

EL4222 Stylistics and Drama: Week 4

Part 1 (Lecture)

1. A little anecdote on felicity conditions:

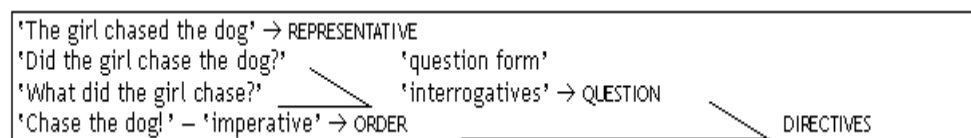
In Islam, a divorce is automatic as soon as the husband utters the word 'talaq' three times repeatedly. If the wife is a bond-maid, two times will do. It has nothing to do with man's intention, nor the expression of regret could stop its operation. It has nothing to do with a man's intention not the expression of regret could stop its operation. ... *The Hindu* (January 1, 1987) reported the case of a 'drama in real life'. In Islamabad, Pakistan, in a divorce scene in a TV Urdu play, a prominent actor Usman Pirzada was shown divorcing his wife by saying 'talaq' three times. But to his misfortune, the role of the wife in the play was enacted by his real wife, Samina. The religious scholars lost no time in proclaiming that the actor and the actress stood separated after the triple *talaq*. This was irrespective of the fact whether they intended to divorce each other in real life or not.

2. John Searle studied under Austin in Oxford. He distinguished between 'propositional content' (= Austin's 'locution') and 'illocutionary force' (= Austin's 'illocution'). He proposed a detailed classification of the major categories of speech acts (to be considered below). He pointed out the importance of considering the social institution which the speech act operated in. He also proposed ways to deal with indirect speech acts.

3. Classification useful, so that *ad hoc* labels needn't be used.

Name of Category	Function	Word-world fit	Psychological State ('Sincerity Condition')
REPRESENTATIVE (ASSERTIVE)	To describe – eg statements, assertions	Word to world fit	Belief
DIRECTIVE (IMPOSITIVE)	To attempt the addressee to do or say something – eg requests, suggestions, questions, permitting, advising	World to word fit	Want (wish, desire)
COMMISSIVE	To commit the addresser to a future course of action – eg, promises, undertakings	World to word fit	Intention
EXPRESSIVE	To express a person's psychological state – eg, thanking, congratulating, welcoming	[None]	Different possible psychological states
DECLARATION	To bring about a change in the state of affairs – eg, naming, marrying	Word and world change simultaneously	[None]

- Some of these categories are 'encoded' grammatically, but not all.



4. Searle's conditions for speech acts. Searle suggests that we interpret what speech act has been produced by means of rules. His felicity conditions are rules.

Felicity conditions on requests and warnings.

Conditions	REQUESTS	WARNINGS
propositional content	Future act A of hearer H	Future event E
preparatory	Speaker S believes H can do A. It is not obvious that H would do A without being asked.	S thinks E will occur and is not in H's interest. S thinks it is not obvious to H that E will occur.
sincerity	S wants H to do A.	S believes E is not in H's best interest
essential	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A	Counts as an undertaking that E is not in H's best interest

Example:

'Can you play the piano?'

NO PIANO IN THE VICINITY → preparatory condition broken → reinterpretation as 'question'

S IS KNOWN TO HATE MUSIC → sincerity condition broken → reinterpretation as 'question'

Indirect speech acts must also satisfy the conditions, eg

'I'd love to hear you play some Rachmaninov'.

- highlights the sincerity condition
- other conditions satisfied (H has the ability, there is a piano in the vicinity, etc.)
- interpretation: probably a request

> 'You can play some Rachmaninov, can't you?'

In English, warnings can be to do with

- unavoidable future events ('There'll be a storm tonight');
- avoidable future events ('If you go on the railway tracks, you might be hit by a train').

Denis Healey, British Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Government (1 January 1973) on tax rises: 'I warn you that there are going to be howls of anguish from the 80,000 people who are rich enough to pay over 75% on the last slice of their income.'

Neil Kinnock, former leader of the British Labour Party, shortly before the British General Election in 1983: 'If Margaret Thatcher wins on Thursday, I warn you not to be ordinary. I warn you not to be young, I warn you not to fall ill, and I warn you not to grow old.'

