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Interactional negotiation[1]

1. Introduction

In her numerous works, Marina Sbisà (1984, 1992, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2019) has developed an Austin-inspired theory of speech acts which constitutes an alternative to the Gricean account of illocutionary interaction. According to John L. Austin, "the illocutionary act is a conventional act: an act done *as* conforming to a convention" (Austin 1975: 105); the force of a speech act, then, is determined not by the speaker's intention, but by the *conventional procedures* she invokes in making her utterance (*Ibid*.: 128). By contrast, the Griceans (Strawson 1964; Bach and Harnish 1979) claim that "a central class of illocutionary acts is communicative in nature" (Harnish 2005: 15) and that the force of a communicative speech act — e.g., that of a statement, a request, a warning, a promise, an apology, etc. — is determined by the audience-directed and reflexive intention with which it is made (Strawson 1964; Bach and Harnish 1979). They also argue that only some illocutionary acts — such as betting, dubbing, giving a verdict, naming a ship, and other formal or ritualized conversational moves that Austin (1975) discussed as paradigmatic cases of illocutions — are conventional in that their performance requires certain extralinguistic conventions and normally involves the use of certain conventional means.

Sbisà adopts Austin's central idea according to which to perform an illocutionary act is to invoke "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect," which includes "the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances" (Austin

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1975: 14). She argues, however, that illocutionary acts are conventional not due to the conventional means with which they *are* or *could be* performed,[2] but because of the conventional nature of the effects they produce; the effects are conventional in that they come into being and exist in virtue of "an interpersonal or social agreement" (Sbisà 2009: 50; cf. Labinaz and Sbisà 2021: 69) and, as a result, are defeasible in the sense of being "liable to annulment" (*Ibid*.: 47, cf. Sbisà 2007: 465). Normally, the agreement is tacit and by-default: communication runs smoothly and the interacting agents take their conversational contributions at their face value (Sbisà 2003: 78). In some cases, however, the agreement is achieved through more or less open negotiation. The speaker's utterance may have linguistic or contextual properties which "may be taken to indicate [more than] one illocutionary force" (Sbisà 2013b: 236) and it "is up to interactional negotiation (…) to make the utterance count as one of the [possible] illocutionary acts it is compatible with." (*Ibid.*) There may also be situations in which there is a divergence between the speaker's intended force and the way her utterance is taken by the hearer (Corredor 2019; Bentley 2020; McDonald 2021b); in such cases, the communicating agents may produce a sequence of conversational moves whose purpose is to negotiate the function of the speaker's act and thereby achieve the agreement in virtue of which its conventional effect exists. In short, *illocutionary underdeterminacies* and *divergent force assignments* invite interactional negotiation.

In this chapter, I employ Marina Sbisà's idea of interactional negotiation to consider what it is for conversing agents to follow language conventions or to act "as conforming to a convention". Specifically, I use the Austinian notions of *uptake* and *response* as well as the Lewisian concept of *accommodation* to discuss a few examples of force negotiation and develop a model of its underlying mechanisms. I also suggest that interactional negotiation plays a key role in the functioning of all language conventions — phatic, rhetic, illocutionary, etc. — construed as families or lineages of linguistic precedents in the sense outlined by Ruth G. Millikan. 1998, 2005; cf. Witek 2015a, 2015b, 2019b). My contention is that the proposed ideas presented in Sections 2 and 3 are compatible with Sbisà's theory of speech acts and can be regarded as its possible extension.

[2] As Austin (1975: 103) put it, the use of language for performing illocutionary acts "may (…) be said to be *conventional*, in the sense that at least it could be made explicit by the performative formula." According to Peter F. Strawson (1964: 450), however, "the general suitability of an illocutionary act for performance with the help of the explicitly performative formula for that act" can be explained along the Gricean lines, i.e., by reference to the speaker's motive to get the hearer to recognize her communicative intention. For a discussion of this issue, see Sbisà (2009: 38 and 47-48).

