

## Presentation 3: Communicative acts

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## A solitary utterance

Bart going outside the strictly English school, I rather like Steinbeck's style,

single assertion

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## Native medium for language

1. conversation
2. two or more participants
3. co-present, face-to-face
4. speech + gestures + placement



## In an exchange

Allen is there any present-day novelist which you regard as particularly good,  
Bart going outside the strictly English school, I rather like Steinbeck's style,

answer to question

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## Traditional object of study:

the *solitary*  
utterance

but utterances are *never*  
solitary

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## In a sequence of exchanges

Allen is there any present-day novelist which you regard as particularly good,  
Bart well going outside the strictly English school, I rather like Steinbeck's style,  
Allen now is this a recent novel of Steinbeck or going back to things like *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Mice and Men*?  
Bart *Grapes of Wrath*, yes, I'm afraid I don't keep up to date very much,  
Allen have you read any present-day American literature like Salinger? have you read *Catcher in the Rye*?  
Bart no I haven't read that,

## Pairs in telephone conversation

Jane: (rings K's telephone)  
Kate: Miss Pink's office --  
Jane: hello  
Kate: hello,  
Jane: is Miss Pink in .  
Kate: well, she's in, but she's engaged at the moment,  
Jane: who is it?  
Kate: oh it's Professor Worth's secretary, from Pan-American College  
Jane: m,  
Kate: could you give her a message [for me]  
Kate: [certainly]

Jane: uh:m Professor Worth said that, m, Miss Pink runs into difficulties, on Monday afternoon, . with the standing subcommittee, . over the item on Miss Panoff, - - -  
Kate: Miss Panoff?  
Jane: yes,  
Kate: that Professor Worth would be with Mr Miles all afternoon, - so she only had to go round and collect him if she needed him, - - -  
Kate: uh - - -  
Jane: thank you very much indeed  
Kate: right  
Jane: Panoff, right [you] are  
Kate: [right,]  
Jane: I'll tell her, [(2 to 3 syll) bles]]  
Kate: [thank you]  
Jane: bye bye  
Kate: bye

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## Two approaches to communicative acts

### Utterances as *autonomous acts* (traditional)

- I *decide* on my utterance *by myself*
- I *formulate* my utterance *by myself*
- I *produce* my utterance *by myself*

### Utterances as *participatory acts* (revised view)

- I decide on utterance *with you*
- I formulate utterance *with you*
- I produce my utterance *with you*

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## Autonomous speech acts (Austin)

Type of act	example
Phonetic act	making sounds Jane produces the sounds /iz.mis.pink.kin/
Utterance act	presenting a sentence Jane presents the English sentence <i>Is Miss Pink in?</i>
Illocutionary act	asking a question Jane asks Kate whether Miss Pink is in
Perlocutionary act	getting a response Jane gets Kate to say whether or not Miss Pink is in

## Participatory acts (neo-Austin)

Speaker's part		Addressee's part	
<b>phonetic act</b>	making sounds	<b>attention</b>	attending to sounds
<b>utterance act</b>	producing sentence	<b>identification</b>	identifying sentence
<b>illocutionary act</b>	meaning something	<b>recognition</b>	understanding what s meant
<b>perlocutionary act</b>	getting A to react	<b>consideration</b>	considers reacting as a wanted

## Speaker's meaning

### Speaker's meaning (Grice)

In doing action  $x$ , a speaker  $S$  means that  $p$  for hearers  $H$  if and only if:

(i)  $S$  intends  $H$  to recognize that  $p$  in part by recognizing that  $i$ .



(x) Obama is **waving** to Bush  
 (p) In waving at Bush, Obama means **that he is bidding Bush farewell**  
 (i) Obama intends Bush to recognize 2 in part **by recognizing that he has this very intention (i)**

Note that (i) is a self-referring intention. It is reflexive, or mirror-like.

[Logically, when I look at myself in a mirror, I see that I am looking at myself in the mirror, that I am looking at myself looking at myself in the mirror, and so on *ad infinitum*.]

