

Performative Utterances

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Presented by Amber Torres

Uses of language/ types of utterances...

So far in the course...

studied one use of language

Assertions (statements)

Describe

Report

Austin broadens our criteria for understanding the functions of language

To exemplify a need for a broader framework

John Austin? →



#PerformativeUtterances

1. **#exemplify** do not report on acts but are the spoken components of rituals
2. **#asement** cannot be verified on the basis of truth or falsity, they follow particular criteria of assessment → felicity & infelicity
3. **#identify** grammatically resemble statements or assertions, seem non-sensical but are commonly used and understood

Exercise

“... if a person makes an utterance of this sort we should say that he is *doing* something rather than *saying* something” (Austin, p. 235)

Give an example of a performative utterance that would be used in that circumstance, explain how it is performative?

1. Betting p. 235
2. Christening p. 235
3. Wedding p. 235
4. Apologizing p. 235
5. Warning
6. Order/ advice
7. Commitments p. 244

#Assessment Verifiability & Falsifiability vs. **Felicity & Infelicity**

“loosen up our ideas of truth and falsity” -Austin

1. Convention must exist and be accepted

2. Must be invoked in the appropriate circumstance

1. Infelicity of inappropriate circumstance
2. Infelicity of insincerity

when criteria not met → infelicity

#Infelicity : Inappropriate circumstances

#misfire

“I divorce you”

- said to wife in living room



#Infelicity : **Insincerity**

“I congratulate you”



“I promise”

Exercise #2

Give (2) examples of utterances that can result in infelicities

insincerity

inappropriate circumstance

misunderstanding

poetry

non-responsibility

1. Betting p. 235
2. Christening p. 235
3. Wedding p. 235
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Identifying A Performative Utterance

- Explicit performative verb
 - “order”
 - “insult”
- Explicit performative utterance
 - I order you to shut the door
 - I insult you?

#cont'd

Asymmetry of verbs

1st person singular present indicative active verbs

“I promised”

“He promises”

“I promise”

Passive verbs

Passive verb, 2nd or 3rd person

“Passengers are warned”

“You are authorized”

#Discussion

“In this way the ills that have been found to afflict statements can be perceived paralleled with the ills that are characteristic of performative utterances. And after all when we state something or describe something or report something, we do perform an act.. We see then that stating something is performing an act just as much as is giving an order or giving a warning; and we see, on the other hand, that, when we give an order or a warning or a piece of advice there is a question about how this is related to fact which is not perhaps so different from the kind of question that arises when we discuss how a statement is related to fact”.

- Austin