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CG and speech acts

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The mainstream truth-conditional approach to meaning:

the meaning of a sentence should be characterized in terms of its truth-conditions, that is, in terms of the state of affairs that should obtain in the world for the sentence to be true

truth – correspondence to facts

such a characterization presupposes that the relevant facts obtain out there in the world independently of their potential description

such a description may either correspond or not correspond to facts – it may be either true or false

Austin's basic insights concerning speech acts

a. *I promise to come*

certain utterances cannot at all be characterized in terms of truth/falsity

this is because they are not descriptions of states of affairs but rather performances of actions

in fact, all utterances, even those which do describe states of affairs, are performances of actions

each utterance is invested with a particular **illocutionary force**, that is, is intended as a performance of a particular speech act (**illocutionary act**)

Illocutionary acts cannot be true or false – instead they may be **happy/felicitous** or **unhappy/infelicitous**

An illocutionary act is happy/felicitous when its felicity conditions are satisfied

Meaning and illocutionary force are very different kind of entities

Searle:

each kind of speech act may be characterized in terms of its felicity conditions

the felicity conditions for a particular kind of speech act may be viewed as necessary and sufficient conditions defining the essence of this speech act kind

Principle of expressibility: Whatever can be meant can be said

In explicit performatives the nature of the relevant illocutionary force is explicitly signaled by an **ifid**

In the case of implicit performatives the nature of the relevant illocutionary force may be always made explicit in an appropriate paraphrase

The principle of expressibility “enables us to equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, since for any possible speech act there is a possible linguistic element the meaning of which (given the context of the utterance is sufficient to determine that its literal utterance is a performance of precisely that speech act” (Searle 1969:20-21)

The problem of the relation between meaning and illocutionary force

a. *I order you to go*

b. *He is ordering her to go*

➤ the same illocutionary force conveyed by very different grammatical structures

c. *Proszę **pozmywaj**_{2 SG. PERF. IMP.} naczynia*

I-request you-wash-up dishes

d. *Proszę **pozmywać**_{INF.} naczynia*

I-request wash-up dishes

e. ***Zmywaj**_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} **mi**_{DAT.} te naczynia!*

Wash-up to-me these dishes

Is the illocutionary force really the same?

➤ the same grammatical structure may be used to convey different illocutionary forces

a. *Oddychać*_{INF.}

Breathe

b. *Odmaszerować!*_{INF.}

March away 'Dismissed!'

➤ how does the hearer go about recognizing the intended illocutionary force?

Theories of politeness

different grammatical structures may be used to perform the same illocutionary act, at the same time producing different effects with respect to politeness

- a. *Wash the dishes!* face-threatening
- b. *Can you wash the dishes?* face-saving

Panther and Thornburg's metonymic model

request scenario

S wants H to do X

BEFORE

H can do X

S puts H under the obligation to do X

CORE

H is under the obligation to do X

RESULT

H will do X

AFTER

Via evoking any aspect of the scenario we can metonymically evoke the scenario as a whole

Panther and Thornburg's model may deal with the following cases:

- a. *I would like you to do the dishes*
- b. *Can you do the dishes?*

However, neither theories of politeness nor Panther and Thornburg's model are terribly helpful with cases like the following:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| c. <i>Proszę pozmywaj_{2 SG. PERF. IMP.} <i>naczynia</i></i> | I-request you-wash-up dishes |
| d. <i>Proszę pozmywać_{INF.} <i>naczynia</i></i> | I-request wash-up dishes |
| e. <i>Zmywaj_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} mi_{DAT.} <i>te naczynia!</i></i> | Wash-up to-me these dishes |

quite different grammatical constructions available as means of issuing an order

the three constructions produce very different interpersonal effects

CG and speech acts:

- our knowledge of a language contains not only the knowledge of specific expressions and constructional schemas abstracted from such expressions
- importantly, it also contains numerous schematic scenarios of how to perform different speech acts in different interactive circumstances (**speech act scenarios/interactive frames**)
- speech act scenarios stored in our minds are schematic conceptualizations of the interactive circumstances characteristic of each type of linguistic interaction

