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SOME REMARKS ON THE CLASSIFICATION  
OF UTTERANCES

In what follows I shall present a few remarks on the classification of utterances as represented by Austin, Fraser, and Grodziński. There are three reasons why I have decided to put these three names together.

1. It is unquestionable that Austin's research on utterances has been an important contribution to philosophy of language and the impact of his work on both philosophy of language and linguistics has been considerable. For this very reason his views deserve attention.
2. Fraser was one of those linguists who critically viewed the so-called Performative Hypothesis /cf. e.g., Fraser 1971, 1973/ and he proposed some insightful solutions of his own. /Cf. Fraser 1974a, 1974b, 1975/.
3. Grodziński's recent book "Wypowiedzi Performatywne" /Performative Utterances/ is an original proposal of his own approach to the classification of utterances.

Now a brief presentation of the classification of utterances as conceived by the three above mentioned scholars is in order

Although the notion "utterance" will be quite essential in this paper I shall not attempt any strict definition. The notion "utterance" will be taken here in the sense of, simply, "uttering words/phrases, sentences/ with some sense and reference", that is, "speaking a language". /Cf. Austin's 1962 "locutionary act"/. This treatment of "utterance" places a considerable stress on "uttering words /phrases, etc./, i.e., "producing speech" as opposed to, say,

"listening" or "writing". It is obvious, nevertheless, that "utterances" can be represented graphically; they can be written down.

Because the notion "utterance" will be crucial in the presentation of Grodziński's classification of utterances an illustration seems to be inevitable at this point.

1. I'm telling you to shut up.

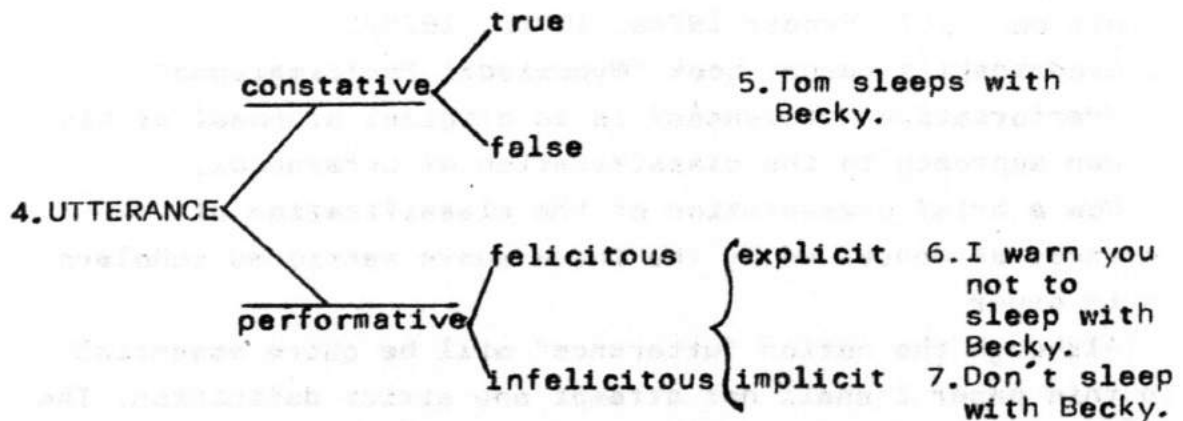
2. Shut up!

3. John shouted at his younger brother, "Shut up!"

1,2, and "shut up" of 3 will be considered to be graphic representations of speech, i.e., of utterances that could have been uttered by someone whereas "John shouted at his brother" of 3 will be considered to be a sample of written language and thus not an utterance. /In some specific contexts "John shouted at his younger brother" can be an utterance, e.g., as an answer to a question/.

After these preliminaries it is time now to address my main task in this paper which is presenting Austin's, Fraser's, and Grodziński's classifications of utterances.

As is well known Austin /1962/ classified utterances into two categories: Constative Utterances and Performative Utterances. 4 - 7 below represent his classification.



