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MILITARY SPEECH ACTS AND SPEECH ACT VERBS

The role of communication is recognized in international relations in theory and practice. Both hostility and cooperation between states are realized through communication. But certain forms of communication can forestall or resolve conflict, just as lack of certain forms of communication can contribute to the outbreak of violence. Military and civilians are significantly different. Obviously, we can see the difference from their speech, especially during conversations. Military tend to act and behave in accordance with certain norms and values that are admitted by the reference institution. Military communication counts on good and clear communication

Although the theory of Speech Acts proposed by Searle [1] is intended to be completely general, they are used considerably in the military context. We can find details about the types of speech acts, their form, the effective effects they can provide and how they are expressed by the interactants. This may reduce misunderstandings in the line of order. However, military speech acts are different from those in general use. They are likely to be more formalized and more terse than those of everyday discourse. The importance of speech acts in the military use has been acknowledged especially in military training. [2] The term speech act covers "actions" such as: "requesting," "commanding," "informing" and "complaining." According to Salt, military speech acts are typically rigid and as a result, they are not complicated with metaphorical constructions. History has noted that some misunderstandings in wars were due to the effect of unclear speech acts (commanding, requesting).

Searle [3] classifies speech acts into: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. Assertive speech acts serve to make an assertion that, in the speaker's belief, some proposition is true. Examples might be "18 platoon is at the Bridge Farm," or "there are no enemy within 1000 metres." We may also view responses to challenges as assertive speech acts. When asked "who goes there?" the reply "friend" asserts one thing, while a burst of fire asserts the other. [4] Other examples could be: Captain Harris: "Sky Six reports a fresh company of NVA moving across from Cambodia to this blue line," "Bravo Six, there is a bunker here," "Chopper's on the way Gardner, hang in there, you gonna be okay…" (Platoon). In "All Quiet on the Western Front" by Erich Maria Remarque, Katczinsky reports that almost half of the company have been lost: "There's 80 of us left."

War films are normally characterized by the excessive use of commands, which are classified as directives. Directive speech acts direct the interlocutor to do something, they are used to give orders or make requests and to get the hearer do what the speaker wants the hearer to do. These include commanding, ordering, requesting and suggesting: "Take rations for 72 hours" and "I want you to go to 18 platoon's location" (war film Platoon).

Directive speech acts may be performed using positive imperatives such as: "Don't need this or this…you are doing okay. Just stick close to Tex, do what he does!" (war film Platoon). Some are in the form of declaratives (statements): "Elias, you take your squad and I'll take Tex and Francis from your squad." (Platoon) The directives which are performed in declarative positive sentences are used to make the command more polite, such as: Captain Harris (to Lt. Hawkins): "Lt. Hawkins, you take this area to the rubber plantation…" (Platoon).

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Commissive speech acts commit the speaker to some future action. They are used to enter into contractual agreements for future performance. Fraser [5] subdivided these acts into two: those without any further preconditions such as "promise" and "swear," whereas the second is subject to a favorable response from the hearer such as "offer," "propose" and "bid." An instance of the latter is

> "well I'll be dipped in shit – new meat! Sorry bout that boys – 'sin loi' buddy…you gonna love love the Nam, man, for fucking ever" (Platoon).

Commissive speech acts are performed in the form of declaratives such as follows: Elias (to Chris and Gardner)

> "Case somethin'happens to you, you get separated or lost, don't yell out, okay. We'll get to you" (Platoon).

Commissive speech acts can also be found in the form of a threat: Barnes to Crist:

> "…and that goes for you, shit for brains. You don't sleep on no fuckin' ambush. Next sonofabitch I catch coppin' z's in the bush I'm personally gonna take an interest in seeing him suffer –I shit you not…" (Platoon).

Indirect speech acts may lead to misunderstandings as the intentions of the speaker are not always made clear. Most command speech acts are performed directly. A sentence such as "Yo getting there Taylor. You be cool now and I'll introduce you round to some of the "heads," is an example of speech act expressed in the declarative form either as positive or negative. This type is classified as commissive – promise – a positive speech act. In battle, politeness is not much considered, since the most important thing is that the soldiers understand the order clearly, in order to avoid misunderstandings. In undertaking commitments, the use of performative verbs is more rare than with directives. In constructions containing "will" the speaker explicitly expresses his intention to perform a future action.