2. Uptake, responses, and accommodation in force negotiation

Stephen C. Levinson (2012: 104) argues that what he calls 'action ascription' — i.e., the assignment of a certain more or less definite action to a conversational turn — "is revealed by the response of the next speaker, which, if uncorrected in the following turn(s), becomes in some sense a joint 'good enough' understanding" or, in other words, takes effect as a jointly accepted interpretation of the initiating turn. According to Sbisà (2006, 2013b), the above-mentioned ascription-centred view of action is an integral element of Austin's theory of speech acts and, by extension, of her Austin-inspired and model of illocution. She claims:

> the hearer's responses manifesting how the hearer has received the speaker's illocutionary act must be taken into account when what has been done is at issue. An analyst can tell what has been done (at the illocutionary level) from the consideration of illocutionary force indicating devices (what I would like to call the speech act's illocutionary physiognomy) and from the hearer's response, provided the speaker does not further challenge the latter. (Sbisà 2006: 153)

Viewed from the perspective of Sbisà's theory of speech acts, then, the force of an utterance is jointly co-determined by the speaker, the hearer, and possibly other relevant social agents. In other words, what Gerald Gazdar (1981) calls 'speech act assignment' is fixed through *interactional negotiation*: a discursive process which involves (*i*) the speaker's initiating move, (*ii*) the hearer's response, and (*iii*) the speaker's validation or repair. Quite often turn (*iii*) manifests or signals the speaker's default and tacit acceptance of the hearer's understanding of turn (*i*). In some cases, however, the speaker can make more or less explicit attempts at correcting the hearer's uptake manifested in turn (*ii*), thereby initiating another round of negotiation.

The above-mentioned *initiation-response-evaluation* schema plays a key role in the framework of conversational analysis. According to Emanuel A. Schegloff (2006), it tidentifies a minimal conversational sequence which determines the meaning of its initiating turn.[3] Following Sbisà's (1992, 2003, 2006) works on sequencing in illocutionary interaction, Cristina Corredor (2019) and Lucy McDonald (2021b) claim that the schema also represents the

[3] For an extensive discussion of sequencing in speech acts and meaning negotiation, see Fetzer (2019).

structure of the discursive mechanism of force-negotiation. Let us then look at the three-part sequence through the lens of Sbisà's Austin-inspired theory of speech acts.

While producing her initiating turn, the speaker uses various devices — lexical, grammatical, prosodic, kinesic, contextual, etc. — whose function is to indicate the procedure she invokes and, by the same token, show what she takes to be the conventional effect of her words. The hearer's response manifests his uptake, i.e., shows how he understands the force and meaning of the speaker's utterance. Normally, the evaluating turn takes the form of a default or implicit validation of the force ascription revealed by the hearer's response; in some cases, however, it involves a series of corrections and repairs which are subject to further evaluation.

In the remaining part of this section, I use the above-presented framework to discuss a number of examples of interactional negotiation. Before I get into the details, however, let me consider the relation between the hearer's response and his uptake. The former is said to *manifest* (Sbisà 2006, 2007, 2009, 2013b), *reveal* (Levinson 2012), or *signal* (McDonald 2021a) the latter.[4] One may ask, however, what uptake is and what it is for the hearer's response to manifest it.

According to Austin (1975: 117), to secure uptake on the part of the hearer is to bring "about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution"; in other words, it is to get the hearer to recognize the force and meaning of the speaker's act. Herbert H. Clark (1996: 199) claims, in turn, that the hearer's response *displays* or *gives evidence* that he understands or recognizes what the speaker means; in short, the response "*is evidence of understanding.*"[5] (*Ibid.*: 200, italics in the original) It is natural to assume, then, that the hearer's response gives evidence of his uptake construed as his understanding or recognition of the force and meaning of the speaker's act.

[4] Marcin Matczak (2019) argues, however, that uptake construed along the Hartian lines — e.g., as an act of recognition which confirms that a certain act of enacting a piece of legislation is valid — is to be identified with a certain reaction to a change in the law. At first sight, such a proposal seems to depart from Austin's original perspective, since Austin (1975: 116-7) explicitly distinguished the *securing of uptake* and the *inviting of a response* as two distinct effects of the successful illocutionary act. Nevertheless, Matczak's account of the response-uptake relation seems to allow for the peculiarity of legal communication, which involves (*i*) collective agents — such as a legislature and a community of lawyers — rather than individual speakers and hearers and (*ii*) producing complex and structured texts rather than individual utterances constituting conversational turns.

[5] In fact, Clark (1996: 200) uses the sentence "*Uptake is evidence of understanding.*" It is instructive to stress, however, that he uses the term 'uptake' to refer to the hearer's response, e.g., the words "I take you on" uttered in response to the speaker's "I bet you sixpence" (see Clark 1996: 139); at the same time, he claims that the uptake so construed displays the hearer's recognition and argues that "[w]hat is needed to complete an illocutionary act, however, is not its uptake, but its recognition" (*Ibid.*). In this paper, however, I use the term 'uptake' along the Austinian lines, i.e., as standing for what is *manifested by* or embodied in the hearer's response rather than for the response itself.

