

Force and Conversational States

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 (Joint work w/Sarah Murray)

• Distinctions:

1. **Sentential Force vs. Utterance Force:**
 - *Sentential*: how semantics constrains utterance force
 - *Utterance*: total ‘force’ of an utterance
2. **Social Convention vs. Social Norm** (Bicchieri 2005):
 - Social conventions: arbitrary solutions to coordination games
 - Social norms: self-fulfilling expectations that transform games of conflict into coordination games

• View:

1. Sentential force: semantically encoded update of context
2. Utterance force: coordinating function of utterance (Millikan 2005)
3. Social norms: primary mechanism relating 1 and 2

1 Previous Accounts of Utterance Force

Explanatory Aim Systematize intuitive categorizations of utterances into, e.g. warnings, assertions, promises, etc.

Issue Systematic cross-linguistic native speaker judgements?

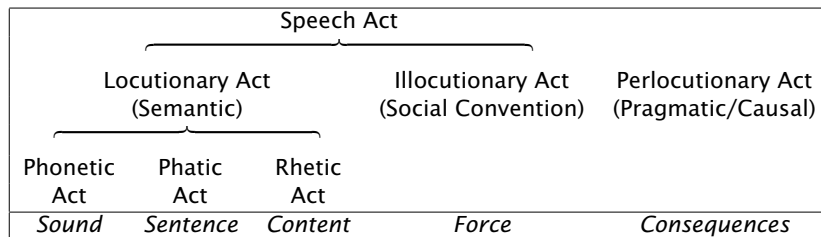


Figure 1: Austin (1962) Analysis of Speech Acts

1. *Mechanism*: social conventions
2. *Utterance Force*: individual commitments brought about by utterances and social conventions

Issue What are social conventions? How are they activated? Social conventions for betting, naming OK, but all utterances (Strawson 1964)?

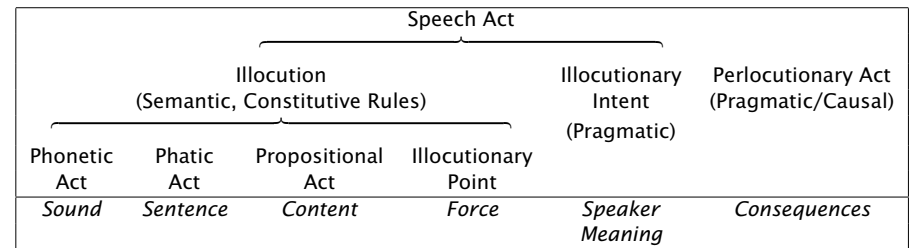


Figure 2: Searle (1969) Analysis of Speech Acts

1. *Mechanism*: constitutive rules
2. *Utterance Force*: understood, intended commitments brought about by utterance and constitutive rule

Issue Variation in force without variation in linguistic form, e.g. *Run!*

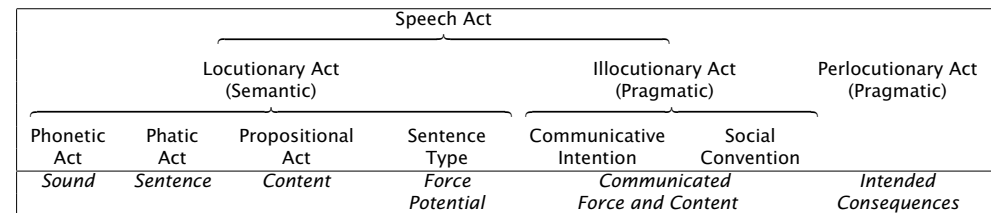


Figure 3: Neo-Gricean Analysis (Bach & Harnish 1979; Cohen & Perrault 1979)

1. *Mechanisms*: communicative intentions, inference; social conventions
2. *Utterance Force*: understanding of intended commitments brought about by utterance and intention recognition

Issues Stipulates sentential/utterance force relations; ‘hybrid forces’ impossible; recognition of intended effects only

- **Dynamic Models**: say how utterances ‘changes score’ (Hamblin 1971; Stalnaker 1978; Lewis 1979; Gazdar 1981)
 - ‘Score’: what agents are mutually assuming for exchange
- Recent empirical focus on dynamic models of **sentential force** (Portner 2004; Murray 2010; Starr 2010; Murray & Starr 2012)
 - Murray & Starr (2012) model: declaratives eliminate worlds, interrogatives introduce alternatives, imperatives order alternatives, evidentials make at-issue/not-at-issue contributions
 - Mixtures of mood and evidentials under connectives favors semantic account (Murray & Starr 2012)
- But what about **utterance force**?

