Applied speech act theory: philosophical and pragmatic analysis of some wishes in Albanian and Bulgarian

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The aim of this paper is to have a general view in speech act theory and to determine some issues concerning the usage of some wishes as speech act in Bulgarian and Albanian. The wishes which will be used in this paper are part of the research with Bulgarian and Albanian native speakers. The essence of some of the wishes in both languages is the way of expressing the good desire toward another person, sometimes something magic which the speaker wish for the other person to be reality. This paper will give a contrastive view basically from the theoretical framework.

Key words: speech act, wishes, contrastive analysis

Целта на текста е да бъде направен генерализиращ преглед на теорията за речевия акт и да бъдат детерминирани някои проблеми, свързани с използването на изрази с компонент „пожелание" в речевия акт в българския и албанския език. Изразите, които ще бъдат използвани, са част от проучване, проведено сред българи и албанци, говорещи съответно езика като майчин. Използването на пожеланието в изрази и в двата езика е резултат от начина, по който изразяват доброжелателството си към друг човек, а понякога е като отправено към него магическо заклинание, което да се сбъдне. Този текст ще даде контрастен на базирания върху теоретичната рамка поглед.

Ключови думи: речеви акт, пожелание, контрастивен анализ

Every language, every culture has its own wishes for different cases. People express their feelings toward an event, toward a situation or any other thing. A wish is simply a speech act which expresses an attitude toward somebody's behavior. A wish is the expression of a desire, of a pleasure in words. A wish can be expressed in many ways or formulas according to the situation.

Speech acts are a staple of everyday communicative life, and therefore are very important in our society. For language (Hudson 1980: 106), in the sense of knowledge of linguistics items and their meanings, the balance is in favor of the social, since people learn their language by listening to others. At the same time, each individual's language is unique since no two people have the same experience of language.

In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances (Austin: 1962).

Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and, in English, are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise or request. These descriptive terms for different kinds of speech acts apply to the speaker's communicative intention in producing an utterance. The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer. Both speaker and hearer are usually helped in the process by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. These circumstances, including, other utterances, are called speech event. In many ways, it is the nature of the speech event that determines the interpretation of an utterance as performing a particular speech act (Yule 1996: 47).

Three aspects of speech acts

Austin (1962) distinguishes three kinds of acts which an utterance performs:

1. *Locutionary act*: the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference;

2. *Illocutionary act*: the making of a statement, offer, promise etc. in uttering a sentence by virtue of the conventional force associated with it (or with it explicit a performative paraphrase);

3. *Perlocutionary act*: bringing about effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effect being special to the circumstances of the utterance (for example: making hearer happy, angry, or scared etc.).

In practice, the term "speech act" has come to refer exclusively to the illocutionary act. As Cutting (2002: 16) states: "Austin defined speech acts as the actions performed in saying something. Speech act theory said that the action performed when an utterance is produced can be analyzed on three different levels. The first level is the words themselves – locution, "what is said", the form of the words uttered; the act of saying something which is known as the locutionary act. The second level is what the speakers are doing with their words. That's the illocutionary force "what is done in uttering the words", the function of the words, the specific purpose that the speaker have in mind. And as it is stated above, the last level is the perlocutionary act which is the hearer's reaction; it is the effect on the hearer, "what is done by uttering the words".

According to Levinson (1983: 236 – 237), Austin is careful to argue that locutionary act and illocutionary act are detachable, and therefore that the study of meaning may proceed independently, but supplemented by a theory of illocutionary acts. More troublesome, it seems to

him, was the distention between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The illocutionary act is what is directly achieved by the conventional force associated with the issuance of a certain kind of utterance in accord with a conventional procedure, and is consequently determined. A perlocutionary act is specific to the circumstances of issuances, and is therefore not conventionally achieved just by uttering that particular utterance and includes all those effects, intended or unintended, often indeterminate that some particular utterances in a particular situation may cause.

The locutionary act is the basic act of utterance (Yule 1996: 48) or producing a meaningful linguistic expression. We form an utterance with some kind of function in mind. The second dimension is the illocutionary act which is performed via the communicative force of an utterance. We might utter to make a statement, an offer, an explanation, or for some other communicative purpose. This is also, generally known as illocutionary force of the utterance. We do not, of course, simply create an utterance with a function without intending to have an effect and that is the third dimension, the perlocutionary act. Depending on the circumstances, you will utter on the assumption that the hearer will recognize the effect you intended. This is also known as the perlocutionary force. The term "speech act" is interpreted quite narrowly to mean only the illocutionary force of an utterance.

Searle (1976) classifies speech acts in the following groups:

1. *Declarations* include words and expressions that change the world by their utterance such as "I bet", "I declare", "I resign" etc. These are effect changes in the institutional state of affairs (declaring, war, and christening).

2. *Representatives* include acts in which the words state what the speaker believes to be the case, such as "predicting", "describing", "insisting", "claiming", "hypothesizing". Representatives commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed propositions (e.g. asserting, concluding)

3. *Commissives* include acts in which the speaker uses words to commit him/herself to some future action, such as "volunteering", "promising", "offering", "refusing", "vowing" and "threatening". Commissives commit the speaker to some future course of action (e.g. promise, order, and threat).

