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The Speech Acts vs. the Analysis of the Role of the Speech Acts in Bank Brochures and Pieces of Publicity

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Abstract: The article focuses on the general aspects of the speech acts in J. Austin and J. Searle perspectives, who are considered the founders of the theory of speech acts. Simultaneously an analysis on pieces of publicity was made, precisely a bank brochure and an advertising video for BT bank. It started with the classifications of the above mentioned theorists and continued with a practical part (a study on a bank brochure and advertising video) whose purpose consisted of confirming the idea that all comprising elements of the "analyzed material" represent speech acts that respect the pragmatics and linguistics principles.

Keywords: speech acts; advertising communication; perlocutionary; pragmatics; conditions of fulfillment

"The advertising communication is ambivalent. The dichotonic discourse–verbal and iconic-of the text-image is increased by the ambivalence of a symbolic production induced by the economic market." (Adam & Bonhomme, 2005, p. 46.)

This particular interest in the speech acts in the contemporary epoch is associated with Austin (Moschler & Reboul, 1999, pp. 49- 51) He is the one who thought appropriate and necessary to consider and analyze the speech acts. In the traditional perspective/theory he makes the distinction between affirmative, that are pure descriptions and that he names constative, and utterances that do not represent descriptions. The utterances that do not say anything and are neither true or false and they just refer to the performing of an action are labeled as performative. "This distinction constative/performative can ultimately be regarded as differentiating between saying and doing", and what "defines a performative is that the speaker by actually uttering something already fulfills an act."(Moschler & Reboul, 1999, pp. 49- 51). Pragmatics appeared from Austin's discovery of the phenomenon and based on Searle's study.

The bank brochures and advertising films are created with the help of speech acts and they actually represent speech acts. The pragmatics model, referring to the interpretation of the message, becomes essential when decoding the message-either from brochures or advertising films-as in fact we recreate the message taking in view both the intentions of the communicator and of the consumer. This way, the speaker takes responsibility for his own sayings and uses verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal cues in his argumentative utterances or when sending the message to the interlocutor.

According to Gardiner, there is a variety of reasons for a speaker to utter something and based on this Gardiner suggests a classification of utterances/statements into: interrogatives, declaratives, requests and imperatives. If declarative utterances are characterized by "saying something about something", for

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the interrogative utterances "the success of the speech act depends on the interlocutor's performing of a certain action, for example a pertinent verbal response." (Moschler & Reboul, 1999, p. 43.)

"Any speech act involves a locutionary dimension, when making a statement according to grammar rules, an illocutionary dimension related to the value of the act: request, order, promise, piece of advice, warning, and at last a perlocutionary dimension linked with the effect on the auditory." (Rovența-Frumușani, 2005, p. 56) "The speech act is the key element that the entire conversational process is based on." (Rovența-Frumușani, 2005, p. 68)

The illocutionary acts determine three different types of effects, out of which the focus is on the effects resulting from "the majority of these illocutionary acts require a new act in case they are not successful for the first time."

Austin insists on this distinction between locutionary and illocutionary and creates a taxonomy of the various values comprising an illocutionary act. Though there are five categories, our study will look at only two of them: *Promises,* that require the speaker to adopt a certain attitude or even to carry out a particular action, and the *Behavioural category* that imply an action or reaction towards the other's behaviour or situation.

In the case of significant utterances, Searle mentions four types of acts that should be achieved, the last one being optional. The most interesting ones are the locutionary and perlocutionary acts. The perlocutionary acts aim at convincing the interlocutor either physically present or absent in the given communicative context. The syntactic structure of the utterance contains in Searle's opinion, a note of propositional content (indicating the expressed utterance) and a note of illocutionary force (revealing the illocutionary act).

"The illocutionary force shows the intention of the message and the way in which the message is decoded by the receptor, as a promise, request, excuse, warning, order, etc." (Borchin, 2004, p. 159)

As a demonstrative example, I selected a BT brochure as the visual below indicates in an effort to discuss the already mentioned elements. In the following structure "If you can dream about anything, you should be able to go anywhere!" the note of illocutionary force (ultimately expressing the achieved illocutionary act) is suggested by "If you can dream about anything", while the note of propositional content is indicated by "you should be able to go anywhere!".

Source: Bank Brochures of Publicity BT

Searle further differentiates between normative and constitutive rules. The normative rules generally have an imperative aspect, while the constitutive rules can take the form of a definition. Respecting the constitutive rules allows for the accomplishing of an illocutionary act. The normative rule can be easily identified in the given structure from the brochure: "You should be able to go anywhere!" as it is an imperative - exclamative form. "The three dimensions - locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary-indicate the semiotic and pragmatic approach of the advertising communication, managed by an agile productive authority that knows ow to build its discourse in order to reach a consumer frequently impressed by the "on stage" show." (Robu, 2015, p. 171)

As a further example, there is also a publicity video from BT that can downloaded at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1n_U71Q4Lk-, the functioning of BT Flying Blue Card, 16th May 2017.

