ON PERFORMATIVES

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Abstract. *Can we translate every performative to constative? If we can do this, does it mean that performatives are constatives? J. L. Austin made a distinction between performative and constative, but in time he gave up that distinction. Some theoreticians criticize Austin for using just conventional acts (Grice) and for his attitude that performatives are not spiritual acts (Loxley). We accept performatives as conventional and spiritual acts. In this paper the author explores some conventional speech acts-imperatives and requests, using Austin's conditions for successful speech acts and giving the argument against ambiguity thesis.*

Key words: *performatives/conventional acts/ambiguity thesis/imperatives/requests*

INTRODUCTION

    J. L. Austin was criticized for his theory of performance. He was criticized that he analyzed only conventional acts (Grice) and that he rejected non-serious acts as performative acts (Auslander). We are interested in the former, and because of that criticism we will discuss both conventional and anti-conventional theory.

    During his work, Austin also rejected the distinction performative ∕ constative. The dilemma is whether a performative can be a constative. Austin's arguments for the distinction between performatives and constatives are not very convincing. Those are, first, that performative utterances are neither true nor false. Therefore they are not statements. Second, someone who utters to H "I order you to go there" would not be said to have stated that he was ordering to H to go there. And, third, someone who utters an order does not intend to convey information to someone to do something, but he intends to be thereby ordering something. Why are these arguments not convincing for some theorists? Firstly, the argument is question-begging. We presuppose that performatives are not statements, which means they are neither true nor false. Secondly, even if the speaker would not be said to have stated that he was ordering, it does not follow that he was ordering to go there. If he is ordering S to go there, that does not imply that he was not

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stating that he was ordering S to leave. If this is the case, then we have the problem of ambiguity. Thirdly, Bach and Harnish state that speaker could be intending to do both, to inform and to order.[1]

We will consider some performatives in the interrogative mode. Then we will analyze the ambiguity thesis and intention as the most important phenomena which could make the analyses of performatives less difficult.

TRANSLATION OF PERFORMATIVES TO CONSTATIVES AND AUSTIN'S ABANDONMENT OF THE PERFORMATIVE∕CONSTATIVE DISTINCITION

The assumption of philosophers was for too long that the aim of statements is to state or describe some state of affairs, which must be either true or false. Grammarians state that not all statements are true or false as there are also questions, exclamations, or commands, wishes or concessions. For fifteen years philosophers were talking about pseudo statements and ethical propositions, which are not verifiable.

Austin made a difference between statements that are not nonsense and those for which the following conditions are valid:

"A: They do not "describe" or "report" or state anything at all, are not "true or false", and

B: the uttering of sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something" (Austin 1962: 5).

Here are some of Austin's examples:

"I name this ship Queen Elisabeth", as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem,

"I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow." (1962:5)

Austin calls those sentences performative sentences. Many of performatives are declarative ("I declare you husband and wife") or contractual ("I bet").

It is not enough to say some words, Austin wrote: "Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the circumstances in which words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, appropriate, and it is very commonly, necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain other actions, whether "physical" or "mental" actions or even acts of uttering further words" (1962:83). From this explanation, Austin entails conditions for successful performatives. We will see them in the fifth part.

Austin divides speech acts to serious and non-serious acts. The former are the utterances of ordinary language. The latter are utterances in theater, in literature and films or jokes. Serious performatives can be successful and non -successful. The second are necessary non successful, for Austin they are "parasitic".

We will see some kind of performatives with a verb with first person singular indicative active, and performatives without this verb:

""Out" is equivalent to "I declare, pronounce, give or call you out " (when it is a performative: it need not be, for example, if you are called out by someone not the umpire or recorded as "out" by the scorer),

"Guilty" is equivalent to "I find, pronounce, deem you to be guilty",

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[1] See more about this in: Bach&Harnish, (1982) *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts,* The MIT Press, Cambridge.

"You are warned that the bulls are dangerous", is equivalent to "I, John Jones, warned you that the bull is dangerous" or "This bull is dangerous", signed John Jones. "(1962:62).

