storytelling elements through his use of assertives and expressives and commands which create a complex narrative that shows his feelings of regret and self-doubt and his process of self-discovery. The narrative's speech acts deliver information while they create emotional effects on readers who interpret the mother-daughter relationship and the difficulties women face in oppressive social situations. The analysis of speech acts demonstrates that Olsen uses language to convey messages which serve as a communicative tool that enables her to establish her identity and develop her relationships and share her understanding of personal and social responsibilities. The narrator's speech creates a power that enables her to generate emotions which highlight conflicts and guide readers toward new understandings of motherhood and guilt and the weight of past actions.

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