

A semantic map for Interpretive Deontics

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Interpretive use

“Any representation with a propositional form, and in particular any utterance, can be used to represent things in two ways. It can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs; in this case we will say that the representation is a *description*, or that it is used *descriptively*. Or it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form – a thought, for instance – in virtue of a resemblance between the two propositional forms; in this case we will say that the first representation is an *interpretation* of the second one, or that it is used *interpretively*. (Sperber & Wilson 1986, 228–229)”

Metalinguistic and interpretive

“Interpretive” is not the same as “metalinguistic”:

- Metalinguistic use refers to a unit of language, e.g., the form *came* may refer to itself as an instance of a past tense form;
- Interpretive use refers to an utterance, e.g., the form *came* may be a means of referring to an utterance in which the form *came* occurs (without any intention on the speaker’s part to say anything about the verb form *came*).

The Russian interpretive imperative

- The proper (directive) imperative:
Otvečaj! ‘Answer!’
- The interpretive imperative:
On sdelal ošibku, a ja za nego otvečaj!
‘He made a mistake, and I’m expected to answer for him!’

This form refers to an imaginary utterance of the form *(ty) otvečaj za nego*, imputed to some third person.

Interpretive use and grammar

- The notion of interpretive use was introduced in pragmatics (in the framework of relevance theory), but some think it could be important for grammar as well: according to several authors, hearsay markers are a kind of ‘interpretive use markers’ (Blass, Ifantidou, Blakemore)

Hearsay markers

- The Latvian quotative *Jānis esot Rīgā*. ‘John is said to be in Riga.’ could be said to refer not to a state of affairs, but to an utterance of the form *Jānis ir Rīgā*.
- The Latvian quotative also has an ironic use: *Un tas esot draugs!* ‘Call that a friend! And that’s supposed to be a friend’

Ironic use is hard to account for as hearsay, but it fits the notion of interpretive use.

Interpretive use in grammar

- But interpretive use may be relevant to grammar without having any explicit markers; interpretive use may form the periphery of certain grammatical forms.
- E.g., *otvečaj* – imperative proper, core use
- *A ja otvečaj za nego* – interpretive imperative, peripheral use.

Interpretive deontics

- Russian interpretive imperatives are an instance of **interpretive deontics** – expressions referring to other people's demands or other people's notions about what the speaker or some other person should do or not do. (Deontics proper refer to what the speaker himself/herself thinks should be done)

Types of interpretive deontics

- The basic types will here be illustrated from Latvian. Latvian has a hortative particle *lai* (historically a shortened form of *laid* 'let') corresponding to Russian *pust'/puskaj*, Polish *niech*, Lithuanian *tegul* etc.
- It is used basically with 3rd person verb forms: *Lai Jānis te atnāk* 'Let John come here' (cf. Russian *pust' pridet sjuda*, Polish *niech tu przyjdzie*)

Interpretive *lai* (i)

Lai may be used with other person forms as well, but in that case it is interpretive:

(i) Request for permission:

Pagaidi, lai sasildos!

wait:IMPER HORT warm.up-PRS.1SG

‘Wait a minute, let me warm up a bit.’ i.e.,
‘allow me to warm up a bit.’

Here the verb form anticipates a directive (‘warm up a bit!’) expected from the addressee (it is ‘echoic’).

Interpretive *lai* (ii)

(ii) Deontic requests, i. e., questions intended to elicit a directive rather than information:

Ko lai es daru?

What HORT I do:PRS.1SG

‘What should I do?’

Such questions are also ‘echoic’ – they anticipate a directive expected from the addressee.

Interpretive *lai* (iii)

- Deontic requests may also be rhetorical, in which case they do not expect a directive but express the speaker's opinion that (s)he (or some third person) could not have been expected to take another course than actually taken:

Ko lai es būtu darījis?

What HORT I AUX:IRR do:PA.PRT

'What else was I to do? What else could I have done?'

Interpretive *lai* (iv)

- At a next stage expressions with *lai* lose the features of interrogative sentences and become a way of rejecting an unreasonable demand from some other person:
- *Es lai viņam palīdzu?!*
I HORT him:DAT help:PRS.1SG
‘Me – helping him?’ ‘Do you expect me to help him?’
- At this stage the expression with *lai* is roughly equivalent to the Russian interpretive imperative (cf. ... *a ja emu pomogaj*)

Interpretive *lai* (v)

(v) At the next stage, the expression with *lai* is used to reject not a demand from another person, but another person's surmise, assertion etc. (interpretive deontic → interpretive epistemic)

Es lai būtu palīdzējis zaglim?!

I HORT AUX:IRR help:PA.PRT thief:DAT

‘Me – helping a thief?’

‘Do you really think I could have helped a thief?’

Deontic → epistemic

- The transition from (iv) to (v) seems to be motivated by the universal tendency to represent other people's opinions as acts of volition:

Eng. *Others would have it that...* (= others think that...)