Sentences "I betted" and "He bets" are not performatives, but describe some actions. We can say that verb with first person singular indicative active is specific of performatives.

Now, we will see Austin's division of utterances:

Performative	performative and constative	constative
I thank	I am grateful	I feel grateful
I apologize	I am sorry	I repent
I criticize	I blame	I am shocked by
I censure		I am revolted by
I approve	I approve of	I feel approval
I bid you welcome	I welcome	
I congratulate	I am glad about[2]	

The difference between these utterances is illocutionary force. While second and third group have descriptive meaning, the first one does not have it. The first has apologizing force, or force of gratefulness and so on.

<div align="center">SPEECH ACTS CONVENTIONALISM</div>

Conventionalism is tied with performative theory. There are two attitudes: conventionalism and anti-conventionalism. Austin and Ducrot are radical conventionalists and Recanati and Serl are a weak conventionalist. Anti-conventionalist theorists are Warnock, Hedenius and Cresswell.

Austin claimed that language is a big institution connected with conventional roles in the range of speech acts. For example, the rule for statements is that the speaker knows what he states, believing is expressed with special statements, hatred too. That means convention and it is very important for a speaker to believe in their statements, Serl and Austin think. But Sperber, Wilson, Bach and Harnish do not agree.

Austin made the distinction between conventional and physical acts. Physical acts are acts like raising hands, moving fingers or speech organs. They are defined by moving. It is necessary to make the distinction between uttering sounds and uttering sentences. The utterance "The cat is on the mat", is a consequence of speech organs moving. But, the uttering of this sentence is not equal to producing sounds. If we can say that the uttering of a sentence is a conventional act, then we can also say the same for acts of betting or baptizing etc. If there were no conventional roles in chess, we could not say that two people play chess, says Rekanati. Chess player activity is not just the moving of figures, but also the respect of socially accepted conventional roles. The performing of conventional roles is led by institutions. They define what can be done, who does it and under which circumstances.

Austin's opinion is that uttering sentences presents evoking of institutional rules. Linguistic act of making a question is performed in accordance with a special kind of con-

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[2] Austin, J.L.,(1962) *How to do things with words?*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, p.97.

vention which determines to do this and that, means to make a question. But uttering for example, an oath, means to swear by force of social convention, not simply by force of sentence meaning. Question is not a question because of linguistic convention but because of the meaning of that question, too. Warnock does not think that illocutionary acts can always be created by convention. He criticized Austin for failing to distinguish extra-linguistic acts (baptism, swearing) and acts when we say: "I advise you", "I state" and so. When we say "I swear", we do that by social convention, not with sentence meaning, but he does not know what convention is in utterance "What time is it?". This utterance has the force of question by virtue of its meaning. Anti-conventionalists say: when I use a sentence S to perform a speech act A, there is no convention to associate the uttering of S with performing of A (except the linguistic convention about meaning). But, Warnock accepts that there is convention in the act of baptizing.

Austin was wrong because he did not distinguish institutional acts and speech acts. All of them are illocutionary acts for Austin. Radical interpretation of conventionalism is: when a speaker performs an act A, it is always by virtue of convention that associates that act with a particular linguistic form that the speaker has used. This is indefensible because there are not always indicators which connect utterance with some act. Then ambiguity could be a problem for understanding the meaning of utterance, too. "Don't go" could be an order, request, but an entreaty, too. Radical conventionalism must be abandoned. But Austin was right for: that there is the same convention in act of baptism and act of greeting, this is pragmatic convention which associates sentences with certain illocutionary force. Serl, as a weak conventionalist, claimed that for making the differences between illocutionary acts it is necessary to separate indicators. These indicators could be markers as explicit verbs or context. So it is possible to perform a speech act conventionally by uttering a sentence that contains specific indicator by pragmatic conventions of language. This is the similarity with Austin.

Now, we will present Bach and Harnish speech acts schema (SAS) to see what are locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and to explain linguistic convention in question and importance of meaning for making questions.

