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SPEECH ACTS AND ILLOCUTIONARY FORCES

This paper is concerned with an analysis of Questions as Speech Acts (SA). By a SA I understand the act of uttering of an expression X by a Speaker S who communicates something in order to intentionally create an effect IF in an Addressee H relative to the context R in which the act of uttering X takes place. X is a sentence belonging to a language L. S is the person who does the act of uttering X. H is the person who participates in the communicative situation in which a SA is performed. IF is the illocutionary force of X, which is what the Speaker S intends X to be taken for by the Addressee H in context R. R is the empirical setting in which the performance of a SA takes place.

An adequate description of a SA must account for both its syntactic and semantic characteristics on the one hand, and for whatever makes the given SA appropriate in the context in which it is used on the other. As is well known the latter aspect of analysis involves what Austin (1962) called felicity conditions. The study of felicity conditions can not be performed within the bounds, and limitations, of any of the syntactic or semantic theories proposed so far by linguists but it can be accounted for at the level of analysis which is often referred to as pragmatics.

I am quite aware of the fact that the notion "pragmatics" is far from being crystal clear. Scholars who work in the field of pragmatics: philosophers, logicians, and linguists approach human communication from different angles and in a variety of ways. Some, for example, would follow Morris' original division into syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (cf., Thomason 1977) and others would like to see all three combined within one integrated theory (cf., for example, Ross 1975). Without deciding the question what pragmatics is or what it should be it is still possible to say, I think, that linguistic pragmatics should be concerned with these aspects of verbal communication which are outside the scope of syntax and semantics (putting aside the biological aspects of language) in order to see and, hopefully, to explain how language users manipulate language in the process of communication. From this it follows that at the present state of the art it seems realistic to keep the pragmatic aspects of linguistic analysis apart from the syntactico-semantic aspects since it is clear that the former are connected with how language functions and the latter are connected with how language is structured.

Corresponding to these two aspects are rules of well-formedness and rules of appropriateness of use, or, in other words, well-formedness conditions and felicity conditions. It has become a practice among some language analysts to try to describe the interaction between these two types of conditions by thinking up hypothetical situations in which a sentence can be used intentionally by the speaker to perform different communicative functions. My point is this. It is difficult, if at all possible, to explain the interaction between felicity conditions and well-formedness conditions if little is known about use of language in terms of rules which govern the use, and, consequently, little is known about felicity conditions. To illustrate this point I will consider three situations in which the utterance of (1) can be taken to function as an answer, a threat, and a warning.

1. It's five o'clock.

Situation One. The first case is an easy one and it is not difficult to imagine a situation in which (1) has been uttered as an answer to a question as in (2).

2. What time is it?

Situation Two. The second situation is slightly more imaginative. Someone "X" was expected to pay back a large sum of money on an appointed day and was told that if he didn't do that he would be shot. The appointed day comes and "X" doesn't pay the money back to "Y". Now, if "Y" turns up and utters (1) into "X's" face he will no doubt take it as a threat. If this is so then (1) has the force of (3).

3. If I don't get the money this instant I'll shoot you.

An overtly expressed threat would be something like (4).

4. I threaten you that I'll shoot you if I don't get the money this instant.

Situation Three. Two individuals, "X" and "Y", are planning to steal a diamond from the local jeweler's. The time is five o'clock in the morning and they know that at this time the policeman on duty usually passes by the jeweler's. If "X" utters (1) to "Y" he may be warning "Y" that he should not leave his hiding place or else he will be spotted by the policeman. "X's" utterance of (1) will then have the force of (5).

5. I warn you not to leave your hiding place.

I shall leave it up to the reader's imagination to think up situations in which the utterance of (1) can have other functions. And, indeed, it may very well be the case that the number of functions or forces that (1) can have is limitless. The important point that I want to make now is that it seems to me more realistic if instead of considering hypothetical situations like the ones above we shall try to see what actually is happening when someone is issuing a threat or a warning. It seems to me that a more revealing consideration, and the one that is more valid linguistically, would be to find out the factors present in the given utterance and the given communicative situation in which the utterance was used. By doing this it would be possible to say something about factors that make the utterance what the speaker intended it to be and what the addressee took it to be. In short, what makes the utterance appropriate in the context in which it is used.

To repeat once more; instead of trying to prescribe different communicative functions or forces to utterances relative to hypothetical context in which they can be used we can proceed from an opposite direction and try to describe as precisely as we can the

contexts in which utterances are actually used with the force they are used to be able to define all the factors that characterize the appropriateness of the given utterance in the given context.