In my view, the above presented picture is correct as far as it goes. However, I would like to go further and make the following four points.

First, as Levinson (2012: 104; cf. Sbisà 2013b: 242) notes, describing uptake in terms of recognition "is potentially misleading, because it presupposes that actions have a correct identity, when actually the process of attributing an action to a turn is a fallible, negotiated, and even potentially ineffable process." Therefore, it is better to describe uptake in terms of action and meaning *ascription* rather than in that of *recognition*.

Second, uptake construed as action ascription may, but do not have to, take the form of the hearer's occurrent mental state whose content represents the force and meaning of a conversational contribution.[6] Normally, uptake is *practical* and *implicit*. In other words, it is *embodied* in the hearer's response to the speaker's act. When John follows Ann's order, his behaviour manifests that he takes her words to constitute a binding and felicitous directive act. Nevertheless, it is difficult to think of his uptake as a mental state that is formed prior to his response and plays a causal role in its production. Rather, John's *mental* uptake, if there is any, is formed for the sake and in the course of acting and in this respect is akin to 'discourse-constituted thoughts': mental states that have no independent existence but are formed in the course of a progressing discourse (Jaszczolt and Witek 2018; Witek 2020). In sum, in most cases uptake does not take the form of an occurrent thought but is embodied in the hearer's response. It remains to be considered, however, what it is for the hearer's response to embody his uptake.

Third, the relation of embodying that holds between the hearer's response and his uptake is primarily ontological and only derivatively evidential. In my view, the hearer's uptake is in a sense a structural component of his response; more specifically, the former *coincides in content with* a precondition of the latter. Following Mandy Simons (2013: 345) I take *precondition* to be an ontological notion which holds "[…] of events: a precondition on an event *E* is a condition which must be satisfied by the world in order for the event *E* to take place." By extension, we can take the notion of *precondition* to hold of actions: a precondition on action *A* is a condition which must be satisfied by the context of a stretch of behaviour in order for this stretch to count as the performance of action *A*; in other words, the felicity of action *A* *presupposes* that its preconditions are satisfied.[7] Ann's utterance of an imperative sentence is a felicitous order provided she stands in an appropriate authority relation to John; in other words,

[6] Elsewhere I have called this view 'uptake externalism'; for a discussion, see Witek (2015c: 21).
[7] A similar view is proposed by Thomason, Stone, De Vault 2006. For a discussion of the idea of preconditions and the role it plays in an action-based approach to presupposing, see Witek 2019a.

the felicity of her directive act *presupposes* that she has the required authority. By analogy, John's practical response to Ann's utterance can be adequately described as an act of compliance — or, alternatively, as his failure or refusal to comply — only if her utterance is a binding directive act; in other words, the ascription of the action of compliance to John's behaviour *presupposes* that Ann's words constitute a felicitous order.

The response-uptake relation, then, is akin to presupposing: in producing his response, the hearer presupposes that the speaker's utterance to which he reacts has a certain force.[8] What is more, uptake construed as a force ascription seems to 'project': if John explicitly *refuses* to execute Ann's order, his refusal, like compliance, manifests that he takes her words to constitute a felicitous directive act. John may also *defuse* Ann's purported order — and thereby *undo* it (Caponetto 2020) or make it a *misfire* (Austin 1975) — by saying that she does not have the required authority; that is to say, he can block the *tacit acceptance* or *accommodation*[9] of what the felicity of her utterance *qua* an order presupposes (Langton 2018, Witek 2021).

By analogy, let us consider a situation in which Ann utters sentence (1) and John responds by uttering one of the sentences listed in (2).

(1) Is Carl a philosopher?

(2) a. Yes, he is.
b. Ask Peter.
c. I don't know.
d. Why do you ask?
e. It depends on what do you mean by 'philosopher'.

In my view, each of his possible responses listed in (2) manifests that John takes Ann's utterance of (1) to be a genuine question[10] rather than, say, an ironic comment on Carl's bizarre behaviour. In uttering any variant of (2) John presupposes that Ann's utterance of (1) is a felicitous

[8] The idea that the response-uptake relation can be described in terms of presupposing comes from Sbisà (1992: 102-103); see also McDonald (2021b: 16-17).

[9] Roughly speaking, accommodation is a context-adjusting (Stalnaker 2002, 2014) or context-repairing (Lewis 1979) process which is guided by a default assumption that what the speaker says constitutes an appropriate conversational move of a certain type. For a discussion of accommodation as it occurs in illocutionary interaction — as well as of the phenomena of blocking the accommodation of some presuppositions — see Langton 2015, 2018; Sbisà 2019; Witek 2013, 2015c, 2021.

