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THE MANY FACES OF SPEECH ACT THEORY – EDITORIAL TO SPECIAL ISSUE ON SPEECH ACTIONS

Over the past decades speech act theory has evolved in many directions and, as a result, it may be more reasonable to talk about speech act theories than one received model. Most of the contemporary developments explicitly refer to John L. Austin and John Searle as their mentors. However, the (still growing) heritage has been used in a selective way and some of the newer approaches are not mutually compatible. What remains constant through all of them is the focus on language as a type (and means) of action and the underlying belief that communication is composed of linguistic acts. It is also important that these acts are not performed in isolation, but typically, in natural communication, form complex structures. It is, at least partly, the evasive nature of the interplay between the linguistic form used and the context in which it appears that constitutes the puzzle of performativity and illocutionary force.

The editors decided to use the notion of speech "action" rather than "acts" in the title of this volume to indicate that, although any analysis of speech as action must pay proper attention to occasional, specific, or accidental occurrences of particular acts, the focus of this collection is on the systematic, methodological aspects of linguistic action and its types. The seven papers included in the volume

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are representative of the diversity in the speech act theoretic field and result from different theoretical commitments.

In *"Internalism and externalism in speech act theory"* (9-31) Robert M. Harnish presents and discusses two different, though closely related, classifications of speech act theories, thereby offering an interesting perspective on the historical dynamics within this field of research. Following an established tradition, first, he categorizes speech act theories as Austinian or Gricean depending on what their basic explanatory categories are. The central idea behind the Austinian conceptions is that all illocutionary acts are by nature institutional and, as such, should be accounted for in terms of illocutionary rules, conventions, or norms, universally accepted by the community of the speakers. The proponents of the Gricean approach, in turn, claim that the central class of illocutionary acts are not institutional but communicative, i.e. consist in the speaker's expressing and the hearer's inferentially recognizing complex propositional attitudes. Harnish observes, however, that one can also classify speech act theories along a different dimension. One can, namely, categorize them as more or less externalist or more or less internalist depending on the nature of conditions set down on the analysis of the force of a successful speech act: externalist conditions constrain the way the social or physical context must be, whereas internalist conditions restrict the mental states of the speaker and/or the hearer. Harnish notes that both classifications allow for intermediate positions. Apart from purely Austinian and purely Gricean conceptions, for example, there is a mixed theory developed by Bach and Harnish (1979), who account for *communicative* illocutionary acts along the Gricean lines and describe *institutional* illocutionary acts in terms of conventions shared by speakers and hearers. Analogously, between a purely internalist conception (developed by Grice, Schiffer, Alston and Holdcroft) and purely externalist accounts (one example of which is the theory offered by Gazdar), there is a space for mixed theories; for example, Austin, Searle, as well as Bach and Harnish, allow for both internalist and externalist conditions for the performance of particular kinds of illocutionary acts. In the final part of his paper, Harnish offers a critical consideration of an (allegedly) externalist and purely Austinian account developed by Marina Sbisà (2002), thereby arguing in favour of the Gricean and internalist approach. In his analysis, he focuses on the Austinian idea of speech acts as social actions and on the externalist conception of constructed, limited and objective contexts. Harnish's conclusion is that the Gricean approach, which naturally favours the internalist point of view, not only offers an adequate account of illocutionary communication, but also possesses many of the explanatory merits traditionally ascribed to Austinian and externalist theories.

Some theorists, however, maintain that it is the externalist and Austinian approach that provides us with an adequate and holistic insight into the nature of

illocutionary acts. In "Uptake and Conventionality in Illocution" (33-52), Marina Sbisá, a former Austin's student and editor of the second edition of *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin 1962/1975), puts forward a novel perspective on the notion of conventionality of illocutionary acts. Sbisá revives the traditional Austinian view that illocutionary force arises from convention by re-reading Austin's original text and ideas. She opposes the view that the indispensability of uptake should be read as the victory of the intention-based perspective on the nature of illocution over the convention-based view, which has been growing in power since Strawson's (1964) landmark article "Intention and convention in speech acts". On the basis of careful discussion of Searle's and Strawson's ideas, Sbisá argues that all illocutionary acts are conventional because they all produce conventional effects, which in turn binds them with the initial commitment to the indispensability of uptake, i.e. some kind of recognition of a speech act on the part of the audience.