It should be clear from the above, especially from the definition of SA that I gave at the outset, that it is the use of an utterance in context that constitutes the performance of a SA. In view of this whatever has been said about utterances and their appropriateness applies mutatis mutandis to SA's and felicity conditions. Since I assume that there is only one IF per SA, the above discussion amounts to saying that any analysis of SA's must take into consideration felicity conditions.

In assuming that there is only one IF per SA, granted that my definition of IF is correct, I am saying that given the context in which a SA is used the speaker who uses the SA can only intend to mean one thing at a time and he encodes his intention and his meaning in the SA he is making. This also means that utterances are not ambiguous in context. It must be borne in mind, however, that the meaning that is present in SA is the "utterers meaning": Very often, in actual communication, the participants may misinterpret their mutual intentions as to the way they "mean" what they say. There may exist a discrepancy between what an utterance is intended to be and what it is taken to be, which leads to a misinterpretation of the SA being made by the speaker. Suppose that a speaker has uttered (6) and by doing so he could have expressed either a genuine request for the reason why someone did something or he could have expressed his dissatisfaction with someone's doing something; these two possibilities are, roughly, paraphrased in (7) and (8).

6. Why are you doing this?

7. I want you to give me the reason why you are doing this.

8. You should not be doing this.

While the first interpretation (7) for (6) is that of a request for information and I shall label it as a Question the second one (8) can be called a Reprimand; both terms stand here for the names of SA's that the speaker could be making by uttering (6). Notice that the addressee would react differently to (6) depending on which of the two interpretations he would assume the speaker was intending. Hence, (9) or (10).

9. Because it's already seven o'clock and I must finish sorting this stuff out before eight if I am ever going to make it to the airport in time.

10. It's none of your business.

It will be difficult to define which of the two meanings were intended by the speaker on the basis of (6 and 9) or (6 and 10) alone. To be able to do this the speaker's reaction to (6) must be known. Suppose then that the speaker uttered (6) to which the addressee produced (10), which in turn made the speaker say (11).

11. Why are you so rude to me. I only wanted to know why you were doing all this.

The speaker has thus made it clear that he intended (6) as a Question and not as a Reprimand. Considerations of this nature are above the scope of this paper. It suffices to say that proper answers could be provided only if the analysis is stretched upon longer portions of conversational interaction wherein the speaker's meaning is interpreted relative to the addressee's meaning.

After these somewhat longish preliminaries I shall proceed to the presentation of

the framework within which the analysis of Question as a SA is possible. This framework, I believe, can be extended to other SA's. I therefore propose that an analysis of a SA must take into consideration the following factors:

1. The Syntactic Form and the Propositional Content of the expression the utterance of which constitutes the performance of the given SA
2. The Semantic Presupposition of the expression the utterance of which...
3. The Pragmatic Presupposition of the speaker who is performing the given SA
4. The Communicative Context in which the given SA takes place
5. The Socio-cultural Context in which the given SA is acceptable

I shall not be concerned with the first two factors in detail here assuming that they can be handled by a Grammar of a generative type which accounts for the syntactico-semantic characterization of the expression the utterance of which constitutes the performance of the given SA. I shall then pass to (3), (4), and (5).

3. The Pragmatic Presupposition is taken here after Stalnaker (1972) as a relation holding between the Speaker and the proposition; it is defined as the propositional attitude of the Speaker.
4. The Communicative Context is a set of assumptions the participants in the communicative situation are making about themselves and about the content of what is being communicated as well as about the world around them. All these assumptions constitute an integral part of the pragmatic characterization of a SA and are uniquely associated with the given SA although some of them cut across different SA's due to general principles of conversation.
5. The Socio-cultural Context in which the given SA is acceptable is a set of restrictions on the use of the SA relative to cultures and/or rules of social behaviour.