4. *Directives* include acts in which the words are aimed at making the hearer do something, such as "suggesting", "commanding", "forbidding", "requesting", "inviting" etc.

Directives are an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something (e.g. request, question).

5. *Expressives* include acts in which the words state what the speaker feels, such as "congratulating", "apologizing", "regarding" ,"praising", and "deploring". They express a psychological state (e.g. thanks, apologies, welcome, and congratulation).

As Levinson (1993: 243) states: "Searle's theory of speech acts is just Austin's systematized with sallies into the general theory of meaning, and connections to other philosophical issues."

According to Yule (1996: 50), there are certain expected or appropriate circumstances, technically known as felicity conditions, for the performance of speech act to be recognized as intended. In everyday contexts among ordinary people, there are also preconditions on speech acts. There are general conditions on the participants, for example, that they can understand the language being used and that they are not play-acting or being nonsensical. Then there are content conditions. For example, for both a promise and a warning, the content of an utterance must be about a future event. A further content condition for a promise requires that the future event will be a future act of the speaker. The preparatory conditions are significantly different from those for warning. When I promise to do something, there are two preparatory conditions first, the event will not happen by itself, and second, the event will have a beneficial effect to the hearer. When I utter a warning, there are the following preparatory conditions: it isn't clear that the hearer knows the event will occur, the speaker does think the event will occur, and the event will not have a beneficial effect to the hearer. Related to those conditions is the sincerity condition that, for a promise, the speaker genuinely intends to carry out the future action, and, for a warning, the speaker genuinely believes that the future event will not have a beneficial effect to the hearer. Finally, there is the essential condition, which covers the fact that by the act of uttering a promise, I thereby intend to create an obligation to carry out the action as promised. In other words, the utterance changes my state from non-obligation to obligation. Similarity, with a warning, under the essential, the utterance changes my state from non-informing of a bad future event to informing. This essential condition thus combines with a specification of what must be in the utterance content, the context, and the speaker's intentions, in order for a specific speech act to be appropriately (felicitously) performed.

For Austin (1962), the felicity conditions are that the context and roles of participants

must be recognized by all parties; the action must be carried out completely, and the persons must have the right intentions.

As Yule (1996: 51) states: one way to think about the speech acts being performed via utterances is to assume that underlying every utterance there is a clause, similar to presented earlier, containing a performative verb which makes the illocutionary force explicit. This is known as the performative hypothesis. There are some technical disadvantages to the performative hypothesis. For example, uttering the explicit performative version of a command has a much more serious impact than uttering the implicit version. The two versions are consequently non equivalent.

The really practical problem with any analysis based on identifying explicit performatives is that, in principle, we simply do not know how many performative verbs there are in any language. Instead of trying to list all the possible explicit performatives, and then distinguish among all of them, some more general classifications of types of speech acts are usually used.

Speech acts and their linguistic (Cutting 2002: 21), realizations are culturally bound. The way of expressing speech acts vary from country to country, from culture to culture.

A speech act (Hudson 1980: 111) is a bit of speech produced as a part of a bit of social interaction. Our culture includes a rich set of concepts for classifying bits of social interaction, reflecting the importance of social interaction, reflecting the importance of social interaction in society.

If speech-act categories are cultural concepts, we might expect them to vary from one society to another, and that is again what we find. One of the standard examples of a type of speech act which has a distinctive illocutionary force is the baptizing of a person into the Christmas faith, for which there is a specific verb (baptize) which can be used as a performative utterances (I baptize you…). This particular illocutionary force is clearly restricted to societies in which baptism takes place, and there are many other similar examples of culture-specific illocutionary forces.

Eventually as Hudson (1980: 119) states: society controls our speech in two ways:

Firstly, by providing a set of norms, which we learn to follow (or occasionally to flout) more or less skillfully, but which vary from society to society, though some may be more universal than others.

Secondly, society provides motivation for adhering to these norms, and for putting efforts

into speech (as into social interaction in general).

In addition to controlling it in these two ways, society takes a great interest in speech, and in particular provides a set of concepts has to do with the functions of speech, and the theory of speech-acts reflects this social categorization of speech according to its functions.

Based on the practical framework of the wishes in Albanian and Bulgarian we have to mention the fact that the word "health" is present in both languages. In Bulgarian the type of the sentence used for wishes is admirative and affirmative sentences which are used to show the good desire for somebody's health such as: „*Да си я носиш със здраве.*"; „*бъди жив и здрав!*". Also, in terms of semantic, most of the wishes in Bulgarian are followed by the formula (жив и здрав) to show the desire for somebody to be healthy and alive.

Albanian wishes contain a magic issue in the meaning, usually the Albanian wishes express a good desire that is not realized (the wedding of single person, the birth of a boy or a girl, the good attitude toward a job that has not started), but it is expressed to the hearer in order to show support, love and good attitude toward him. Mainly Albanian wishes consist of an adjective healthy such as: (i.e.) shëndoshë, or the noun health (shëndet).

Speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also appropriate use of that language within a given culture. In the present paper are involved two languages: Albanian and Bulgarian and also two different cultures.

According to Yule (1996: 87) the study of differences in expectations based on cultural schemata is part of a broad area of investigation generally known as cross-cultural pragmatics. To look at the ways in which meaning is constructed by speakers from different cultures will actually require a complete reassessment of virtually everything.

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