- each such scenario emerges as a result of entrenchment of commonalities of the interactive circumstances as apprehended by the conceptualizer in actual specific linguistic interactions
 - the speaker-hearer relation (social, psychological)
 - their intentions and mutual expectations
 - what the speaker wants to achieve via the linguistic interaction
 - how specifically he wants to achieve his aim
- all these elements taken together may be viewed as constituting the specific illocutionary force of an utterance
 - a. *Proszę **pozmywaj**_{2 SG. PERF. IMP.} naczynia* I-request you-wash-up dishes
 - b. *Proszę **pozmywać**_{INF.} naczynia* I-request wash-up dishes

- the **illocutionary force** of an utterance is an **aspect of grounding**

- what constitutes our knowledge of how to perform each general kind of speech act (such as e.g. request, order, promise, etc.) is not a single well-defined scenario

- instead, it is a network of scenarios, at different levels of specificity and with different degrees of prototypicality
 - speech acts are not clear-cut and well-defined categories (cf. Kalisz and Kubiński 1993; Rudzka-Ostyn 1989; Sokołowska 2001)
 - we do not have just a single scenario e.g. for an act of ordering; we have a different scenario for an act of a parent giving an order to a child and a different scenario for a boss issuing an order to an employee

- schematic speech act scenarios invoke aspects of the ground in a generalized manner (as virtual entities)
- speech act scenarios are invoked as sanctioning units with respect to specific actual usage-events (full vs. partial sanction)
- when a particular scenario is chosen as the sanctioning unit for a particular usage event, aspects of the scenario are put in correspondence in a particular way with aspects of the actual ground in the usage event in question

a. *John finished his PhD dissertation.* *And I'm the Chinese Emperor.*

b. *Thanks for nice cooperation!*

used sarcastically, in the context
of a complete lack of cooperation

strong identification vs. **weak identification**

- particular patterns of applying a speech act scenario in discourse may themselves be conventionalized in a language as higher-order speech act scenarios (cf. e.g. patently false assertions, sarcastic explicit thanking)
- when a particular linguistic structure is used in an actual usage event, which is invested with a particular illocutionary force, the conceptualization evoked by the relevant linguistic structure is embedded within the conceptualization constituting our apprehension of the specific speech event and its interactive circumstances
- our knowledge of a language comprises also an inventory of patterns for using particular kinds of grammatical structures in particular kinds of speech acts
- this knowledge emerges as a result of the recurrent use of similar grammatical structures in similar kinds of linguistic interactions and the entrenchment of commonalities recurring over the relevant usage events