I shall now present an analysis of Questions which function as direct SA's along the lines proposed in (1-5). The analysis will be restricted in several ways. Firstly, by Question I understand a SA which conveys a request for information and thus I sharply distinguish between Questions and Interrogatives; the latter being structures accounted for by a set of syntactico-semantic rules which, in most cases, are language specific and may be employed by language users to perform various communicative functions including requesting for information. I have dealt with the terminological inconsistencies in the linguistic literature concerning Question and Interrogatives in Oleksy (1977). Secondly, I shall deal only with such Questions whose syntactico-semantic form is that of an interrogative sentence. Thirdly, Questions in my analysis are derived from two distinct propositional structures;

- A. One which contains a disjunction of two or more propositions
- B. One which contains a proposition with an indefinite NP

The former is the underlying Propositional Structure (PS) for Checking Questions (CHQ) and the latter is the underlying PS for Searching Questions (SQ). Traditionally, these two types of Questions have been most often referred to as Yes-No Questions and Alternative Questions for the A-type in this paper and WH Questions for the B-type. Because I am more interested in what Questions do in communication rather than how they are derived by a grammar of a language and because the traditional terminology is inconsistent in the use of criteria of classification (e.g., type of answer in the case of Yes-

-No Questions, the underlying structure in the case of Alternative Questions, the presence of a Wh-word in the surface (or underlying structure for WH Questions) I prefer to use the terms which reflect the communicative functions of the two types of Questions.

By way of illustration I shall analyze two Questions expressed in (12) and (13):

12. Is John a fool?

13. Where is the money?

(14) below represents the PS and the PP for (12)

14. Q : Is John a fool?

PS : (John is a fool)_{P₁} (John is not a fool)_{P₂}

PP : P₁ is true or P₂ is true

Where: Q = Question

PS = Propositional Structure

PP = Pragmatic Presupposition

(14) accounts for the PS and PP of (12) but it can easily be extended to account for sub-types of CHQ's. e.g., (15)

15. Did you kiss Susan or Betty?

Depending on whether "or" has an inclusive or exclusive interpretation the propositional content of (15) will be different but the PP will still express the Speaker's presupposition about the truth of one of the disjuncts.

I shall now turn to SQ's. (16) below represents the PS and the PP for (13).

16. Q : Where is the money?

PS : ((Money is at (Place) _{NP})

PP : It is true that there is a (Place) _{NP} such that P

The Speaker in uttering (13) presupposes the truth of the proposition P and is asking the Addressee to identify the referent of the NP which occurs in the proposition P.

Semantically, it can be noticed in passing, NP's which occur in the P's underlying SQ's are indefinite but the Speaker presupposes that their referents are definite. Therefore, the definiteness of NP's underlying surface occurrences of question words in SQ's is presupposed, not asserted.

The framework of analysis for SQ's proposed above can be easily extended to cover Questions with multiple occurrences of question words. However, each occurrence of a question word necessitates the introduction of a new PP into the analysis, which is in keeping with what I proposed above. (18) represents an analysis of (17) along the lines proposed for SQ's.

17. Who bought what?

18. Q : Who bought what?

PS : ((Person)_{NP} bought (Thing) _{NP}) P

PP : It is true that there is a (Person) _{NP} such that P

PP : It is true that there is a (Thing) _{NP} such that P

So far, I have tried to demonstrate how the first three factors can be employed in the analysis of Question. I shall now turn to the fourth factor; the Communicative Context. As I said above, any adequate account of a SA must take into consideration the Speaker, the Addressee, and the Context in which communication takes place. To be precise, an

analysis of SA's must take into consideration the assumptions that the participants have about themselves and about the content of what is being communicated. These assumptions constitute the shared knowledge of the participants and the shared knowledge, in turn, is part of the communicative situation.

To be able to say whether what the participants say is felicitous or not one must know what the general principles of verbal exchange are. Equally important, one must know what the unique conditions on the SA performed by the Speaker at the given time and in the given context are. The general principles of verbal exchange, the so-called „conversational maxims" have been proposed by Grice (1967) and I shall not be concerned with them here. Instead, I shall deal with only these conditions which are unique for Questions. I have borrowed a name for a typical communicative situation in which Questions occur from Belnap (1969). He proposed the term „erotetic situation" or, as he put it, „the asking-questions-in-circumstances". A typical „erotetic situation" will have the following constituents:

- 19. S = the Speaker
- H = the Addressee
- A = the Answer
- Q = the asking of a question in an erotetic situation
- R = the state of affairs (non-linguistic)
- PP = S's pragmatic presupposition