The BT Flying Blue Card turns every of your payment in miles flying prize. You can use them later to buy plane tickets to any destination you want + extra free luggage and an upgrade to 1st flying class. So your next holiday is much much closer. The BT Flying Blue Card is a card in a partnership with Air France, KLM TAROM and the prize miles will be registered in your Flying Blue account through this loyalty programme of flying companies. Using BT Flying Blue you can get a loan from 5 times your salary and you can pay your instalment – no fee- in more than 85000 partner shops.

In the publicity discourse expressed by the above video, we can notice the same verbal argumentative strategy indicated this time through the repetition of the modal verb "can", used in the Present tense aiming at the persuasive act together with the intensifier "much". As previously mentioned, the perlocutionary acts aim at persuading/convincing the targeted interlocutor physically absent but present in the process of communication through "you/your" reference.

"We observed that one of the modalities to make an indirect request consists of listing the reasons of such an act." (Moschler & Reboul, 1999, p. 199) The above structure under analysis points out the reasons why the interlocutor will resort to the given act of acquiring the Flying Blue card that "turns every of your payments in miles flying prize."

Austin and Searle on one hand and Sperber and Wilson on the other hand approached the theory of speech acts totally different. For Austin and Searle, one of the objectives of these speech acts is to question the "descriptive" illusion, meaning that all statements/utterances are used in order to describe state of things. In performative statements there exists true or false, whereas in constative statements success or failure. In Austin's view, the constative acts aim at fulfilling certain acts called illocutionary.

"The theory of speech acts developed by Searle confronted another problem, the indirect speech acts. "In an indirect speech act, with the help of a primary illocutionary act, it is intended that its illocutionary force (the performing of a primary act) to be recognized by the public." (Moschler, Reboul, 1999, p. 193) The sentences in the structure *The BT Flying Blue Card turns every of your payment in miles flying prize. You can use them later to buy plane tickets to any destination you want + extra free luggage and an upgrade to 1st flying class. So your next holiday is much much closer. The BT Flying Blue Card is a card in a partnership with Air France, KLM TAROM and the prize miles will be registered in your Flying Blue account through this loyalty programme of flying companies. Using BT Flying Blue you can get a loan from 5 times your salary and you can pay your instalment – no fee - in more than 85000 partner shops,* aim at the interlocutor's capacity (absent but targeted) to fulfill the act of acquiring the card.

The reasons for such an acquisition are obviously mentioned in the text suggested by the illocutionary verb: "*You can use them later to buy plane tickets to any destination you want*".

Searle (Moschler & Reboul, 1999, p. 195)states that any speech act must respect the following conditions: the condition of propositional content, the condition that must be fulfilled prior to the achievement of the act (for the directive speech acts –the interlocutor's ability to perform the action), the sincerity condition defining the psychological state of the speaker – for the directive acts named wish/desire- and the essential condition defining the illocutionary purpose of the act- for the directive acts stimulating the interlocutor in performing the action. These conditions are present in the video taken as an example.

1. The condition related to the propositional content seems to be fulfilled by acquiring the flying card that provides the interlocutor with the certainty of buying a ticket together with the multiple advantages of the loyalty programme "*You can use them later to buy plane tickets to any destination you want…. So your next holiday is much much closer.*"

2. The condition that must be achieved prior to the achievement of the act (for the directive speech acts –the interlocutor's ability to perform the action), this capacity being indicated by the structure "*You can use them later to buy plane tickets to any destination you want*" The sincerity condition defining the psychological state of the speaker – for the directive acts named wish/desire- is confirmed by and through the representative of the BT bank, that has the necessary elements to validate the offers from the video. In other words, beyond the man talking in the video there is the guarantor- the BT bank. "The values acknowledged by the audience, the prestigious oratory and the meaningful language seem to be in a constant interaction with the purpose of winning the public." (Perelman & Olbrechts- Tyteca, 2012, p. 166)

3. The essential condition defining the illocutionary purpose of the act- for the directive acts stimulating the interlocutor in performing the action. The interlocutor becomes interested in buying such a card as every aspect of the video comes to satisfy his wishes **"*So your next holiday is much much closer*".** Who doesn't dream of a holiday as near as possible? Not necessarily from a spatial point of view but as a time projection as well.

"Language is not merely a means of communication, but also an instrument of action upon the public, a persuasion method." (Perelman & Olbrechts- Tyteca, 2012, p. 166)

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