German *Er will dich gestern gesehen haben*
(‘He wants to have seen you yesterday’ = ‘He claims / is positive he saw you yesterday.’)

A Slovenian parallel: *naj*

- Slovenian has the hortative particle *naj* (< *nehaj* – an exact etymological counterpart to Polish *niech* < *niechaj*); it is used in the same way as Latvian *lai*, but its use is wider.

Slovenian *naj* in interpretive use

- (i) Request for permission: *Naj se usedem.*
'Allow me to sit down.' (Polish *niech usiądę*, but Russian **pust' sjadu*)
- (ii) Deontic request: *Kaj naj mu povem?*
'What should I tell him?'
- (iii) Rhetorical deontic request: *Kaj naj bi napravil?* 'What was I to do?'

Slovenian *naj* in interpretive use

- (iv) Rejection of other person's demands, considered unreasonable: *Az naj mu pomagam?! 'I'm expected to help him?'*
- (v) Rejection of other people's surmises, assertions etc.: *Az naj bi pomagal zločinci? 'Do you think I could have helped a criminal?'*

Extentions in Slovenian

- (vi) neutral rendering of other people's expectations: *Politiki naj bi uresničevali želje ljudstva.* 'Politicians are expected to realise the will of the people.'
- (vii) neutral rendering of other people's assertions (evidential): *Taka izjava naj bi bila dana na nekem sestanku.* 'Such a declaration is said to have been made at some assembly.'

Extentions in Slovenian

- The Slovenian uses (vi) and (vii) are extentions of (iv) and (v) respectively, the element of negative evaluation having been discarded.
- Of course, given the tendency to present other people's opinions as acts of volition, Slov. (vii) could also have directly evolved from (vi).

Other sources of interpretive deontics

Where some languages have hortative particles in interpretive use, other languages have other means:

Latv. *Ko lai es daru?*

Slov. *Kaj naj napravim?*

Russ. **Čto pust' ja sdelaju?*

Čto mne sdelat'?

Polish **Co niech zrobię? *Co mi zrobić?*

Co mam zrobić?

Types of input

- Hortative particles (Latv. *lai sasildos*, Slov. *naj se usedem*, Pol. *niech usiądę*, Old Lithuanian *tesraubiu* ‘let me sup’)
- Imperatives (Russ. ... *a ja rabotaj!*, Lith. ... *o man dirbk!*)
- Infinitives (Russ. *Čto mne peredat’?*)
- Modal verbs (Pol. *co mam robić?*)

Semantic space

The uses mentioned here can be arranged in a certain order, so that

- Deontic expressions may enter the interpretive deontic domain at various stages, but
- from that stage on they must develop further in the specified order
- Polysemy of interpretive deontic expressions is reflected in contiguity in the semantic space.

The semantic space of interpretive deontics

(I) REQUESTS FOR PERMISSION



(II) DEONTIC REQUESTS



(III) RHETORICAL DEONTIC REQUESTS



(IV) NEGATIVE EVALUATION OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
DEMANDS



(V) NEGATIVE EVALUATION OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
ASSERTIONS

The same map with extentions

(I) REQUESTS FOR
PERMISSION



(II) DEONTIC REQUESTS



(III) RHETORICAL DEONTIC
REQUESTS



(IV) NEGATIVE EVALUATION
OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
EXPECTATIONS

→ (VI) NEUTRAL RENDERING
OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
EXPECTATIONS



(V) NEGATIVE EVALUATION
OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
ASSERTIONS

→ (VII) NEUTRAL RENDERING
OF OTHER PEOPLE'S
ASSERTIONS (EVIDENTIAL)

Semantic map for *lai* / *naj*

- Latvian *lai* and Slovenian enter at stage (i) and encompass further uses: (i) to (v) in Latvian, (i) to (vii) in Slovenian;
- The Russian interpretive imperative enters at stage (iv) and stays at this stage (it has only one use);
- The Russian interpretive infinitive enters at stage (ii) and extends to (iii), (iv) and (v)