Assuming that everything that is present in a typical erotetic situation is given above I want to propose that the following set of assumptions held by the Speaker and by the Addressee constitute the felicity conditions on Questions. The conditions given in (20) are expressed informally but, I hope, they can be transformed into a more formal language, which I shall not attempt here.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20. 1. S is ignorant of R 2. S wants to know R 3. S believes that he will know R if Q 4. S believes that H knows R 5. S believes that H is willing to share R with him 6. S believes that H will supply A 7. S believes that R is present in A 8. S believes that Q is appropriate in erotetic situation 9. In asking Q, S has PP such that PP is true | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. H is not ignorant of R 11. H wants to supply R 12. H believes that S will know R if A 13. H believes that S does not know R 14. H believes that S believes that H is willing to share R with him 15. H believes that S will be satisfied with A 16. H is confident that R is present in A 17. H believes that A is appropriate in erotetic situation 18. In answering to Q, H is sharing S's PP |
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It is easy to see that (20.₁₋₁₈) can be broken down into Speaker Based Assumptions and Addressee Based Assumptions, respectively (S-A_{SS}) and (H-A_{SS}). However, (20.₁₋₁₈) show that (S-A_{SS}) can be further subcategorized. There is no doubt that (20.₁₋₃) are the

assumptions the Speaker is making about himself and that (20.₄₋₆) are the assumptions the Speaker is making about the Addressee. (20.₇), in turn, is the assumption the Speaker is making about the outside world which, in this case, is the subject matter of the „talk exchange” between him and the Addressee. (20.₈₋₉), on the other hand, seem to be S’s assumptions about the very SA, the Question, the Speaker is performing. Now, if the Addressee is to cooperate with the Speaker in the ongoing communication he must recognize and accept as true the assumptions made by the Speaker. This is precisely what is happening in (20.₁₀₋₁₈). The (H-A_{SS}) can also be divided into four categories: (20.₁₀₋₁₂) concern the Addressee, (20.₁₃₋₁₅) are assumptions about the Speaker, (20.₁₆) is an assumption about the state of affairs, and, finally, (20.₁₇₋₁₈) are the assumptions H is making about A.

If the conditions proposed above are the necessary and sufficient conditions, which I believe they are, for Question to be felicitous and if they properly account for what is happening between the Speaker and the Addressee when they participate in an erotetic situation then it is possible now to propose three general rules of conversational interaction which I shall call Rules of Conversational Cooperation in an Erotetic Situation.

Rule 1. Each (S-A_{SS}) has a corresponding (H-A_{SS})

Rule 2. S and H respect each other’s (A_{SS})

Rule 3. Rules 1–3 guarantee the maximum cooperation between S and H

Once again, I must stress that the three Rules of Conversational Cooperation and the conditions on the felicity of Question given in (20.₁₋₁₈) describe an ideal cooperation between S and H and thus they describe an ideal Erotetic Situation. Only by knowing what exactly is happening when a Question is asked and what the conditions of its being a felicitous SA are can we analyze situations in which the participants violate some of the conditions and thus the SA the Speaker is performing is not a Question at all or it is not decoded as a Question by the Addressee. By setting up conditions as the ones in (20.₁₋₁₈) it will be possible to talk about the violations in a more systematic manner. The study of the violation of felicity conditions on SA’s could be a way to investigate the so-called derived forces of utterances provided that we have, among other things, a description of SA’s in terms of felicity conditions. Ideally, we could be able to say whether an utterance X constitutes the performance of a SA, say, T if X can be described in terms of felicity conditions for T. Such an analysis would, in fact, involve the matching of utterances with felicity conditions on SA’s.

I shall consider an example in which the Speaker can not be said to be issuing a Question (despite the fact that superficially (21) could pass for a Question) because (21) violates conditions I proposed for Question in (20.₁₋₁₈). In other words I shall now try to answer the question: „Why (21) is not a felicitous Question?” using (20.₁₋₁₈) as a tool which measures „questionness”.

21. Where is John if he is by the window?

In terms of the violation of conditions proposed in (20.₁₋₁₈) it appears that (21) violates condition (20.₁) so it is not the case that the Speaker who uttered (21) is ignorant of R. It follows then that the Speaker who uttered (21) has, in fact, violated all other conditions and thus has failed to ask a Question. It can be added in passing that

the Speaker who uttered (21) has also violated the Rules of Conversational Cooperation. Rule 1. does not hold because (20.₁₋₁₈) do not hold. Rule 2. does not hold because it can not be the case that Rule 2. holds if Rule 1. does not, etc.

The above discussion showed that I was able to demonstrate why (21) could not be taken for a felicitous Question. It would be interesting to demonstrate what (21) is as a SA. This could only be possible if one had a set of conditions similar to those in (20) for all other SA's. Such conditions are non-existent, yet.