[10] Viewed from the perspective of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (Asher and Lascarides 2001, 2003), speech acts made in uttering different variants of (2) have relational illocutionary forces; for instance, John's utterance of (2a) stands to Ann's utterance of (1) in the *Question-Answer-Pair* relation (*Ibid.*: 314n), whereas his utterances of (2b) and (2c) have relational illocutionary forces of *Request-Elaboration* (*Ibid.*: 326) and *Not-Enough-Information* (*Ibid.*: 319), respectively.

question. That is to say, his uptake 'projects' in that it is embodied in different conversational moves that are equally appropriate responses to Ann's initiating turn.[11] By analogy, in uttering any member of the following family of sentences:

(3) a. I have to visit my sister.
b. I do not have to visit my sister.
c. If I have to visit my sister, I will not be able to come to your lecture.
d. I have to visit my sister or call my father.

the speaker presupposes that she has a sister.

What enables the hearer's response to display or give evidence of his uptake, then, is the fact that the latter coincides in content with a certain precondition of the former. The relation of *being a precondition of* is ontological. When it holds of actions, it is determined by the procedures for their performance. What is more, it is akin to presupposing. In uttering any variant of (3) the speaker presupposes that he has a sister and thereby displays his belief to the same effect. By analogy, John's utterance of any variant of (2) — or, more precisely, the speech act he makes in this utterance — manifests his uptake and thereby gives evidence that he takes Ann's utterance to be a felicitous act of asking a question.

Fourth, the third turn in an *initiation-response-evaluation* sequence can be described either as *licensing* or *blocking* the accommodation of what the second turn presupposes. In other words, it can either *validate* or *repair* the hearer's uptake construed as force ascription. By way of illustration, let us consider the following interaction.

(4) Ann: a. Do you have a pencil?
John: b. Yes, I do.
c. Here you are.
[John hands Ann a pencil]
Ann: d. Thanks!
[Ann takes the pencil.]

[11] They are *appropriate* because they make up a family of responses that Ann's initiating turn *invites by convention* (Austin 1975: 117) as a question and as such they contribute to the development of a rhetorically coherent discourse (Asher and Lascarides 2001, 2003); for a discussion of this topic, see Witek 2015a and 2019b.

Ann's utterance of (4a) constitutes the performance of two speech acts or, in other words, is ascribed two different illocutionary forces. In uttering (4b), John presupposes that Ann's initiating turn is a *question*, whereas in uttering (4c) and handing her a pencil he shows that he takes it to be a *request*. The former ascription is validated or agreed on *by default*: it goes through unchallenged and its accommodation is licensed simply because it is not blocked. The latter is explicitly endorsed by Ann's evaluative turn (4d).

By way of comparison, let us consider interaction (5).

(5) Ann: a. Do you have a pencil?
John: b. Yes, I do.
c. Here you are.
[John hands Ann a pencil]
Ann: d. No, thanks.
e. I don't need it.
f. I just wanted to know.

This time Ann explicitly blocks the accommodation of John's presupposition — which is manifested in his response (5c) — that her initiating turn has constituted a request. In uttering (5d) she refuses to accept the pencil, whereas in uttering (5e) she explicitly states that one of the felicity conditions for making the request under discussion is not fulfilled. What is more, she utters (5f) to license the accommodation of John's first ascription to the effect that her utterance of (5a) has been a question. Unlike in the previous case, she validates this ascription explicitly rather than implicitly and thereby makes sense of her initiating turn which, as evidenced by John's utterance of (5c), has been misunderstood.

It is instructive to stress that the interactional negotiation of the force of turn (5a) can be accounted for along the Gricean lines. That is to say, it can be described in terms of miscommunication and repairing the hearer's faulty action ascription. One may say, then, that the force of Ann's utterance of (5a) is determined by Ann's communicative intention (Strawson 1964; Bach and Harnish 1979) rather than by John's uptake. Nevertheless, there are cases in which the negotiated force of an utterance depends on the audience's response — or, more specifically, on the action ascription it manifests — rather than on what the speaker has in mind. By way of illustration, let us consider the following three examples which, it seems, require an Austinian explanation.

Consider dialogue (6), which is part of an attested example discussed by Sbisà (2003: 77) in one of her papers on speech act sequences. A and B are sitting in A's kitchen. A is the hostess, whereas B is a guest who wants to record an interview of A. The following conversation takes place.[12]

(6) A: a. If you'd wanted we could have gone into the living room.
b. We'd have been much more comfortable there.
B: c. It is all the same.
d. Let's bring the stuff through.
A: e. Yes, OK. I will carry this for you.

