

Non-representational speech acts on the table

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1. Speech Acts that propose a plan

1.1 Bermuda triangle: Directives, commissives and declarations

Some acts fall in between commissives and directives

- (1) *A: I invite you to dinner on Saturday.*
- (2) *A: I bet you 50 € that Black Beauty will win.*
- (3) *A: I challenge you to a duel. / Ich fordere Sie zum Duell.*

Obligations are mutual rather than obligations-of-A (= commissive) or obligations-of-B (= directive). Speech acts can invite to establish a **shared plan**. (Utterance requires uptake. No uptake — no new obligations.)

Open offers and proposals

- (4) *A: I propose to ... p ...*
- (5) *A: I suggest that ... p ...*
- (6) *A: Lets ... p ...*

English can express speech acts that propose **plans p of any level of complexity**. Plans for mutual obligations are not limited by cultural practices / the lexicon.

1.2 Uptake

- (7) *A: I invite you to dinner on Saturday.*
 - a. *B: No, sorry, I don't have time.*
 - b. *B: Thank you, I gladly accept.*
 - c. *B: (negotiates details; change of plan)*

Is uptake part of the act or an act in its own right?

What is the effect of uptake? Which utterances require uptake?

Austin, Searle: *not all SA require uptake ("Hello!", "Foul!")*
some SA do ... (offer, propose, bet, invite, ...)

More uptake than Austin/Searle saw:

- Table theory (Farkas&Bruce 2010): silence as tacit consent
- Portner (2004): Imperatives establish To-Do obligations *unless* the addressee turns them down.
- Schlöder (2014), Schlöder & Fernández (2015): weak and strong uptake; Clark (1996): dialogues as shared projects

1.3 Meta-Uptake: Negotiations

Schlöder (2014), Clark (1996) a.o.:

- proposal of a plan
- modifications of plan
- acceptance (or rejection) of modified plan

Models of non-representative speech acts need a storage device for plans while negotiations are going on.

Aim: Describe SA that propose a plan
Define a Table Model, including
proposal of plan
reactions and effects of reactions

2. What's in a plan?

Searle (1976): propositional content p (plus many more factors)

Portner (2004): commands are propositions on someone's To-Do-List

Kaufmann (2012): Imperatives denote modal propositions of certain types

Condoravdi & Lauer (2012): Imperatives change A's preference relations

Schwager (2006): Conditional obligations

<Anon>: Commissives are dual to directives¹

Plans are (at least) recursive systems of conditional obligations between two or more people.

A: *I offer to sell you a car for 500 \$.*

(i) if B says "yes", then A must pass car to B.

(ii) if B says "yes" and A passes car to B, then B must give A 500 \$.

(iii) if B says "yes" and A passes car to B and B gives A 500 \$ then B owns car.

If A fails to produce car, then B has no further obligations.

(See also Buffington 2015 for the logical form of contracts.)

A provisional proposal:

- The plan conveyed by a non-representative speech act is coded as a (modal) proposition $p(A,B)$ that describes the future moves and obligations of A and B.
- Plans can involve one or several interlocutors.
- Plans are stored in a common PLAN set, like shared beliefs are stored in CG. There are no individual To-Do-Lists or such.
- Individual speakers can take away individual preference relations / to-do-lists after the dialogue has ended.

¹ Starr (2012), Murray & Starr (t.a.) seem cases in question

3. Speech Acts on the Table

3.1 Elements of Table model for two interlocutors A, B

TABLE = storage device for unprocessed utterances.