Expressive speech acts express the psychological state of the speaker. They state what the speaker feels. Examples might be: "I am sorry to hear of 18 platoon's casualties," or "I am determined to carry on with this operation." An interesting example is offered by Katczinsky in "All Quiet on the Western Front:" "Some time, I'm going to take one of you volunteers apart - find out what makes you leave school and join the army." At first sight, these seem to be the least interesting class of speech acts from a military perspective. However, British army commanders set a great deal of store on the "moral component" of combat power, and ensuring the psychological welfare and fighting morale of their soldiers is a key task for officers and NCOs (non-commissioned officers). [6] Fraser [7] terms these acts differently as "evaluatives" and states that they may include "regret," "sympathy," and can be in the forms of statements of pleasure, joy or sorrow such as: "I'm sorry for falling asleep, Sir!" (Platoon).

Declarative speech acts declare something to be so. They may be used to designate people or units to certain roles, to define command relationships or to assign names to things such as control measures. In military use, examples like: "The password for tonight is Pomegranate" and "Your platoon is the company main effect" are often discovered and are quite common. The point here is that the making of the utterance (if the speech act is successful) in itself accomplishes its meaning. Just as with directive speech acts, in a military context the success of declarative speech acts will presumably depend on the formal

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authority of the speaker. Commanders will only be able to nominate elements under their command as being the main effort.

Speech acts which employ bald on record strategies are usually avoided in everyday conversation, because they directly threaten the face of the addressee. They are appropriate however in situations demanding brevity, definitness and prompt action due to urgency, as in military commands or in emergency messages. In English, we normally avoid the imperative, except in specific circumstances, as in the military language. It is well-known that the imperative is the conventional way of issuing military commands and other orders backed by some authority, and in such cases it is therefore seen as congruent in that there is an accurate fit of function and form. [8] Commands are classic instances of illocutionary acts. Other illocutionary acts include warnings, alerts and reports.

In contrast to the commands (directives) in general use, where the yes/no questions are commonly used to soften or make utterances polite and to ask the cooperation of addressees in doing something, in the military language, most commands that are made are based on orders and the subordinates have to carry out those commands.

Language and communication do play some role in conflict. For example, the decision to mobilize military force can only be executed through the verbal activity of the political elites, who possess the legitimacy to issue mobilization orders. A declaration of war is a speech act. Another example is represented by the military operations, that can only be set in motion and continued by verbal activity. Both these instances are cases of speech acts, verbal activity that actually constitutes action. Indeed what constitutes a legitimate concept of "war" can only be established in linguistic activity. Wars would not be wars unless certain verbal practices constituted the "institutions" of war. [9]

The extent to which emotion is conveyed depends upon the style of speech that the speaker is employing. Thus, command utterances do not convey sadness or fear. One way to account for this is to regard emotional expression as dependent upon the illocutionary force of the utterance. The indirect communication is particular to military contexts: in the Cuban missile crisis, for example, the proverbial shot-across the bows (of the Russian ships) had to force the missing illocutionary force of the verbal announcement with a signal from which the opponent could infer the seriousness of American intentions. [10]

English has in its military lexicon a number of speech act verbs whose meanings serve to determine the possible illocutionary forces of the utterances of their sentences. In analyzing speech act verbs, we can determine how the set of illocutionary forces is lexicalized in the English vocabulary. [11] There are semantic relations of entailment between military English performative sentences in virtue of the meaning of their main performative verbs. Some of the theoretical distinctions in the analysis of English speech act verbs derive from the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between actual illocutionary forces and speech act verbs. [12] Some performative verbs are systematically ambiguous between several illocutionary points. For example, an "alert" is the conjunction of an assertion that some danger is imminent and of a directive suggestion to the hearer to prepare for action in order to avoid misfortune. We must distinguish between speech act verbs like "order" and "promise," that are essentially hearer directed.

An "order" is always by definition an order to someone, even when the speaker gives an order to himself. A very important relationship for the logic of conversation is the relation of interlocution that exists between the protagonists of the speech act, the speakers, and the hearers in a context of utterance. People perform speech acts in both spoken and written interaction. Sometimes people announce their illocutionary intentions using phrases which

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contain performative verbs. Explicit performatives are common only in situations where it is important that a person's intentions in saying something be absolutely unambiguous. "To report" is to assert to the effect that the propositional content is about either the past in relation to the time of utterance, or, in some cases, the present. We report on what has happened or on what is happening now. "To alert," is "to warn," whose propositional content condition is that some danger or concern is imminent ("a military alert"). An "alarm" (e.g. "a fire alarm,") is a warning of immediate danger. "To instruct" someone in the directive sense, is to tell him to do something, while presupposing that one has the knowledge or information required (as an instructor) as to what needs to be done in the context of utterance. In this case, the mode of achievement is related to a preparatory condition to the effect that the speaker himself has the relevant instruction. The difference between "ordering" and "telling" is that the former is much stronger and this strength comes from the speaker's being in a position of considerable power over the hearer. We can give an order from a position of any kind of power.