As Sbisà notes, A's utterance of (6a) can be read either as an offer or a proposal. In short, it is illocutionarily underdetermined and as such invites interactional negotiation.

> Here it is possible to observe how sequencing selects one reading for an illocutionarily ambiguous conversational move. [(6a)] might be an offer: the undertaking of a commitment to do something that is desirable for the addressee; or merely a proposal: an act granting the addressee the right to do something with which the speaker agrees to cooperate. But B, in [(6c)], denies having any desire or interest in moving (…), so that the reading of [(6a)] as an offer does not become effective. (…) Utterance [(6a)], however, manages to become effective as a proposal. (…) B's turn [(6d)] is quite appropriate as a reply to a proposal to move. So turn [(6cd)] can be viewed as operating a selection among the forces that [(6a)] might have, that of an offer (which is rejected) and that of a proposal (which is accepted, by accepting the proposal itself). At the beginning of turn [(6e)] (…), A ratifies what has been done up to that point. (Sbisà 2003: 78-79)

In other words, B's utterance of (6c) prevents turn (6a) from being read as an offer; that is to say, if A intended his words to take effect as an offer, B's utterance of (6c) would *defuse* or *undo* this purported act by explicitly stating that one of its preconditions — i.e., that B has "any desire or interest in moving" — is not satisfied. In uttering (6d), B presupposes that A's initiating turn constitutes a proposal; as Sbisà notes, turn (6d) "is quite appropriate as a reply to

[12] The conversation of which example (6) forms a part was in Italian; the English translation comes from Sbisà (2003).

a proposal to move". Next, this presupposition is accommodated by A's utterance of (6e). In sum, the force of turn (6a) is jointly co-determined by A and B.

The next example comes from "The Queen's Gambit", a miniseries written and directed by Scott Frank. Beth and her friend Harry are talking about her anger that arises when she plays chess.

(7) Beth: a. Anger clears my head.
Harry: b. Anger is a potent spice.
A pinch wakes you up, too much dulls your senses.
Beth: c. Where'd you get that from, a fortune cookie?
Harry: d. Mrs. Grecco, my second grade teacher.
Beth: e. Ah.
Harry: f. Mm.

In uttering (7a), Beth asserts that anger has a positive effect on her thinking. Harry's utterance of (7b) is a complex metaphor which presents an alternative and more nuanced view of anger and its impact on us. It is natural to assume that the point behind his remark is to draw Beth's attention to the potential negative effects of strong anger and warn her against them. Nevertheless, rather than saying "Thanks for the warning, but I keep my emotions under control", Beth *attacks* Harry and his statement. More specifically, she utters (7c) with an intention to *ridicule* Harry and his statement and thereby *convey* that she does not intend to take his words seriously. To achieve this effect, she uses a rhetorical technique that consists in asking a question of the form 'Where'd you get that from?' in response to the speaker's advice or opinion. To defuse her attack, Harry utters (7d). More specifically, his response manifests or gives evidence that he takes Beth's utterance of (7c) to be a standard question that invites the response of giving an answer; in other words, his words can be naturally taken to take effect as an indirect answer to Beth's question.[13] In sum, the process of negotiating the effective function of Beth's utterance of (7c) involves the interaction of two conflicting factors: her intention to ridicule the statement made in turn (7b) and Harry's uptake embodied in his response; the exchange of turns (7e) and (7f), which is a characteristic conclusion of information-exchanging dialogues, shows that the latter prevails over the former. As a result, Beth's attempt to ridicule Harry's opinion does not come off: her purported attack is a misfire and her utterance of (7c)

[13] As Asher and Lascarides (2003: 314n) would put it, Harry's utterance of (7d) is linked to Beth's utterance of (7c) by the rhetorical relation of *Indirect-Question-Answer-Pair* (*IQAP*).

takes effect as a standard question. Harry recognizes Beth's intention to ridicule what he said, but effectively blocks its fulfilment.