"Utterance Act: S utters E from L to H in C.

Locutionary Act: S says to H in C that so-and-so.

Illocutionary Act: S does such-and-such in C.

Perlocutionary Act: S affects H in a certain way."[3]

Austin calls utterance acts phatic acts, which involve a performance of what we called phonetic acts. Utterance acts involve producing certain sounds in language L. Rhetic acts present sentences with more or less defined sense and reference. For Bach and Harnish, locutionary acts are rhetic acts in Austin sense.

Austin made a distinction in terms of what is done *in saying* something and what is done *by* saying something. Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts can produce effects on the hearer, but according to Austin, to be successful an illocutionary act must bring understanding of the meaning and force of the locution. Strawson thinks that intention is a very important phenomenon for explaining sentence meaning and for rejecting ambiguity.

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[3] E presents expression (typically sentence) in language L, L is language, S and H are speaker and hearer, and C presents context of utterance. See in Bach&Harnish, (1982) *Linguistic Communocatio and Speech Acts,* The MIT Press, Cambridge., p.3.

SPEECH ACTS IN COMMUNICATION

For pragmaticians (Grice, Sperber and Wilson, Bach and Harnish), linguistic communication is an inferential process. "The speaker provides, by what he says, a basis for the hearer to infer what the speaker intends to be thereby doing. However, what he says underdetermines what he can reasonably expect to be taken to be intending," (B&H,1982: 5). The inference the hearer makes is based on what the speaker says but also on *mutual contextual beliefs* (MCBs). When S says to H "I love you like my brother", that could mean that a woman does not have amorous feelings toward her brother or she hates her brother. Such information Bach and Harnish call "beliefs" rather than "knowledge" because they need not be true in order to figure speakers' intention and hearers' inference. They are contextual because they are relevant. They are "mutual" because S and H do not have both of them, but they believe they both have them.

Without common language we could not imagine communication. But people expect that, if people belong to the same community, they must understand each other, what is not always the case. People do not use all words, then it is possible not to understand each other. For the ordinary speakers, intuitive understanding is enough for them.

It is important for the hearer to understand the meaning of utterances. That means that it is necessary for the hearer to use operative meaning if we presuppose that a sentence is ambiguous. There are two ways to make an utterance unambiguous: the first way was suggested by Austin in the book "How to do things with words?" and that is by explicit verbs, and the second is by recognizing intention (Bach&Harnish). We will consider both of them and infer which of them is acceptable. The first way means this:

Instead of saying "I will come", I will say "I promise that I will come",
Commander would not say "Mow the grass", but "I order you to mow the grass",
Judge would not say "Guilty", but "I declare that you are guilty".

The first example is most acceptable for the following reason:

The utterance "I will come" can mean information, or uttering intention or promise. If it means information or uttering intention then it is constative. But we will not say that the utterance is constative if it presents promise. If it is a promise then the speaker becomes moral agent, because promising is a conventional moral act, and the speaker has commitment to do the promising action. On the other hand, the hearer expects the promising action to be done. If it is not done, then the hearer can suffer because people often promise what the hearer wants to hear. To recognize illocutionary acts force, Austin suggests including of performative verbs. Then the utterance "I promise I will come" clearly and unambiguously presents a promise. If we say for this utterance that it means "I will come" or "He will come" then we are in constative sphere. We do not reject the possibility that performatives could be promoted to constatives but that does not mean that they are equal. The first reason is that performatives obligate the speaker to do the promising action, while constatives inform and describe. We can say that the performatives are spiritual acts, which Austin rejected. He said that words serve not to describe the state of affairs but to predict our future actions. But when we look wider we can see that in utterances translating we include beliefs, emotions, intentions, thoughts and that shows us that performatives are spiritual acts.