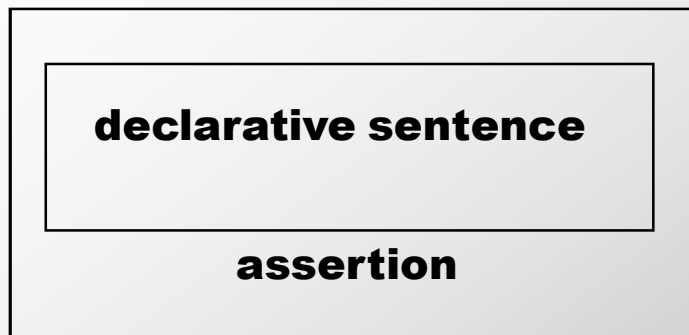


Fig. 1

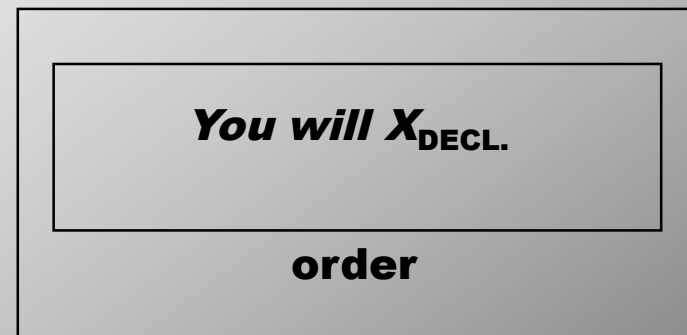


Fig. 2

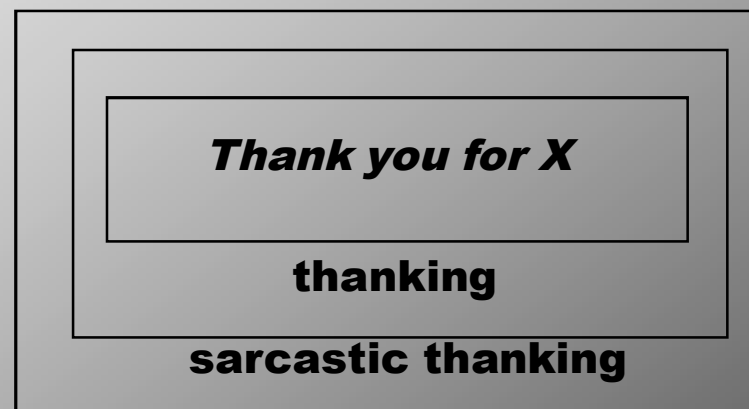


Fig. 3

➤ this does not mean that the illocutionary force of an utterance is ever determined by any lexical or grammatical element explicitly used in this utterance

a. *Thanks for nice cooperation!*

b. *Proszę, żebyś pozmywał naczynia*

I-request that you wash up dishes

c. *Proszę pozmywaj₂ SG. PERF. IMP. naczynia*

I-request you-wash-up dishes

d. *Proszę pozmywać_{INF.} naczynia*

I-request wash-up dishes

- the illocutionary force is always a matter of how the speaker intends the virtual grounding evoked by the conventional linguistic pattern which serves as the sanctioning unit with respect to the actual usage event to be put in correspondence with aspects of the actual ground in the usage event in question
- linguistic hints
 - contextual hints
 - encyclopedic knowledge (including cultural models of social interaction)
- hence, the actual illocutionary force always has to be inferred by the hearer
- a. *Mummy!* uttered by a small kid who has just fallen down and cannot get up by himself

- the likelihood that a particular linguistic structure will be chosen as the carrier of a particular illocutionary force correlates with the degree of fit between the conceptual configuration evoked by the relevant structure and the apprehension of interactive circumstances in the relevant usage event
- in particular this pertains to how aspects of the ground are construed within the conceived scene evoked by the grammatical structure and how this construal fits the construal inherent in the apprehension of the relevant interactive circumstances

a. *Proszę **pozmywaj**_{2 SG. PERF. IMP.} naczynia* I-request you-wash-up dishes

b. *Proszę **pozmywać**_{INF.} naczynia* I-request wash-up dishes

- a. **Zmywaj**_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} **mi**_{DAT.} *te naczynia!* Wash-up to-me these dishes
- b. **Zmywaj**_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} **jemu**_{DAT.} *te naczynia!* Wash-up to-him these dishes
- b. **Zjeżdżaj**_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} **mi**_{DAT.} *stąd!* Go-away to-me from-here 'Get lost!'
- b. ***Zjeżdżaj**_{2 SG. IMPERF. IMP.} **jemu**_{DAT.} *stąd!* Go-away to-him from-here 'Get lost!'

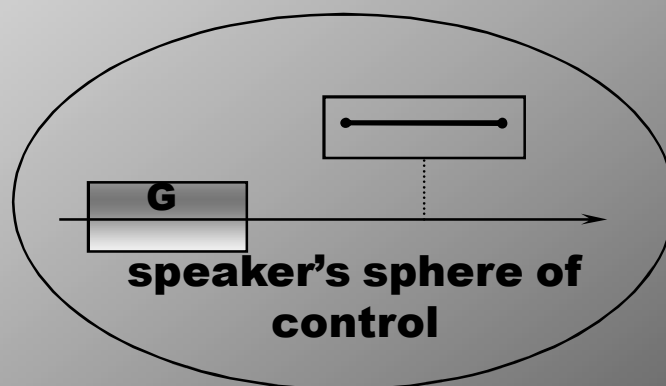


Fig. 4

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Thank you !