## Classification of speech acts

1	<b>Assertives</b>	act of expressing a belief
2	<b>Directives</b>	act of trying to get A to do something
3	<b>Commissives</b>	act of committing oneself to do something
4	<b>Expressives</b>	act of expressing a psychological feeling
5a	<b>Effectives</b>	act that changes institutional state of affairs
5b	<b>Verdictives</b>	act that determines, institutionally, what is to be the case

## Assertives

### *Act of expressing a belief*

Examples from telephone conversation:

She's in but she's engaged at the moment.

It's Professor Worth's secretary, from Pan-American College.

Yes.

## Directives

### *Act of trying to get the addressee to do something*

Requests and commands

Questions = requests for information

(variations in forcefulness)

Examples from telephone conversation:

Direct requests

1. Who is it?
2. Miss Panoff?

Direct plus indirect requests

1. Is Miss Pink in?
2. Could you give her a message for me?

## Commissives

### *Act of committing oneself to do something*

Promises and the like

Offers (conditional promises)

Examples from telephone conversation:

1. I'll tell her
2. Certainly

## Expressives

### *Act of expressing certain psychological feelings*

Thank you very much for the gift.

I apologize for not being there.

Congratulations on your new job.

Hello

Good-bye

Bon voyage

General structure:

*Presuppose* a fact (e.g., the gift)

*And express* feeling about that fact

Examples from telephone conversation

Hello.

Thank you very much indeed.

Bye bye

## Effectives

### *Act that changes institutional state of affairs*

You're fired.

I appoint you president of the club.

I sentence you to 20 years in the pen.

I hereby arrest you.

## Verdictives

### *Act determines, institutionally, what is to be the case*

Baseball umpire: "Strike"

Jury in court: "We find the defendant guilty"

## Properties of speech acts

### Inherently *social*

- one person making *commitments* to another
- depends on *social system*

### Theory of *interpersonal commitments*

- covers all types of commitments one person can make to another
- essential for *all* social affairs

## How to coordinate a joint activity

## People don't coordinate *by accident*

### Problem

Imagine *I just happened to sing* "Hark" on A-flat as *you played* A-flat chord on piano

Coordination doesn't arise *by chance, luck, or prayer*

### Solution

A & B make *joint commitments*

### Joint commitment?

1. *A commits* to something as part of 1 + 2

2. *B commits* to something as part of 1 + 2

## Arranging for a joint activity

### A&B in joint project 1

#### A&B in sub-project 1.1

#### A&B in sub-project 1.2

A and B must *jointly commit* to ...

- each main project
- each sub-project

Two-step procedure

**Step 1:** A *proposes* a joint project

**Step 2:** B *takes up* A's proposal

## Making *two* commitments

### Pair of actions

**Part 1:** A *proposes* a joint action by A & B

**Part 2:** B *agrees to* A's proposal

### Result

A & B are *jointly committed* to joint action

## Making *two* commitments



### Pair of actions

**Part 1:** A *proposes* a joint action by A & B

Ann: "Should we put this in the I bar?"

**Part 2:** B *agrees to* A's proposal

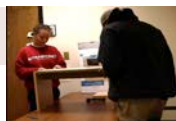
Burton: "Yeah we can do that"

### Result

A & B are *jointly committed* to A's proposal

Ann & Burton are jointly committed to "putting this in the I bar"

## Adjacency pairs



### Pair of turns

Ann So, do you wanna put the top on first?

Burton Sure.

### Joint commitment (Clark, 1996)

**Part 1:** A *proposes* "putting the top on first"

**Part 2:** B *takes up* A's proposal and agrees to it

## Adjacency pairs

Prototypical pair: question + answer

**Part 1:** What time is it?

**Part 2:** A quarter after three.

Properties (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973):

1. Two turns: question and answer
2. Two different speakers: Questioner and answerer
3. Two parts are expected to be adjacent.
4. Parts are ordered.
5. First part projects second part.