It is instructive to stress that in speculating about the intention behind Beth's utterance of (7c) I do not adopt the Gricean perspective on speech acts. According to the Griceans, what determines the force or function of an act is the *communicative* intention with which it is made, i.e., an intention whose fulfilment *requires* (Strawson 1964) or even *consists in* (Bach and Harnish 1979) its recognition. In my view, however, Beth's intention to ridicule Harry and his words is not communicative, i.e., it is not intended to be fulfilled by means of its being recognized. What is more, I am inclined to say that it is not perlocutionary either. The perlocutionary intention behind Beth's utterance of (7c), if there is any, is to embarrass Harry, i.e., to get him to feel awkward and unsettled. The central point behind ridiculing, by contrast, is not to "produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (Austin 1975: 101) but, rather, to express one's negative or mockery attitude towards a certain target — a person, a speech act, an idea, or an opinion — and thereby publically stigmatize it as unreliable and untrustworthy. My hypothesis, then, is that ridiculing is not a perlocutionary act but, rather, a complex speech action which can be likened to ironizing construed as a speech action whose point is to present its target — i.e., a certain contextually available thought — in an unfavourable light (Witek 2022). A detailed discussion of this issue, however, goes beyond the scope of this chapter. For the present purposes it suffices to assume that Beth's intention to ridicule, which can be described as a Serlean intention-in-action (Searle 1983), is neither Gricean nor perlocutionary.[14]

One might also argue that Harry's utterance of (7d) is designed to get Beth to believe that he takes her words as a mere question, when in fact he perfectly got that her utterance of (7c) was uttered with an intention to ridicule him; therefore, his reply should be viewed as hiding rather than manifesting his *actual* uptake.[15] In my view, however, Harry's recognition of Beth's intention to ridicule him should be distinguished from his official uptake embodied and signalled in turn (7d). It is the latter, not the former, that is publically available and, as a result, contributes to determining the negotiated force of turn (7c). In short, Harry's recognition of Beth's intention is not his effective uptake. Nevertheless, it plays a role in the psychological mechanism that motivates him to resist Beth's attack by responding to turn (7c) as if it were a

[14] I am grateful to Paolo Labinaz for suggesting that I clarify this point.
[15] I am grateful to Laura Caponetto for raising this worry.

mere question. In sum, turn (7c) manifests Harry's effective uptake and, at the same time, is a faked or pretended signal that he has failed to recognize Beth's intention to ridicule him.

Finally, let us consider a situation in which Jim meets Juliette, his younger female colleague, and utters the following words:

(8) You look great today, sweetheart.

According to Aaron Bentley (2020: 16), from whom I borrow this example, it is possible that Jim intends his utterance to be a compliment,[16] whereas Juliette may take his commentary on her appearance to constitute an act of subordinating her. In short, Jim and Juliette may ascribe different action types to his utterance of (8) and this divergence may invite interactional negotiation. By way of illustration, let us consider the following exchange of turns which might follow Jim's utterance of (8).

(9)	Juliette:	a.	There is more to me than how I look.
		b.	Besides, I am not a 'sweetheart'.
	Jim:	c.	Come on, I just wanted to be nice.
	Juliette:	d.	I don't think it is nice to say things about someone's appearance.
		e.	In fact, your remark was patronizing and subordinating.

As Bentley (2020: 18) notes, one of the felicity conditions for the act of complimenting is that "what is offered as complimentary must be valued by the person to whom the compliment is offered". In uttering (9a), then, Juliette suggests that this condition is not met and thereby defuses Jim's purported act of complimenting her on how she looks.[17] In uttering (9b), in turn, she thwarts his implicit attempt to make their relations less formal or, in other words, to shorten the social distance between them; more specifically, she blocks the accommodation of what is presupposed by his act of calling her 'sweetheart'. Jim's response (9c) is intended to repair what he takes to be a misunderstanding: he says that he wanted be nice and thereby implies that his utterance of (8) was a sincere compliment. Still, his attempt to repair fails: in uttering (9d) and (9e), Juliette rejects his intended reading of turn (8) and explicitly ascribes to it the forces of

[16] It is instructive to stress that Jim's intention to pay Juliette a compliment does not have to be Gricean. Viewed from the Austinian perspective, it is a mere intention-in-action whose presence renders Jim's utterance of (8) an intentional act of paying a complement (provided other felicity conditions for complimenting are met).
[17] If, by contrast, she sincerely said "Oh, thank you!", she would license Jim's intended reading of his words.

patronizing and subordinating.[18] Her uptake prevails over Jim's intention and she wins the negotiation. What gives her advantage is the fact that Jim can reliably be taken to execute a procedure for subordinating which involves one speaker making a positive comment on the appearance of another, where the former, because of his or her *informal social group identity* (Bentley 2020), is stereotypically and unjustly regarded as intellectually superior to the latter.