Story related by J. M. Barrie (author of Peter Pan) concerning one of his wards Jack Llewelyn-Davies and his friends: 'When stuffing himself with cakes at tea, Sylvia had warned him, "You'll be sick tomorrow." "I'll be sick tonight," replied Jack cheerily.

Suppose I say to you, 'I promise to bar you from the exam if you don't submit your essay on time.' This would not normally be described as a promise, even though the word *promise* is used. Searle suggests that this is because we know the **conditions** for promises:

Propositional content: Sentence predicates a future act (A) of speaker (S).
Preparatory condition: S believes that doing act A is in hearer's (H's) best interest and that S can do A.
Sincerity condition: S intends to do A.
Essential condition: S undertakes an obligation to do A.

We operate in a world where *barring H from an exam* is not normally considered to be in H's best interest (*preparatory condition*) – so we have to re-interpret the utterance.

Another example: **apologising**.

Propositional content: S expresses regret for a past act A of S.
Preparatory condition: S believes that doing act A was not in H's best interest.
Sincerity condition: S regrets doing A.
Essential condition: Counts as an apology for act A.

The episode (from British TV series *Soldier, Soldier*) is set in the British army base in Germany. The main character, Tucker, has been served with a paternity suit by a German woman. Not surprisingly, Tucker's wife is very upset and decides to leave him to return to England, but changes her mind at the last moment. Meanwhile, Tucker has undergone blood tests and has learnt that he is not the father of the child after all.

TUCKER: It's not my baby, Donna.
DONNA: Is that 'sorry'?
Tucker nods his head shame-facedly.

FROM ADVERTISEMENT FOR BENDICK'S CHOCOLATES: 'Why is this man giving his wife chocolates? ... Is it an apology?'
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5. The authorial speech act (see Alward 2010).

- ☞ Given that authors do not believe the stories they write, not do they (typically) intend their readers to do so, the suggestion that authors assert the sentences contained in their texts is not generally thought to be tenable. (Alward)
- ☞ Or an exercise in pretence? (Searle: "... the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the representative type.") 'Whereas the intended effect of assertion is listener belief in the asserted proposition, the goal of fictive illocutionary action is that the listener make-believe or imagine the proposition expressed by the utterance' (Alward). What do we do with historical novels which contain a mix of fictional and non-fictional details? What about films based on real people, but have been adjusted for greater dramatic interest?

- ☞ Or are they fictive illocutionary acts? (Currie: *a speaker who utters a sentence S thereby performs a fictive illocutionary action just in case (i) she intends that the audience recognise that S means some proposition P by means of their recognition that she intends S to mean that P and (ii) she intends that the audience will make-believe that P by means of the recognition that she intends them to do so.*)
- ☞ Or are they fictive perlocutionary acts? (Hoffman)
- ☞ Or they don't perform illocutionary acts (proposition acts that lack illocutionary force)? (Walton: "[fiction] is not just language stripped of some of its normal functions; it is something positive, something special.")

6. The felicity condition of **tellability** is said to apply to all narratives, and to the extent that plays involve story-telling, this should apply to plays as well. There is a traditional distinction between **fabula** (story) and **sjuzet** (the way the story is organised, discourse, narration): tellability focusses on fabula. The story has to be worth telling.

- ☞ Inherence. Sacks (1992: 12): 'the sheer telling of a story is something in which one makes a claim for its tellability'
- ☞ Culture- and time-bound. Norrick (2004 :80): 'the sort of news that makes a story salient today will no longer make it salient tomorrow'
- ☞ Mutability. Polanyi (1979: 213): the point of the story 'may change in the course of the narration'
- ☞ Generic differences. Ryan (2005: 590): 'whereas popular literature invests heavily in the tellability of plots, high literature often prefers to make art out of the not-tellable'

Valerie Lowe analyses the speech act of **confession** by the black slave Tituba in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*. She says, 'Austin suggests ... that certain conditions must be fulfilled in order to produce what he termed "happy" performatives. Those characters in *The Crucible* who confess while believing themselves to be innocent produce "unhappy" confessions. To complicate matters further, Austin excludes those performatives which are "done under duress": these "come under the heading of 'extenuating circumstances' or of 'factors reducing the agent's responsibility' " (Austin 1962: 21)' (Lowe 1998: 131).