## Adjacency pairs in telephone conversation

### Adjacency pair

1. Summons	Jane: (rings)
2. Response	Kate: Miss Pink's office
1. Greetings	Kate: hello
2. Greetings	Jane: hello
1. Question	Kate: who is it?
2. Answer	Jane: oh it's Professor Worth's secretary, from Pan-American College
1. Assertion	Jane: oh it's Professor Worth's secretary, from Pan-American College
2. Assent	Kate: m

## Adjacency pairs in telephone conversation

Adjacency pair	
1. Request	Jane: could you give her a message
2. Promise	Kate: *for me*
1. Promise	Kate: I'll tell her
2. Acknowledge	Jane: thank you
1. Thanks	Kate: thank you very much indeed
2. Acknowledge	Jane: right
1. Good-bye	Kate: bye bye
2. Good-bye	Jane: bye

## A and B *negotiate* each joint commitment

### “Projective pair” of actions

Part 1: A *proposes* a joint action by A & B

Part 2: B *takes up* A's proposal

## But what is “uptake”?

### To *take up* a proposal is to ...

1. consider proposal: [Ah, let me see ...]
2. decide what to do: [I'll accept it]
3. signal decision: “Yeah we can do that”

### B can *decide* to ...

- *accept* the proposal
- *alter* it and *accept* the altered version
- *decline* it
- *disregard* it
- *dismiss* it

## How B takes up A's proposal

Accept proposal	A. when is it? B. four thirty tomorrow - - -
Alter proposal	A. how old, were most of the children, B. - . <b>well</b> uh only a few of them, were children in fact, . um . <b>I was teaching adults</b>
Decline proposal	A. what happens if anybody breaks in and steals it, - are are is are we covered, or . B. u:m - <b>I don't know</b> quite honestly, .
Disregard proposal	A. who's calling, B. . <b>well, could you give her a message,</b>
Dismiss proposal	A. do you still have all your faculties? B. . <b>I resent that question.</b> I thoroughly resent it.

Clark (1996)

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## Speech acts (Austin)

Speech act	
Assertions	It was a lovely day
Questions	When is it?
Requests, orders	Please sit down
Promises, offers	I'll see you tonight

Austin (1968), Searle (1975)

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## Speech acts in adjacency pairs

A proposes B takes up	
Assertions	A. It was a lovely day B. Yes.
Questions	A. When is it? B. Four thirty tomorrow
Requests, orders	A. Please sit down B. Okay
Promises, offers	A. I'll see you tonight B. Right

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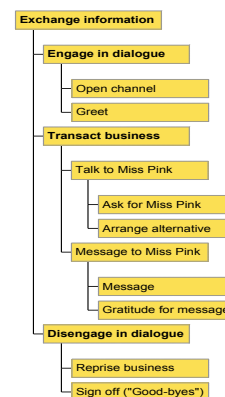
## Speech acts → joint commitments

A & B jointly commit to		
Assertions	A. It was a lovely day B. Yes.	A's description
Questions	A. When is it? B. Four thirty tomorrow	B's description
Requests, orders	A. Please sit down B. Okay	B's future action
Promises, offers	A. I'll see you tonight B. Right	A's future action

Clark (2004)

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## Telephone conversation



## Telephone conversation

Jane: [rings K's telephone]	Jane: uh:m Professor Worth said that, if. Miss Pink runs into difficulties, . on Monday afternoon, . with the standing subcommittee, . over the item on Miss Panoff. - - -
Kate: Miss Pink's office -	Kate: Miss Panoff?
Jane: hello	Jane: yes,
Jane: hello,	Jane: that Professor Worth would be with Mr Miles all afternoon, - so she only had to go round and collect him if she needed him, - - -
Kate: is Miss Pink in .	Kate: ah, - - -
Kate: well, she's in, but she's engaged at the moment, who is it?	Kate: thank you very much indeed, right
Jane: oh it's Professor Worth's secretary, from Pan-American College	Jane: Panoff, right [you] are
Kate: m,	Jane: [right,]
Jane: could you give her a message	Kate: I'll tell her, [(2 to 3 syllables)]
Kate: [for me]	Jane: [thank you]
Kate: [certainly]	Jane: bye bye
	Jane: bye