The Russian interpretive infinitive

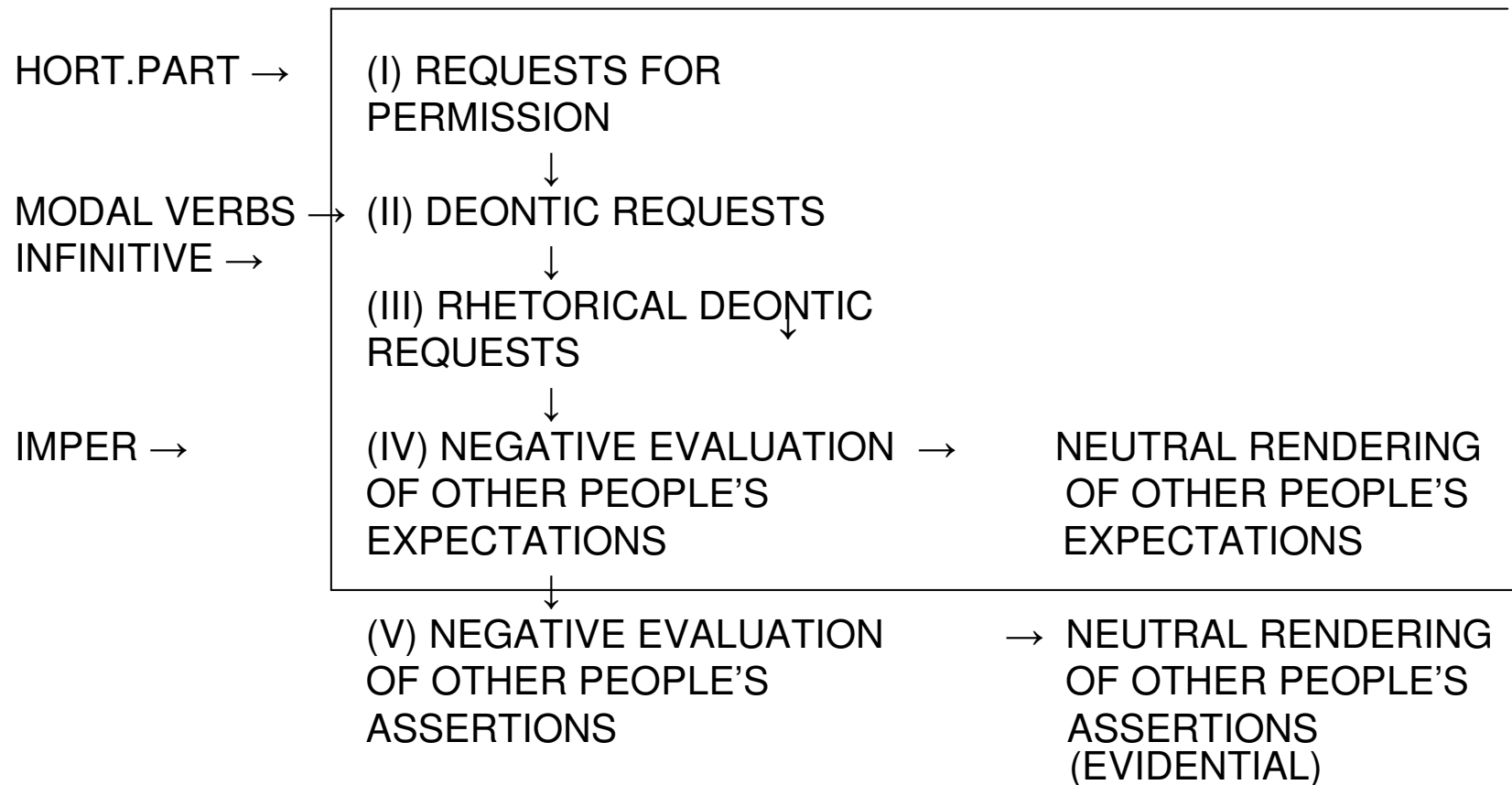
- (ii) *Čto mne peredat' emu?* 'What should I tell him?'
- (iii) *Kuda emu bylo idti?* 'Where was he to go?'
- (iv) *Mne li èto sdelat'?* 'Is it for me to do such a thing?'
- (v) *Emu li ne znat' pisatelej?* 'He – not acquainted with writers? Do you really think he he could not be acquainted with writers?'

Polish *mieć*

Polish *mieć* enters at stage (ii) and has the same range as Slovenian *naj*:

- (ii) *Co mam powiedzieć?* ‘What should I say?’
- (iii) *Co miałem powiedzieć?* ‘What was I to say?’
- (iv) *Ja miałbym ci pomagać?* ‘Do you expect me to help you?’
- (v) *Ja miałem coś takiego powiedzieć?* ‘Could I be supposed to have said such a thing?’
- (vi) *Politycy mają spełniać wolę wyborców.* ‘Politicians are expected to realise the wishes of the voters.’
- (vii) *W Afryce ma być gorąco.* ‘They say it’s hot in Africa.’

The map with sources and further developments



Between deontic and interpretive deontic

1st person hortatives are in between real and interpretive deontics, cf. the Hebrew cohortative:

- Self-encouragement:

'āsūrā-nnā wə'ēr'eh hammar'eh haggādōl hazzeh

‘Let me turn now and see this great sight’

- Request for permission:

'ēbērā bə-'arṣekā

‘Let me pass through your land.’

Between interpretive deontic and interpretive epistemic

- Negative evaluation of assertions is in between interpretive deontics and evidentials: it can be completely dissociated from evidentiality (as type (v) in Latvian, which has a dedicated evidential), but it may also be a secondary function of evidentials (the case of evidentials said to express doubt)

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