Unlike an order, "a command" requires authority or at least pretended institutionalized power. Thus, "to give an order" is to demand the hearer to do something, while invoking a position of authority or power over him (special mode of achievement), while "to issue a command" is just to give an order from a position of authority. "To dictate" is to command with the highest degree of strength, so that there is an obligation of obedience to what is dictated. Only the highest authority can dictate someone's conduct. "To surrender" is to declare that one ceases to contest and therefore yields totally, acknowledging oneself to have been defeated (this being a further propositional content condition). As part of this content condition, we often expect to be able to negotiate terms of surrender. "To capitulate" is to surrender with the added preparatory condition that we do not have enough strength, authority or power remaining to negotiate terms. "To surrender" is to "utter" in capitulation.

The challenge is to communicate effectively and efficiently, to improve effective information flow between mission control centers. Linguistic skills combined with pragmatic knowledge help to avoid miscommunications with coalition partners and the local target audience. Without bridging the gap between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning, misunderstandings can easily occur, people referring to other things than were initially intended, being unable to express beliefs and intentions in well-formed speech acts or communicate spontaneously and effectively in real-life military situations.

NOTES:

[1] Searle, J, R., *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1969, p. 39

[2] Salt, J. D, *Speech Acts of War*. In R.G. Ingalls, M.D. Rossetti, J.S. Smith, and B.A. Peters (Eds.). "Proceedings of the 2004 Winter Simulation Conference," 1040

[3] Searle, J, R., *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 22-26

[4] Salt, J, D., *Speech Acts of War*. In R.G. Ingalls, M.D. Rossetti, J.S. Smith, and B.A. Peters (Eds.). "Proceedings of the 2004 Winter Simulation Conference," 1041

[5] Fraser, B, *The Domain of Pragmatics*. In Richard, J.C., and R.W., Schmidt. (Eds.). Language and Communication, Longman: London, 1983, p.65

[6] Scheutz, M, B. Logan, *Affective versus Deliberative Agent Control*, in: "Proceedings of the AISB '01 Symposium on Emotion, Cognition and Affective Computing," University of York, 21st-24th March, 2001, p. 1-10

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[7] Fraser, B, *The Domain of Pragmatics*. In Richard, J.C., and R.W., Schmidt. (Eds.). Language and Communication, Longman: London, 1983, p.115
[8] Vandenbergen, A, M., Miriam Taverniers, Loiuse Ravelli, *Grammatical Metaphor. Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, John Benjamins Publishing Company: New York, 2003, p. 287
[9] Chilton, Paul, A., Sue, Wright, Dan, Smith, *Language and Conflict*, Multilingual Matters Limited: Birmingham, 1998, p. 2-3
[10] Habermas, Jurgen, Maeve Cooke, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Cambridge, 1999, p. 333
[11] Saussure de F., *Court de linguistique générale*, Payot: Paris, 1966, p. 166.
[12] Searle, J. R. and D. Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985, p. 179-183.

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RÉSUMÉ

ACTES DE LANGAGE DANS LE DOMAINE MILITAIRE ET LEURS VERBES PERFORMATIFS

La théorie des actes de langage proposée par Searle est généralement considérée complète mais elle est aussi utilisée en contexte militaire. Il est possible d'utiliser la théorie des actes de langage dans l' entraînement militaire (trouver des détails sur les types d'actes de langage, leur forme, les effets effectifs qu' ils peuvent produire et la manière d' expression des interactants). Quand même, les actes de langage appartenant au champ militaire sont plus formalisés et plus concis que ceux qu'on utilise d'habitude. L'anglais contient dans son lexique un nombre d'actes de langage-verbes dont les sens servent à déterminer les possibles forces illocutoires des énoncés. En analysant les actes de langage- verbes nous pouvons déterminer comment les forces illocutoires sont lexicalisées dans le vocabulaire anglais.

MOTS-CLÉS *: actes de langage militaires, actes de langage- verbes, langage militaire, force illocutoire, communication indirecte.*

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