In a somewhat similar vein, Friedrich C. Doerge (53-68) argues for the retention of Austin's original definitions of the basic components in the speech act theory. Specifically, Doerge's paper, "A Scholarly confusion of tongues, or, is promising an illocutionary act?", defends Austin's original definition of the illocutionary act and claims that theoretical terms should not be re-defined without a profound reason because of the risk of introducing misunderstanding and terminological confusion that could result in a purely verbal dispute. It was Austin who first introduced the term "illocutionary act" and characterised its content, Doerge claims, and his definition is in a sense a privileged one and should be maintained unless a better, sufficiently justified alternative account of illocutionarity arises. Doerge suggests that researchers who introduce new concepts into speech act theoretic research could use new labels for their categories instead of usurping the right to the traditional (original) one. In this light the diversity of conceptions of illocutionary acts is not a problem at all, but rather an enrichment of the theory. One can maintain, first, that the various re-definitions under consideration determine, as a matter of fact, the same extension of the term "illocutionary act", but in the case of different concepts these could be given new names to include various phenomena that characteristically co-occur with illocutionary acts, such as creating an institutional fact, communicating with language and performing an act with a content. Doerge offers a critical analysis of three influential conceptions of illocutionary acts—developed by Searle, Alston and Bach and Harnish, respectively—and observes that they imply three different views on promising. According to Searle, who characterises illocutionary acts in terms of producing conventional effects, promising is a paradigmatic illocutionary act. Alston, in turn, defines the illocutionary act as a mere act with a content, which does not necessarily involve bringing about a conventional effect. In consequence he takes promising as going beyond performing an illocutionary act. Next, the author questions the status of promising characterised by Bach and Harnish (1979),

pointing that following their theory, promising may prove not to be an illocutionary communicative act at all. The point is that promising cannot be counted either as a pure communicative act, since it necessarily involves creating an obligation conceived of as an institutional fact, or as a conventional act, since it is assumed to involve the speaker's having an appropriate reflexive intention. It turns out, Doerge concludes, that the three definitions under consideration differ not only in how they specify the content of the term "illocutionary act", but also in how they determine its extension. To finally solve metalinguistic confusion, Doerge suggests new labels for categories discussed within the three approaches, which should allow for referring to the phenomena co-occurring with the performance of illocutionary acts. Instead of talking about illocutionary acts in general, he suggests, more precision may be secured by using such terms as "meaning" (for Schiffer 1972), "act of linguistic communication" and "conventional acts" (for Bach & Harnish 1979), or "act with a content" (for Alston 2000).

In the next paper, "Scepticism about reflexive intentions refuted" (69-83), Maciej Witek aims at resisting four sceptical arguments, originally developed by Mark Siebel (2003), that seem to underdetermine the adequacy and explanatory efficacy of Bach and Harnish's conception of communicative illocutionary acts. According to the conception under consideration, to perform a communicative illocutionary act in uttering a sentence is to express a complex propositional attitude or, in other words, to have a reflexive intention that the hearer, by means of recognizing this intention, takes one's utterance as reason to think that one has the attitude. Contrary to what Siebel seems to suggest, Witek argues that reflexive intentions, despite their having complex and self-referential content, can be regarded as thinkable mental representations. To justify his claim, he develops an account of the cognitive mechanism whose *function*—or, more specifically, *proper function* in Millikan's (e.g. 2004) sense—is to produce and consume token-reflexive representations in general and token-reflexive illocutionary intentions in particular. Responding to Siebel's second sceptical argument, he argues that appearances to the contrary illocutionary communicative intentions can be individuated in terms of their contents; that is to say, the so-called mereological problem identified by Siebel is not as serious as it would initially seem. Next, Witek resists Siebel's suggestion to the effect that the explanatory power of the theory of reflexive intentions is severely limited. In particular, it is argued that cases of soliloquy do not as such constitute counterexamples to Bach and Harnish's (1979) theory. Acknowledging that they can hardly be regarded as utterances accompanied by audience-directed communicative intentions, Witek observes that speech acts performed by talking to ourselves are not illocutionary at all. They are, rather, locutionary acts in Récanati's (1987) sense, that is, they are presented though not actually performed illocutionary acts. Finally, Witek resists the fourth

sceptical objection to the effect that the conception of reflexive communicative intentions ascribes to a language user more cognitive abilities than he or she really has. It is argued, namely, that behind this objection there is an inadequate assumption to the effect that there should be a tight correspondence between the theoretical vocabulary we use to characterise the content of reflexive intentions and the psychological vocabulary used by the cognitive system responsible for producing and consuming illocutionary communicative intentions.