- A Neo-Gricean proposal for assertion (Bach & Harnish 1979: 42):
 - Speaker *S*'s utterance of *Janis was a singer* to *H* counts as an assertion roughly when:
 - (1) *S* intends *H* to recognize that:
 - S* believes that Janis was a singer and
 - S* intends *H* to form this same belief
 - Update common ground w/content of *Janis was a singer* and further inferred content (1)
- *Resistance*: lingering concerns above and this account does not tell us what the **communicative function** of an utterance is

2 Force in Communication

- Basic argument: communicative function of utterance is coordination in joint activities, despite conflicting interests
 - For coordination, speech acts must provide reasons to act
 - Mutual assumptions aren't 'actionable', nor are beliefs about each others' communicative intentions
 - Communicative intentions cannot resolve conflicting interests
- Túngara bat illustrates communication-coordination link
- Scott-Phillips *et al.* (2009) study shows power, suggests limitations, of communicative intentions
 - They can't coordinate us when interests conflict
 - May be necessary for communication, but not sufficient
- Social norms provide exactly what's needed
 - Dynamically evolve in response to contingencies in psychological, social and physical environments
 - Exploit unconscious psychological processes sensitive to social cues like reputation, relationship type (Fiske 1992) and schema/activity type (Schank & Abelson 1977; Levinson 1979).
- Bayesian reply? Bounded rationality/oppressive speech reply to reply.
- Attitudes made mutual are mediated through social norms
 - Result in personal commitments
- Force of an utterance: personal commitments it has function of imparting via operative social norms
- **Conversational state**: models how mutual attitudes spread to individuals via social norms

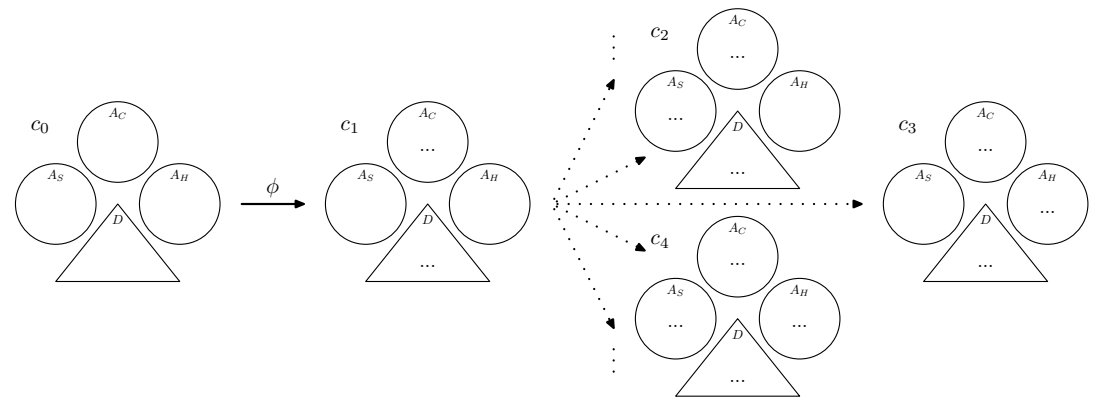


Figure 4: Semantic contribution and possible forces

- **Mutual**: A_C, D ; **Personal**: A_S, A_H ; Social norms mediate

3 Social Norms for Conversational States

- Warm-up: "Here!" (Levinson 1979); Simon says
- Kathy (veteran teacher, sister) and Sharon (new teacher, sister):¹
 - (2)
 - Kathy*: All you have is twelve kids?
 - Sharon*: No. Seventeen
 - Kathy*: Oh, okay.
 - Sharon*: ...and fourth-graders.
 - Kathy*: So then, what you do is, you sprinkle the fifth-graders out evenly... And you make the fourth-graders take the responsibility for teaching them.
 - Sharon*: Third-graders?
 - Kathy*: And you engrain in them, that it's their responsibility to help those little kids. That's what I did.
- Imperatives introduce ranking of alternatives to mutual discourse assumptions
 - Adoption by Sharon mediated by norms of communal interaction w/trusted source
 - Function of utterance is to improve Sharon's deliberations w/o assuming dominance over them

¹Excerpted from the Santa Barbara Corpus (Du Bois *et al.* 2000), SBC004, 967.87 969.38-983.09 983.67.

- Near strangers Lynne (equine expert) and Lenore (non-expert) chat:²
 - (3) a. *Lenore*: So you're always bent over.
 - b. *Lynne*: You're always bent over. And like in the front? You stick the horse's hoof between your leg, you know? Kinda like that, and you kinda, you go like this, you kinda bend down like this, and you have the horse's hoof [right here]?
 - c. *Lenore*: It's hard on your back.
 - d. *Lynne*: It's really hard on your back.
- Function of the imperatives is not directive
 - Lenore has no need or interest in maintaining hooves
 - Build report, social bond
 - Even richer, more social model needed
- Applications to speech acts and social philosophy:
 - Authority problem: what gives some the authority needed to slur others? (Langton 1993; Maitra 2012)
 - Opt-in problem: why don't the oppressed reject rules that make it possible to subordinate them?
 - Amplification of hate speech (Tirrell 2012)

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²Excerpted from the Santa Barbara Corpus (Du Bois *et al.* 2000), SBC001, 996.56 997.50-1008.06 1010.29.

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