Bach and Harnish think that the recognition of intentions enables the utterance to be ambiguous. Semanticians and pragmatics have opposite attitudes concerning the issue of meaning interpretation. Semanticians (Emma Borg, Lepore, Capellan) interpret meaning

literally, using context and truth-conditions, while pragmatics (Grice, Austin, Serl) use context, speaker meaning, intention and some of them reject truth-conditions (Sperber&Wilson). Pragmatic interpretation is wider, and transcends language, which corresponds to Austin's interpretation of performative.

What is the role of intention in meaning interpretation? Can the recognition of intention make performatives unambiguous? For Grice, reflexive communicative intention is the first step in interpreting of meaning, after believing, and it is equal with speaker meaning, which is equal to utterance meaning. Austin, Strawson, Searle, Bach and Harnish underlie the importance of communicative intention. Bach and Harnish said: "For instance, if e (utter) is ambiguous and S is not punning or otherwise speaking ambiguously, only one meaning of e will be operative, only one will be intended by S to be recognized by H as relevant" (Bach & Harnish 1982: 5). They give example, suppose S utters "I had the book stolen", intending to say that he got someone to steal the book for him. It is very important for successful communication for H to recognize that that is what S intended to say, and not to say that S had the book stolen from him (S). It is also important for H and S to believe in what S said. There are two general mutual beliefs that the hearer relies on to make his inference. Bach and Harnish call them linguistic presumption (LP) and communicative presumption.

LP: The mutual belief in the linguistic community Cl that the members of community share language and that whenever any member S utters any e in language to any other member h, H can identify what S is saying, given that he knows the meaning of e.

CP: The mutual belief in community that whenever a member says something in L to another member H, he is doing that with some recognizable illocutionary intent.

If we accept that speakers always have some intention and their intentions are not always sincere, then it is necessary to recognize intention for successful communication. Meanings of sentences are not always literal, we must look behind words.

AGAINST THE AMBIGUITY THESIS

Austin's conditions for successful performatives are very inspiring for many theorists. These are Austin's conditions for successful performatives:

"(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

(A.2) The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed, by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) Completely,

(G.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the on the part of any participating and so invoking the procedure, must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further,

(G.2) Must actually so conduct themselves subsequently," (Austin 1962:14).

I want to tie those conditions with conditions for conventional acts. Austin was very criticized because he did not define conventional acts. But his conditions (A1, A2, B1, B2) are certain conditions for conventional acts.

It is a very big task to analyze all performatives in this paper so I will limit our investigation to request and imperative in the interrogative and affirmative moods. Perhaps, since ambiguity makes utterance problematic for analyses, we will consider the ambiguity thesis. The ambiguity thesis is the view that sentences standardly used indirectly have additional meanings (1982:174). Under this view the standardized use is not indirect after all, but it is literal and direct. Bach and Harnish gave the following example for ambiguous sentences, sentences could be used literally either as a question or as a request. Question will be direct use, while request will be indirect use. Sadock (1974) states that questions were not always ambiguous. There are two kinds of arguments for the ambiguity thesis: psychological and linguistic. The first argument appeals to the introspective immediacy of the inference to the secondary illocutionary intent. The linguistic argument appeals to various paraphrastic phenomena. For example, if somebody says at the dinner "Can you pass the salt?", then it is a request, but if someone says the same sentence to a doctor, then it is a question. For Bach and Harnish, indirect use could be performed from direct use. They say: "If the psychological argument for the ambiguity thesis is correct, the apparent absence of inference (and of any intention that such an inference be made) can be accounted for only by supposing that the sentences in questions are ambiguous" (1982:175). A variety of psychological work has been done on three sources of ambiguity:

"*Lexical:* I found a bat.
Surface structure: It was in a little bat house.
Underlying structure: He had the bat stolen" (1982: 245).

MacKay and Bever (1967) show some evidence that when ambiguity is perceived, lexical ambiguity is perceived faster, and at the end of perceiving is underlying ambiguity. MacKay (1973) has suggested that lexical and surface ambiguities are processed in short-term memory, but the underlying ambiguity must wait transfer to a long-term memory.