Outline: *The Crucible* is set in 17th-c. Salem, a small town in Massachusetts. Revd **Parris** discovers some local girls were performing a 'sinful' dance in the woods with the slave **Tituba**. One of the girls, **Betty**, Parris's daughter, loses consciousness; panic spreads as people see this as evidence of witchcraft. Revd John **Hale**, an authority on witchcraft is sent for. When questioned, the leader **Abigail** Williams denies any witchcraft and claims she and the girls were just dancing. After Betty wakes up with a scream, Abigail and Tituba are questioned and eventually Tituba appears to confess to witchcraft. As the witch trials begin, Abigail and the girls lie and find a new power: seeking revenge by accusing others of witchcraft. Among those accused is Elizabeth Proctor. Her husband John **Proctor**, a farmer, had previously had an affair with Abigail when she worked in their house. When the affair was discovered, Elizabeth dismissed Abigail. Proctor tries to counter the girls by producing **Mary**, his servant, who is willing to admit the girls lied. However, all the girls accuse her of witchcraft, and Mary eventually accuses Proctor to save herself. By now, Revd Hale realises the corruption and injustice of the court and attempts to defend Proctor who has been sentenced to death. Hale denounces the proceedings and resigns from the court. The night before the execution, Proctor gives in to the advice of Revd Hale: to confess, which will get Proctor leniency from execution and save his life. However, he will not let the confession be displayed in the church and rips it up. The play ends with Proctor being led off to his execution.

Some other characters: Thomas **Putnam** (an influential citizen), Judge **Danforth** (presiding judge in the Salem trials)

1 TITUBA: I have no power on this child, sir.

2 HALE: You most certainly do, and you will free her from it now! When did you compact with the Devil?

3 TITUBA: I don't compact with no Devil!

4 PARRIS: You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!

5 PUTNAM: This woman must be hanged! She must be taken and hanged!

6 TITUBA: [*terrified, falls to her knees*] No, no, don't hang Tituba! I tell him I don't desire to work for him, sir.

7 PARRIS: The Devil?

8 HALE: Then you saw him! [TITUBA *weeps.*] Now Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Hell it is very hard to break with it. We are going to help you tear yourself free...

When the Devil comes to you does he ever come – with another person? [*She stares up into his face.*]

Perhaps another person in the village? Someone you know.

9 PARRIS: Who came with him?

10 PUTNAM: Sarah Good? Did you ever see Sarah Good with him? Or Osburn?

11 PARRIS: Was it man or woman came with him?

12 TITUBA: Man or woman. Was – was woman.

...

- 13 HALE: Tituba. You must have no fear to tell us who they are, do you understand? We will protect you. The Devil can never overcome a minister. You know that, do you not?
- 14 TITUBA: [*kisses HALE's hand*] Aye, sir, oh, I do.
- 15 HALE: You have confessed yourself to witchcraft, and that speaks a wish to come to Heaven's side. And we will bless you, Tituba.
- 16 TITUBA: [*deeply relieved*] Oh, God bless you, Mr Hale.

In turn 9, Hale says, 'when the Devil comes to you' (so that the proposition 'The Devil comes to you' is presupposed in the sentence), and in turn 15, he declares 'You have confessed yourself to witchcraft' - yet where is this 'confession' that Tituba had received the Devil or that she practised witchcraft? Lowe sees the 'confession' as unhappy because

- ☞ she does not use an explicit performative admitting her guilt in words
- ☞ the 'circumstances' of the confession are inappropriate since it is extorted under duress
- ☞ we have no evidence of Tituba's 'mental processes' - that she believes that she practises witchcraft

In addition to this, Lowe sees that her powerless social position makes her unable to deny her guilt, so that the 'confession' is more so an unhappy one.

Part 2 (Activity)

Work through the following extract from *R&J* 3.1.

1. Give a (non-technical) speech-act (or physical act) label (LABEL1) for each numbered utterance - eg 'question', 'boast', 'exclamation', 'answer'. (Sometimes more than one label might be possible.)
2. Give a speech-act label according to Searle's categories (LABEL2).
3. Once you have done this, work out if the labelling gives you any insight about what is going on in the extract.
4. Were there any problems in the labelling exercise?
5. Consider the author's speech act here.