In sum, the actual force or function of a conversational contribution is subject to interactional negotiation and at least in some cases it can be determined by the hearer's uptake rather than by the speaker's intention-in-action,[19] where the former is to be described as the hearer's action ascription embodied in or presupposed by his response to the speaker's act. The basic structure of interactional negotiation is represented by the *initiation-response-evaluation* sequence, whose third element blocks or licences the accommodation of the action ascription presupposed or manifested by the second one.

3. Language conventions as lineages of negotiated precedents

In the previous section, I have discussed Sbisà's idea of interactional negotiation and the role it plays in her account of the conventional nature of illocutionary acts. Viewed from the perspective of her Austin-inspired theory of speech acts, acting as conforming to an illocutionary convention is not an automatic process that makes use of form-meaning associations; in other words, illocutionary acts are conventional not because of the conventional means with which they are performed. Rather, following an illocutionary convention is a joint action of the speaker, the hearer, and possibly other relevant social agents, which normally takes the form of the *initiation-response-evaluation* sequence and involves interactional negotiation. In this section I suggest that the same should be said of following other language conventions, such as Austin's (2013: 31) demonstrative and descriptive conventions — which contribute to the determination of the rhetic meaning (Austin 1975: 93) of a speech act — as well as phatic, rhetorical and procedural conventions. My hypothesis is that the notion of interactional

[18] In other words, Juliette's response signals that she takes Jim's utterance of (8) to be a cat-call rather than a benign compliment. Compliments and cat-calls construed as acts of subordination have similar surface structures. For instance, in one context sentence (8) can be used to felicitously perform a complement, whereas in other context it can take effect as a cat-call and subordinate the addressee. I am grateful to Laura Caponetto for drawing my attention to this topic. For a more extensive discussion of the relation between compliments and cat-calls, see McDonald (2021a).

[19] This position can be called 'illocutionary agency externalism'; see Witek (2015c). It is instructive to stress that the speaker's contribution to the process of negotiating the force of her utterance is her intention-in-action which should be distinguished from her Gricean communicative intention (if there is any).

negotiation plays a key role in explaining the process whereby language conventions proliferate and shape our linguistic practice.

Following Ruth G. Millikan (1998, 2005; cf. Witek 2015a, 2015b, 2019b), I assume that conventions are patterns of activity — e.g., driving on the left, shaking right hands, using forks as eating utensils, using grammatical structures and lexical units, etc. — that proliferate, first, by reproduction and, second, because of the weight of their cultural precedents rather than due to their capacity to produce certain effects. Like Millikan, I hold that every language convention construed as a linguistic pattern can be represented as a lineage of its past uses which has been reproduced one from another. In my view, however, the two criteria posited by Millikan — i.e., the reproduction condition and the weight-of-precedent requirement — do not suffice to define the scope of language conventions. My contention is that the mechanism whereby linguistic conventional patterns are reproduced — or, in other words, whereby language conventions construed as lineages or families or reproduced items proliferate — necessarily involves interactional negotiation.

A key idea behind the account proposed in this section is that our linguistic activity is shaped by conventional patterns which operate at different levels of speech organization: not only illocutionary, but also locutionary — including phonetic, phatic, and rhetic levels — as well as rhetorical and procedural. Of course the patterns exist in the form of families of precedents; at a certain level of abstraction, however, we can refer to a certain conventional lineage by describing those aspects of its constituents which have been preserved during reproduction. For instance, to represent a certain phatic family, we focus on and refer to the syntactic and lexical properties of its members. By analogy, to describe a certain procedural lineage — which collects different executions of *the same* illocutionary procedure — we specify a set of felicity conditions and claim that it represents the procedure in question. Likewise, to describe a certain rhetorical lineage — whose members are different tokens of *the same* rhetorical relation — we can use the framework of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (Asher and Lascarides 2001, 2003). For instance, pairs ⟨(1), (2a)⟩, ⟨(4a), (2b)⟩, and ⟨(7c), (7d)⟩ belong to the same rhetorical lineage which can be represented as a family of two-part sequences whose turns are connected by the rhetorical relation of *Question-Answer-Pair*.[20]

It is instructive to stress, however, that the different levels of speech organization distinguished in the previous paragraph corresponds to different abstract aspects of what Austin

[20] Strictly speaking, turns (7c) and (7d) are linked by the rhetorical relation of *Indirect-Question-Answer-Pair* (*IQAP*); see footnote 13. For more examples of rhetorical relations which correspond to different lineages of two-turn sequences, see footnote 10.