Constative Utterances can be true or false whereas Performative Utterances instead of truth values are characterized by conditions pertaining to the appropriateness of their use. Austin's name for these conditions is "Felicity Conditions" or "Happiness Conditions". Accordingly,

a performative utterance can be "felicitous" /happy/ or "infelicitous" /unhappy/.

According to Austin all performative utterances fall into two subcategories: explicit performative utterances and implicit performative utterances. The criterion of this subdivision of performative utterances is purely syntactic; explicit performative utterances are those whose main clause contains an expression of the following canonical form:

1. first person subject "I"
2. second person object "You"
3. present tense and indicative mood
4. the verb belongs to the class of "performative verbs"

Implicit performative utterances do not exhibit the above mentioned characteristics but, under certain conditions, they can be equivalent functionally to explicit performative utterances. 6 and 7 above are examples of explicit and implicit performative utterances, respectively. Both these utterances /6 and 7/, under certain specific conditions, can count as having the function of a warning. Austin called this function of an utterance its "Force".

To finish this very brief presentation of Austin's classification of utterances I shall mention in passing that he changed his views on "performativeness" and its role in analyzing utterances and substituted his early theory of performative utterances with a theory of linguistic acts. Austin's theory of linguistic acts /locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts/ has had much influence on some philosophers of language and linguists.<sup>1</sup>

One of the representatives in the latter category is Fraser. It must be mentioned, however, that Fraser's classification is, in fact, a classification of linguistic acts and not utterances. It might thus seem that a comparison of the "early Austin" and Fraser is impossible. I am of the opinion that such a comparison is possible because linguistic acts are realized via utterances. Also, it must be borne in mind that the theory of linguistic acts is an extension or continuation of the "early Austin", which is what Austin envisaged himself.

Returning now to Fraser, he classified illocutionary acts into two sub-classes: Institutional Acts and Vernacular Acts. /Illocutionary acts are considered to be a class of linguistic acts, cf. Austin's three-way classification of linguistic acts alluded to above/. The former are such whose definition rests with certain cultural or social institutions belonging to a society. These acts are not free from certain restrictions imposed on the speakers who perform them by institutional forms of societal organization. The latter are such acts whose successful performance depends solely on the beliefs the participants share about the communicative context and about themselves. Fraser's classification of Institutional Acts and Vernacular Acts is shown below.

**Institutional Acts**

1. legal
2. religious
3. business
4. government
5. sports

**Vernacular Acts**

1. representative
2. directive
3. evaluative
4. commissive
5. establishive

Institutional Acts are classified according to the institution they represent whereas Vernacular Acts are classified from the point of view of the speaker's intention. By way of illustration I shall provide a few examples of the verbs which represent each class of Institutional and Vernacular Acts. IA and VA stands for Institutional Acts and Vernacular Acts, respectively.

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| IA: 1. pronounce man and wife,<br>sentence | VA: 1. stating, reporting      |
| 2. christen, excommunicate                 | 2. requesting, suggesting      |
| 3. fire, resign                            | 3. criticizing, congratulating |
| 4. proclaim, veto                          | 4. swearing, promising         |
| 5. declare safe, checkmate                 | 5. permitting, granting        |

It can be observed that the five classes proposed by Fraser for IA's do not cover all aspects of the institutional forms existing in modern societies and some of the verbs representing each class of IA's cut across more than just one class of IA's on the one hand and on the other some VA's cut across IA's. For example, arts, education, etc., are not represented in Fraser's classification. The verb "resign" can represent at least three IA's, e.g.; business IA, legal IA, and government IA. "Granting" can be both IA and VA. Furthermore, legal IA's seem to be a broader category than, say, sports IA's /The presentation of Fraser's classification is based on Fraser 1975, and Fraser 1978/.

The presentation of Austin's and Fraser's classifications served the purpose of establishing a convenient background for the presentation and evaluation of Grodziński's classification of utterances.