	TEXT	LABEL1	LABEL2
1	<i>Enter TYBALT, PETRUCHIO, and other CAPULETS</i>		
2	BENVOLIO By my head, here comes the Capulets.		
3	MERCUTIO By my heel, I care not.		
4	TYBALT Follow me close, for I will speak to them.		
5	Gentlemen, good e'en. A word with one of you.		
6	MERCUTIO And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something. Make it a word		
7	and a blow.		
8	TYBALT You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, an you will give me occasion.		
9	MERCUTIO Could you not take some occasion without giving?		
10	TYBALT Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo.		
11	MERCUTIO Consort? What, dost thou make us minstrels? An thou make minstrels of us,		
12	look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick. Here's that shall make you		
13	dance. Zounds, 'consort'!		
14	BENVOLIO We talk here in the public haunt of men.		
15	Either withdraw unto some private place,		
16	And reason coldly of your grievances,		
17	Or else depart. Here all eyes gaze on us.		
18	MERCUTIO Men's eyes were made to look and let them gaze.		
19	I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I.		
20	<i>Enter ROMEO</i>		
21	TYBALT Well, peace be with you, sir. Here comes my man.		
22	MERCUTIO But I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery.		
23	Marry, go before to field, he'll be your follower.		
24	Your worship in that sense may call him 'man'.		
25	TYBALT Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford		
26	No better term than this: thou art a villain.		
27	ROMEO Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee		

<p>28 Doth much excuse the appertaining rage 29 To such a greeting. Villain am I none. 30 Therefore, farewell. I see thou know'st me not. 31 TYBALT Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries 32 That thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw. 33 ROMEO I do protest I never injured thee, 34 But love thee better than thou canst devise, 35 Till thou shalt know the reason of my love. 36 And so, good Capulet—which name I tender 37 As dearly as my own—be satisfied. 38 MERCUTIO O calm dishonourable, vile submission! 39 <i>Alla stoccata carries it away. (draws his sword)</i> 40 Tybalt, you ratcatcher, will you walk? 41 TYBALT What wouldst thou have with me? 42 MERCUTIO Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives, that I mean to make 43 bold withal, and, as you shall use me hereafter, dry-beat the rest of the eight. Will 44 you pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears? Make haste, lest mine be about 45 your ears ere it be out. 46 TYBALT I am for you. <i>(draws his sword)</i> 47 ROMEO Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up. 48 MERCUTIO Come, sir, your <i>passado</i>. 49 MERCUTIO and TYBALT fight 50 ROMEO <i>(draws his sword)</i> Draw, Benvolio. Beat down their weapons. 51 Gentlemen, for shame! Forbear this outrage. 52 Tybalt, Mercutio! The Prince expressly hath 53 Forbidden bandying in Verona streets. 54 Hold, Tybalt! Good Mercutio! 55 ROMEO tries to break up the fight TYBALT stabs MERCUTIO under ROMEO's arm 56 PETRUCHIO Away, Tybalt. 57 <i>Exeunt TYBALT, PETRUCHIO, and the other CAPULETS</i> 58 MERCUTIO I am hurt. 59 A plague o' both your houses! I am sped. 60 Is he gone and hath nothing? 61 BENVOLIO What, art thou hurt? 62 MERCUTIO Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, 'tis enough. 63 Where is my page?—Go, villain, fetch a surgeon. 64 <i>Exit MERCUTIO'S PAGE</i> 65 ROMEO Courage, man. The hurt cannot be much.</p>		
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Part 3 (Analysis)

The following extract from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* depends on our estimation of the felicity conditions of the speech act of **proposing**. What are they for each of the characters? Are particular characters associated with particular speech acts? What is the author's speech act?

- 1 JACK: ... we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.
- 2 GWENDOLEN: Married, Mr Worthing?
- 3 JACK [*astounded*]: Well ... surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.
- 4 GWENDOLEN: I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.
- 5 JACK: Well ... may I propose to you now?
- 6 GWENDOLEN: I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.
- 7 JACK: Gwendolen!

8 GWENDOLEN: Yes, Mr Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

9 JACK: You know what I have to say to you.

10 GWENDOLEN: Yes, but you don't say it.

11 JACK: Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees.*]

12 GWENDOLEN: Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

13 JACK: My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

14 GWENDOLEN: Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter LADY BRACKNELL.*]

15 LADY BRACKNELL: Mr Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

16 GWENDOLEN: Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr Worthing has not quite finished yet.

17 LADY BRACKNELL: Finished what, may I ask?

18 GWENDOLEN: I am engaged to Mr Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together.*]

19 LADY BRACKNELL: Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. ... And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

20 GWENDOLEN [*reproachfully*] Mamma!

21 LADY BRACKNELL: In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door ...*]