Sadock calls whimperatives the sentences which are ambiguous and can be either a question or a request. Ha gave six kinds of ambiguity (whimperatives, impositives, declaratives, pseudo-imperatives, requestions, tag-questions)[4] but we will consider the first one. Whimperatives could be subjunctive and negative and beginning with: will, can, shall, may. It is necessary to prove that these sentences are behaving like requests, not like interrogatives. Sadock gave three arguments:

1. They are considerations about the distributions of words like "please" and "kindly". "Please" could stay preverbally or postsententially. For example "Please, Close the door", or "Close the door, please".

2. There are sentences which have subjunctive and negative sentences in themselves. For example, "When will you wash the car, or don't you know?"

can	subjunctive	
shall	negative	you, (please)
may		

3. Certain expressions co-occur with clear imperatives but do not co-occur with interrogatives.

Wash the car someone!
When will you wash the car, someone?
Will you wash the car, someone?

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[4] See more about these kind of ambiguity in Bah&Harnish, *Linguistic communication and Speech acts,* MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1982. ,p.177.

In each case the whimperatives are behaving like imperatives and not like questions. We can conclude that whimperatives functioning as requests can be evidence against ambiguity. Sadock has noted that directives can be reported using "ask", and "tell", while questions prefer "ask", and imperatives prefer "tell".

CONCLUSION

One of the inspirations for writing this paper has been the statement that performatives are constatives, too. Austin answered differently. First he said that performatives could not be constatives. He showed that using the example of promising, when he said that we can promise by nodding our head, but that does not mean that nodding one's head is promising. He concluded that by promising we can state something, but that does not mean that a promise is a statement. During his work he gave up from the distinction performative/constative. Austin concludes that constatives could be successful and non-successful and performatives could be true or false. Then he claimed that constatives are performatives because they serve to perform speech acts. In the end he reduced the performative/constative to illocutionary/locutionary acts. My opinion about this statement is the following: 1. It is not important whether performatives and constatives are true or false, because truth and falseness are not their indicators; 2. We must distinguish performing of speech acts from performing some acts by speech acts. By constatives we describe some states of affairs and predict future independent of our utterance, which is not the case with performatives; 3. For locutionary acts, the scheme is: S says to H in C that so-and-so, and for illocutionary acts we have the following: S does such and such in C. By the first acts we are doing something in saying something, and by the second, we are doing something by saying something.

Linguistic communication is viewed as a process whereby a speaker encodes message into signal, from which a hearer decodes the message (Bach and Harnish 1982:235). But communication is not simple like this explanation, because sentences are often ambiguous, as we have seen in this paper. Performance of speech acts involves translating pragmatic intentions. It is necessary for comprehension of speech acts to recognize intention. In either case, speaker's pragmatic intention is not just to communicate some messages in uttering the chosen sentence. The relation between the communicative intent and the meaning of the sentence is closer to compatibility than to translation. Recognition of speaker's intention and including of explicit verb, certainly, minimize the possibility of ambiguous interpretation of utterance. In this way, the recognition of the meaning enables successful communication. Since our task is the elimination of ambiguity and recognition of the first intention, then speech acts such as promises, requests or imperatives could be called performatives without the need to call them constatives. Then we could infer about the illocutionary force of speech acts.

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O PERFORMATIVIMA

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Da li svaki performativ možemo prevesti u konstativ? Ukoliko je to moguće, da li to znači da su svi performativi konstativi? Džon Ostin je pravio razliku između performativa i konstativa, međutim, vremenom je odustao od te distinkcije. Neki teoretičari kritikuju Ostina zato što analizira samo konvencionalne činove (Grajs) a neki to što Ostin ne uzima da su performativi duhovni činovi (Luksli). Mi prihvatamo da su performativi konvencionalni i duhovni činovi. U ovom radu autor istražuje neke konvencionalne činove-imperative i molbe, koristeći Ostinove uslove za uspešne performative i argument protiv teze dvosmislenosti.

Ključne reči: *performativi/ konvencionalni činovi/teza dvosmislenosti/imperativi/molbe*