(1975: 148) called "[t]he total speech act in the total speech situation." Let us first focus on the contrast between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (see Sbisà 2013a and 2013b). Roughly speaking, we distinguish between them by referring to their characteristic effects: an utterance described as a locutionary act produces a locution that represents a certain state of affairs in a certain illocutionary mode; if our focus is on how it affects the network of normative intersubjective relations, we describe it as an illocutionary act equipped with a certain more or less definite force; construed as a perlocutionary act, in turn, the utterance produces a certain consequential effect "upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (Austin 1975: 101). In a similar vein, Sbisà rejects both the additive and the embedding model of the phonetic-phatic-rhetic distinction. According to the former, the three acts under discussion are formed independently of one another and add up to the entire locutionary act; according to the latter, in turn, the rhetic act should be identified with the locutionary one. Following Austin (1975: 92-93), however, Sbisà (2013b: 230n) argues that what he called the *phonetic*, *phatic*, and *rhetic* acts are abstract aspects of the *locutionary* act which can be distinguished by reference to their characteristic products: *phones*, *phemes,* and *rhemes*, respectively.

In my view, the Austinian distinction between phonetic, phatic, rhetic, locutionary, and illocutionary acts corresponds to a distinction between five types of language conventions construed as families of reproduced items.[21] For instance, a certain phatic lineage collects utterances which can be regarded as equivalent phemes with respect to their phatic meaning, where the phatic meaning of an utterance is defined in terms of its rhetic and illocutionary act potential (Forguson 1973; cf. Witek 2015b); a certain rhetic lineage, in turn, collects utterances that are taken to be equivalent with respect to their sense and reference, which are determined by what Austin (2013: 31) called *descriptive* and *demonstrative* conventions, respectively. In general, speech acts that are agreed to constitute cases of saying or doing *the same* — e.g., as having *equivalent* effects — constitute a lineage of reproduced precedents. It is instructive to stress, however, that

> "[t]he same" does not always mean the same. In fact it has no meaning in the way that an "ordinary" word like "red" or "horse" has a meaning: it is a (the typical) device for establishing and distinguishing the meanings of ordinary words. Like

[21] For a more extensive discussion of this topic, see Witek (2015a, 2015b).

> "real," it is part of our apparatus in words for fixing and adjusting the semantics of words. (Austin 2013: 29)

By extension, we can say that it is part of our apparatus in words for grouping speech situations into lineages of different types.

In my view, besides phatic, rhetic, and illocutionary families of reproduced linguistic items, there are rhetorical and procedural lineages. The former are collections of reproduced pairs of discursive contributions which can be described in terms of rhetorical relations: *Question-Answer-Pair*, *Indirect-Question-Answer-Pair*, *Request-Elaboration*, *Not-Enough-Information*, etc.[22] A procedural lineage, in turn, is a family of jointly reproduced executions of 'the same' procedure, e.g., the procedure for making a promise, issuing an order, paying a compliment, or subordinating the hearer.

In sum, my hypothesis is that language conventions which are said to shape our verbal activity can be best understood as lineages of reproduced items. I also suggest that the mechanism responsible for the proliferation of language conventions so construed involves interactional negotiation. Even though past speech situations constituting a certain conventional family put constraint on what can count as its new member, they systematically underdetermine its exact form and properties. Following a convention, then, is never an automatic and algorithmic process. What makes a collection of linguistic items — structures, phrases, illocutionary acts, pairs of rhetorically connected discursive contributions, executions of procedures, and so on — a conventional lineage is the fact that the mechanism whereby they have been reproduced one from another necessarily involves interactional negotiation. For instance, the negotiated and hence conventional force of Jim's utterance of (8) is subordinating rather than complementing; by the same token, his verbal behaviour contributes to executing the procedure for subordinating rather than that for paying compliments. The negotiated function[23] of Beth's utterance of (7c) is asking a question rather than ridiculing Harry's statement; as a result, the rhetorical relation that holds between turn (7c) and turn (7b) — or, more appropriately, between the conversational move made in the former and the opinion

[22] See Asher and Lascarides (2001, 2003) as well as footnotes 10 and 13.

[23] I use the term 'function' rather than 'force' because I would like to remain neutral on the question whether ridiculing is an illocutionary or perlocutionary act. In my view, it is neither illocutionary nor perlocutionary. My hypothesis is that ridiculing is a complex speech action whose point is to express one's mockery attitude towards a certain target and thereby publically stigmatize it as unreliable or untrustworthy. However, a detailed discussion of this issue goes beyond the scope of the present chapter.

expressed in the latter — is not *Making-a-Ridiculing-Comment-on*, but *Asking-for-the-Source-of*.

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