DC_A, DC_B = the discourse commitments of A, B; “public beliefs”

CG = common ground

CG* = projected set; possible next common ground(s)

PC_A, PC_B = plan commitments of A, B; “plans that A/B agrees to”

PLAN = shared plans (plans that all interlocutors agree on)

PLAN* = projected plans; plans that await approval by one or more interlocutor

3.2 Semantic content of speech acts that propose plans

Utterance content q ([[.]] applied to the utterance) +

proposed plan $p(A,B)$ (similar to Searle’s *propositional content*)

A: *I order you to open the window.*

SA q = ORDER(A, B, $p(A,B)$) with $p(A,B)$ = ‘B opens the window’

A: *I bet you 50 \$ that black beauty wins.*

SA q = BET(A, B, p') p' = ‘BB wins’

with $p(A,B)$ = ‘A gives B 50 \$ if BB lost and B gives A 50\$ if BB won’

Presupposition: A holds it most likely that BB will win.

A: *I invite you to dinner on Saturday.*

SA q = INVITATION(A, B, ‘dinner-on-Saturday’)

with $p(A,B)$ = ‘B has dinner at A’s on Saturday’

A: *I challenge you to a duel.*

SA q = CHALLENGE(A, B, ‘duel’)

with $p(A,B)$ = ‘A and B duel, A is first’

Derive $p(A,B)$ from syntactic form = major open project for semantics?

3.3 Steps in negotiating plans

Comprehension precedes consent: Performative utterance must be understood before the proposed plan $p(A,B)$ can be accepted or rejected.

“True/false” are inappropriate: When A makes a performative utterance, B can not refuse the content (“that’s not true”). Content q will (almost) automatically update CG.

Uptake:

If plan $p(A,B)$ is proposed on the table, B can accept or reject the plan.

If $p(A,B)$ is not in PLAN*, an utterance by B is required (yes,ok — no, I object).

If $p(A,B)$ is in $PLAN^*$, then B's silence counts as acceptance.²

Aim of discourse:

Interlocutors aim to process utterances and clear the table.

3.4 Some examples

(see extra sheet / slides)

3.5 Performative utterances: Rules for conversational game

I. Performative utterance

Assume that A makes a performative utterance S with utterance meaning q and proposed plan $p(A,B)$. This has the following effects on the table:

- $\langle S, q \rangle$ and $p(A,B)$ are stored on the table.
- $p(A,B) \in PC_A$. (A agrees to plan $p(A,B)$)
- $q \in DC_A$
- $q \in DC_B$
- dependent on q , $p(A,B) \in PLAN^*$ (or not)

II. Hey, wait a minute

SA can depend on presuppositions (sincerity, other preparatory conditions). B can claim presupposition failure for the speech act. This removes q from DC_B and blocks further processing.

- (8) *A: I offer you my new Mercedes. — B: Hey wait! You don't own any Mercedes.*
- (9) *A: I invite you to dinner on Saturday. — B: Hey wait! You can't be serious; Saturday is your night shift at hospital.*

The dialogue is in a crisis. Further negotiations are necessary to settle the issue.

III. Remove utterance content from the table

Precondition: DC_A and DC_B contain q . $\langle S, q \rangle$ is on the table.

- CG is updated by q .
- The utterance $\langle S, q \rangle$ is removed from the table.
- **The plan $p(A,B)$ remains on the table.**

(Rule 3 extends the clearing rule for Assertions proposed by Farkas & Bruce).

IV. Uptake

Precondition: There is a plan on the table and interlocutor B has not commented yet.

² This in analogy to tacit acceptance of asserions. Alternatively, we could let the kind of SA determine the range of possible reactions: Is \emptyset tacit consent or failed uptake?

- B can uptake positively: “yes, ok, I agree ...”.
<Yes, $p(A,B)$ > on TABLE; $p(A,B) \in PC_B$
- B can uptake negatively: “no, I don’t agree”.
<No, $\neg p(A,B)$ > on TABLE, no update of PC_B
- If $p(A,B) \in PLAN^*$ and B does not uptake negatively,
then $p(A,B) \in PC_B$

V. Remove a proposed plan from the table

Precondition: Plan $p(A,B)$ is on TABLE and all interlocutors have $p(A,B)$ in their projected plans.

- PLAN is updated by $p(A,B)$. The plan gains the status of an accepted shared project.
- $p(A,B)$ is removed from the TABLE, from DC_A and DC_B , as well as $PLAN^*$.