Grodziński /1980/ distinguishes three types of performative utterances /wypowiedzi performatywne/<sup>2</sup>:

1. Performative Utterances with Legal or Quasi-legal Significance /I shall call them Legal or Quasi-legal Performatives/
2. Explicit Performatives
3. Polite Formulas

Legal Performatives fall into two sub-groups: General Legal Performatives and Individual Legal Performatives. The former "call forth new rights and/or obligations for huge groups of people" /Grodziński op.cit.:147/ and the latter "call forth new rights and/or obligations for individuals" /Grodziński op.cit.:147/. Constitutions and international treaties, for example, will be instances of General Legal Performatives. Acts of marriage, last wills, etc., will be instances of Individual Legal Performatives.

Quasi-legal Performatives are different from the Legal ones in that their range of application is more restricted. They call forth rights and/or obligations for groups of people or individuals relative to extra-legal norms accepted in the given social group. An example in this sub-group can be "betting".



Explicit Performatives are utterances which begin with a clause containing a performative verb, e.g.; advise, promise, warn- etc./Cf. Austin's "explicit performatives, p. 2/. Whereas Legal and Quasi-legal Performatives create new legal or quasi-legal relationships among individuals or groups of individuals Explicit Performatives create what is denoted by the performative verb they contain, They create an advice, a promise, a warning, etc.

Finally, Grodziński's /op.cit:149/ Polite Formulas are performative utterances whose creative function is to "call forth the 'polite atmosphere' congenial for human interaction". 8 below represents Grodziński's classification of performative utterances.

8. 1. Legal                      Performative Utterances  
    Quasi-legal
2. Explicit Performative Utterances
3. Polite Formulas

Even a superficial examination of the three classifications dealt with above shows that the one proposed by Grodziński is very much different from the other two.

Firstly, missing from Grodziński's classification are Austin's "implicit performatives" though their performative character seems unquestionable. What is more, it can be claimed that for some types of acts the implicit performatives are by far the more frequent ones. This is certainly true for questions; cf. e.g., 9 - 11.

9. I ask you to tell me the time.
10. What's the time?
11. What time is it now?

Secondly, it is difficult, if at all possible, to find out on what grounds Grodziński classified performative utterances into three classes mentioned above. Even if it is the case that both Legal and Quasi-legal Performatives on one hand and Explicit Performatives on the other "do something" /the former call forth legal acts and the latter call forth speech acts/ it is hard to accept that the

function of "doing something" in the case of Polite Formulas is calling forth "polite atmosphere". It seems to me that Explicit Performatives and Polite Formulas somehow belong together as far as their function of "doing something" is concerned: they both express speakers' intentions. They are thus different from the class of Legal and Quasi-legal Performatives which do not express speakers' own intentions. It should be admitted though that Grodziński has managed to point out some interesting aspects connected with the use of Legal and Quasi-legal Performatives and Polite Formulas; for this he must be commended.

Thirdly, Explicit Performatives have been distinguished as a distinct class of utterances on the basis of their syntactic features. No such criterion can be applied to Legal and Quasi-legal Performatives and Polite Formulas: syntactically, some of them are explicit performatives and some are implicit performatives in Austin's sense.

Lastly, Grodziński's understanding of the notion "utterance" is a rather peculiar one. To the best knowledge of the author of this paper most people, both philosophers of language and linguists, writing on "utterances" have in mind "uttering" or, simply, "speaking a language". This is not so with Grodziński's approach. In his treatment of legal acts, constitutions, for example, as well as international treaties are utterances. Yet, more than often, acts of law demand written statements or signatures to be valid, rather than oral statements /i.e. utterances/. For example, all international agreements are written down on paper and signed by the authorized representatives of the interested parties and only then /i.e. after they have been signed/ the signed documents assume the legal force. It is a well known fact that when it comes to legal validity people seem to trust "the written word" more.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I dealt with these matters in Oleksy /1979/.
- <sup>2</sup> Notice a terminological difference at this point which occurs in the Polish renderings of "utterance" and "performative". Grodziński uses "wypowiedź" and "performatywny" whereas Pisarkowa /1976/ uses "wypowiedzenie" and "wykonawczy", respectively.

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Streszczenie

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