I shall now turn to discussing the Socio-cultural Context. I am convinced that the incorporation of sociocultural aspects into an analysis of SA's will make the analysis more valid. Most existing treatments of SA's are characterized by a considerable stress on the universal aspects of communicative interaction and they can be blamed for neglecting the fact that participants in a communicative situation, among other things, function as members of a particular society, a particular social group, and a particular culture. It should be clear that the analysis of SA's advocated here can not be equated with sociolinguistics. However, it is essential that the information concerning what SA's can be performed by which speakers and in which communicative situations be built into the analysis of SA's. It is also important to realize that speakers' evaluation of the appropriateness of a SA in a communicative situation can vary from individual to individual and, equally important, it can vary crossculturally. One could take a stronger stand on these matters and say that there is a range of applicability of SA's relative to speakers and communicative situations. This, at least in part, explains why people say awkward things, embarrass other people without realizing they do so, etc. In general, they misjudge the appropriateness of SA's in a communicative situation.

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, under the term Socio-cultural Context I understand a set of restrictions on the use of a SA in a communicative situation. What I mean by restrictions are such restrictions which cannot be related to felicity conditions but which are conventionally imposed on the participants by rules of social behaviour accepted in the given speech community and culture at the given time. The main difference between these restrictions and felicity conditions is that the former can vary not only within one and the same society but they can also vary across different cultures. This is probably why being "tactful" depends on who the speaker is who the addressee is and where the SA is performed.

It seems to me that, basically, the restrictions I am talking about are of three types: Social Restrictions, Cultural Restrictions, and Contextual Restrictions.

The first type of restrictions covers situations where the main divisions cut across such parameters as social status, sex, age, etc. Because of this type of restrictions certain SA's would not be expected to occur with certain speakers. For example, it is very unlikely for a captain to issue an Order to a general. Usually, adults refrain from asking questions about sexual matters in the presence of young children and telling dirty jokes is out of place in the presence of women or children.

The Cultural Restrictions should, perhaps, be called Cross-cultural Restrictions for what I mean here are differences in the appropriateness of SA's due to cultural differences. For example, in the US, at least in university circles, it is not acceptable to ask about one's salary unless among friends. Therefore, (22) would not be expected to

occur in a casual conversation between two persons employed at a university who do not know each other well even if they meet occasionally. There is nothing wrong with (22a) among university people in Poland.

22. How much is your monthly salary?

22a. Ile zarabiasz miesięcznie?

The last type of restrictions, the Contextual Restrictions, are very interesting from the point of view of SA analysis. Here again, some SA's would not occur due to the uniqueness of places and people participating in the communicative situation. For example, it would be out of place for anyone to utter (23) (and mean it as a Question) to a female pianist adjusting her chair right before the piano recital in, say, Carnegie Hall:

23. Where have you bought this beautiful dress?

The person who would utter (23) would violate, at least, two rules of "accepted" behaviour in a concert hall. It would break into the artist's privacy and it would impose the speaker's desire for information upon the audience who may not wish to share the information with the speaker. There is nothing wrong, however, if the same person utters (23) to the pianist after the recital, at a reception.

In the last section of this paper I was trying to raise the question of appending the analysis of SA's I proposed earlier with restrictions that would guarantee the appropriateness of SA's resulting from the social, cultural, and contextual conditioning of language use. What I said on this topic amounts to nothing more but preliminary remarks and suggestions without any claims of exhaustiveness.

As far as Questions are concerned, it is necessary to observe that a Question is not appropriate if any of the Rules of Conversational Cooperation in an Erotetic Situation are violated and/or if a Question is asked in a context in which an Erotetic Situation is not expected to occur due to social and contextual restrictions.

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AKTY MOWY I MOC ILLOKUCYJNA

Streszczenie

Pytanie jest zdefiniowane jako akt mowy, który funkcjonuje w określonych sytuacjach komunikatywnych nazwanych przez Belnap'a sytuacjami erotetycznymi (erot-

etic situation).

Proponuje się osiemnaście reguł za pomocą których można opisać sytuację erotetyczną, co w konsekwencji prowadzi do uściślenia definicji pytania jako aktu mowy.

Postuluje się, że pełny opis aktów mowy (na przykładzie pytania) powinien zawierać elementy socjo-kulturowe, które określają funkcjonowanie danego aktu mowy w społeczeństwie.