4. Promises vs. orders

A: *I promise, swear to do p ; ich schwöre, p zu tun*

SA function as if they were *uptakes* to requests of B.

- Consent by B is presupposed: $p(A,B) \in PC_B$ when the utterance is made.
- Therefore the plan is established automatically when the utterance has been parsed and comprehended — unless B claims presupposition failure.

(10) A: *I promise to cook the salad.* — B: *Hey wait, I don’t want you to cook the salad!*

ORDER
good discourse starters
rest on general hierarchy A/B
previous commissive makes
order redundant.

PROMISE
marked discourse starters
rest on specific desires of B
previous request does not make
promise redundant

(11) a. A: *I order you to read this book.* — B: *I promise to read it.*
b. A: *I will read this book.* — B: *#I order you to read it.*

ORDER: incoherent when plan is already approved.

PROMISE: felicitous uptake of request.

It is coherent to claim that *promise* presupposes consent. Is it necessary?
Is it infelicitous to propose plans that are already accepted?

(12) A: *I will read “war and peace”.* — B: *Yes. Read it! It is cool!*

=> Inquire in the typology of imperatives (see 5.2)

=> Test similar pairs for other directive verbs.

5. Further considerations

5.1 Hypothesis: Only declarations can establish plans without uptake by interlocutors.

The following speech acts do not allow for negative uptake:

- (13) *Foul!*
- (14) *I order you to pay a fine of 40 Sfr.*
- (15) *I sentence you to 10 years in jail.*
- (16) *I (hereby) quit my job.* (Klaus Mehdorn as BER Manager, 2015)
- (17) *The meeting is hereby opened.*
- (18) *You are fired!*
- (19) *I baptize this ship "Maria".*

Utterance establishes a plan / change in plan / change in situation.

The action taken by A **must be an action alternative in a more general "game" that A and B are part of.**

- *conventional speech acts*
- *speech acts that require institutional anchoring*
- *speech acts that are culture dependent, depend on time*

If S denotes an action alternative q for A in a more general "game", then q is immediately established in PLAN.

Interlocutor B can not disagree to q but B can challenge the fact that A has permission to do q .

(It was discussed whether Mehdorn could actually quit his manager position by standing up in a meeting and utter "*I quit.*" Experts agreed that the step was one of Mehdorn's action alternatives and he was entitled to resign in this manner.)

5.2 Typology of imperatives

The table model reflects the typology of imperatives (e.g. Schwager 2007, Kaufmann 2012):

- (20) ORDER:
Open the window!
- (21) PERMISSION:
Take a cookie! (Feel free to take a cookie! / Nimm ruhig einen Keks!)
- (22) WARNING/ADVICE:
Drive carefully!
- (23) WISH:
Get well soon! Machs gut! (lit. "do well")
- (24) INFORMATION:
(In order to go to the airport, ...) take the local trains Konstanz - Zurich.

Different uptake potential:

- (18') ORDER: Ø / *ok!* / *no, I won't*.
“ok” establishes a plan. Refusal triggers negative reactions by A (force)
- (19') PERMISSION: Ø / *ok* (, *thanks!*) / *no (thanks!*)
“ok” establishes a plan, but sanctions are mild if B fails to comply.
Refusal likewise less costly than in (18).
- (20') ADVICE: Ø / (*ok!*) / # *no, I won't*.
“ok” does not establish a plan; B commits to a certain manner of acting.
Refusal would be irrational (even if B does not plan to follow warning).
- (21') WELL-WISHING: Ø / (*ok*) / #*no, I won't*
Imperative does not bring a plan on the table. “ok” acknowledges the positive intention of speaker A.
- (22') INFORMATION: Ø / *ok* / #*no, I won't* / *no (that's not a good idea)*
Imperative conveys information. A aims at update of CG (“how to go to Zurich airport”) rather than at establishing a shared plan.

Different content (Kaufmann 2012) = different uptake potential and table moves → to be studied further.

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