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## Commitments to *joint positions*

A & B jointly commit to		
Assertions	A. It was a lovely day B. Yes.	A's description
Questions	A. When is it? B. Four thirty tomorrow	B's description

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## Commitments to *joint actions*

A & B jointly commit to		
Requests, orders	A. Please sit down B. Okay	B's future action
Promises, offers	A. I'll see you tonight B. Right	A's future action

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## What do A and B commit to?

### 1. *Joint positions*

**Burton** Okay, so, this [pointing] is the bottom

**Ann** That's the, yeah, that's the lower part

Joint commitment to a certain **position**:  
"This is the bottom, lower part"

### 2. *Joint actions*

**Ann**: Should we put this in the I bar?

**Burton**: Yeah we can do that

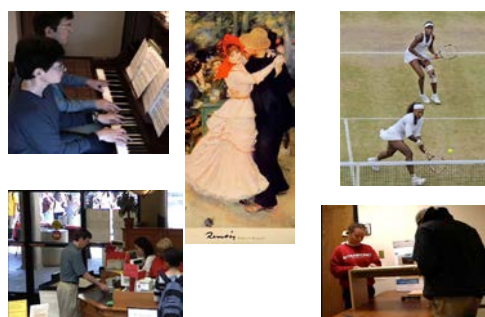
Joint commitment to a **future action**:  
"We can put this in the I bar"

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## Joint activities: largely *joint positions*



## Joint activities: largely *joint actions*

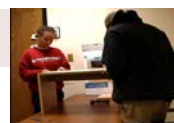


## Do pairs have to be spoken? No!

**"Projective pairs"**

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## Adjacency pairs



### Pair of turns

**Ann** So, do you wanna put the top on first?

**Burton** Sure.

### Joint commitment (Clark, 1996)

**Part 1:** A **proposes** "putting the top on first"

**Part 2:** B **takes up** A's proposal and agrees to it



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Schegloff & Sacks (1973)

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## Projective pair



### Unspoken proposal, unspoken uptake

Burton [extends hand with peg]

Ann [takes peg]

### Joint commitment

**Part 1:** A **proposes** to change possession of peg

**Part 2:** B **takes up** A's proposal and agrees to it

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## Projective pair



### Spoken proposal, unspoken uptake

Ann [extends hand with screw] So you want to stick the screws in?

Burton [extends hand to grasp screw]

### Joint commitment

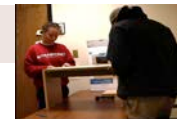
**Part 1:** A **proposes** to "stick the screws in"

**Part 2:** B **takes up** A's proposal and agrees to it

(Clark, 2004, 2005)

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## Projective pair



### Unspoken proposal, spoken uptake

Burton [extends hand with screwdriver]

Ann Thank you [extends hand to grasp screwdriver]

### Joint commitment

**Part 1:** B **proposes** to change possession of screwdriver

**Part 2:** A **takes up** B's proposal and agrees to it

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## Place tool + pick up tool



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## Point at tool + extend tool



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## Range of projective pairs

	Proposal	Uptake
"Adjacency pair"	spoken	spoken
Projective pair	spoken	<b>unspoken</b>
Projective pair	<b>unspoken</b>	spoken
Projective pair	<b>unspoken</b>	<b>unspoken</b>

## Why, then, do we communicate?

<b>Goal:</b>	to engage in <b>joint activities</b>
<b>Problem:</b>	<b>how to coordinate</b> with each other
<b>Solution:</b>	<b>negotiate</b> joint commitments Step 1: A <b>proposes</b> Step 2: B <b>takes up</b> A's proposal
<b>Technique:</b>	projective pairs (e.g., adjacency pairs)
<b>Result:</b>	<b>coordination of next ...</b> joint action joint position

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