In "Speech acts and the autonomy of linguistic pragmatics" (85-106), Iwona Witczak-Plisiecka discusses the (ir)relevance of the attribution of the purely semantic value to the concept of the locutionary act. Taking as her point of departure the Austinian distinction between the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary acts, as aspects of the speech act, the author argues that there are pragmatic processes necessary for meaning derivation at the levels of all three aspects. Thus, it is not theoretically sound to maintain the alleged distinction, according to which the locutionary act belongs in semantics, while the illocution and perlocution are pragmatic in nature. The discussion is supplemented with comments on other dichotomies introduced in relation to form and meaning, especially those proposed with reference to the Austinian notions. These include "what is said" vis-à-vis "what is meant" (or implicated), "what is said" vis-à-vis "what is asserted", and the most relevant "what is said" vis-à-vis "what is locuted". One of the aims of the article is to revive the classical Austinian holistic understanding of the speech act, the view often distorted in contemporary literature, and argue for speech act-theoretic research in a broader framework of social activity in search for a theory of (linguistic) action.

The final two papers exhibit an application of the speech act theoretic framework to the analysis of expressions used in cooking recipes and the concept of pornography respectively. In "Indirect directives in recipes: a cross linguistic perspective" (107-131), Rita Brdar-Szabó and Mario Brdar present data from fifteen languages with regard to grammatical construction types used in the language of cooking recipes. Their research focus is on the directives and their varied indirect forms and diversity and systematicity across languages and language families. For example, it is found that while imperatives are virtually the only possibility in English, other construction types are attested in other languages, either instead or in addition to the imperative. The research question behind the authors' analysis is to shed light on the motives for these intralingual and interlingual similarities and variegations. All the data are analyzed against the background of the speech-act scenario model proposed by Thornburg and Panther (1997; Panther and Thornburg 1998, 1999), and further discussed with the help of two cultural models of HELP, which are claimed to provide the basis for the motivation of the cross-linguistic distribution of various constructions. Specifically, the authors claim that the choice of the metonymic source

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corresponds to two different cultural models of HELP, in turn motivated by conceptual metaphors, viz. the NURTURING PARENT and the STRICT FATHER metaphor. Thus, the speech act theoretic framework integrated with the cognitive approach to metonymy proves to be functional in applied cross-linguistic analysis.

The volume closes with a paper by Mary Kate McGowan, "On pragmatics, exercitive speech acts and pornography" (133-155), which evokes the importance of speech act recognition in institutional legal contexts and communication at large. The author advocates the view that expertise in speech act theory can illuminate various issues regarding free speech and considers how speech act theory may apply to certain arguments regarding the free speech status of pornography. In particular, she elaborates on several speech act accounts of MacKinnon's (1987, 1993) claim that pornography subordinates women. Exploring exercitive speech acts related to pornography, the author also critically discusses the relation between speech and performance and areas where type of (non-linguistic) behaviour counts as speech. By arguing that pornography fails to satisfy several important felicity conditions of exercitive speech acts, McGowan questions her model of analysis following Langton (cf. Langton 1993 and Langton & West 1999) and offers an alternative model of exercitive speech, viz. the conversational exercitive. She also argues that her alternative model meets the challenges raised against Langton's account. Finally, the author's overall claim is that conversational exercitives are an instance of a much more general phenomenon and that pornography (or actions involving pornography) may covertly enact permissibility facts by triggering the rules operative in a system of gender oppression.

The articles collected in the present volume are not representative of all contemporary areas of speech act theoretic research, but the editors believe they are representative of the diversity by which the field is characterized. They also point to important open questions in the theory, and by extension, in linguistic research in general, such as the relation between form and context, the origin of force in utterances, the architecture of communication.

It seems that speech act theory can only develop if it moves towards a theory of (linguistic) action in a broader interactive context because researching its core problem, viz. how linguistic expressions become meaningful and effective, requires a rich communicative environment.

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