

## Recenzió

Margarita Németh

### **Peter Siemund: *Speech Acts and Clause Types – English in a Cross-Linguistic Context***

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*Speech Acts and Clause Types – English in a Cross-Linguistic Context* is a book that provides an introduction to the relationship between clause types and their associated illocutionary forces. It takes an interdisciplinary approach combining insights from linguistics, philosophy and sociology. The book contains extensive cross-linguistic data that are used to illustrate the linguistic phenomena and the clause types under investigation. The book comprises twelve chapters (including an introduction and a summary).

**Chapters 2-4** provide the necessary theoretical and methodological background, more specifically, these 3 chapters cover speech act theory and alternative approaches that can be helpful when investigating speech acts, different ways of identifying clause types and a summary of functional typology.

**Chapters 5-11** offer in-depth discussions of specific clause types and related phenomena. The second half of the book pays attention to specific clause types and other related phenomena (such as declaratives, interrogatives, exclamatives, imperatives, minor clause types and performative verbs) with the help of case studies. Different case studies investigate the typologically prominent clause types and those illocutionary forces that clauses can encode in various languages. These chapters first consider theoretical foundations, then introduce the relevant grammatical structures in English and end with a cross-linguistic analysis of the investigated phenomenon. In the following, a brief summary of each individual chapter is presented.

**Chapter 1** creates a background for further discussion via introducing basic notions, theories and ideas. It throws light on some communication-related concepts and familiarizes the reader with Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts. Later it gives a detailed description about clause categories and the relevant speech acts (forces) that these clauses can express. Since the book adopts a cross-linguistic approach, this introductory chapter also concerns the advantages of the methodology used in cross-linguistic research. Lastly, the chapter ends with a brief introduction of cross-cultural pragmatics.

**Chapter 2** provides further information about the idea that 'language is doing' and describes a great number of social activities that can be carried out only with the use of language. Certain social acts are usually expressed by specific clause types, however, there is no one-to-one correspondence between major clause types and their prototypical illocutionary forces – stating, asking questions and uttering questions – since declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives each can express a variety of functions.

**Chapter 3** defines clause types from a morpho-syntactic perspective *i.e.* intonation is not a relevant source of information here. Clause types are categorised on the basis of their marking strategies, such as word order differences, particles and certain affixes. The chapter also argues for the necessity of connecting clause types with their illocutionary forces. It is shown that there is a strong connection between marking strategies and the type of the clause. The chapter also touches upon the question of major and minor types and claims that this dichotomy needs to be replaced with a model that is based on gradient concepts.

**Chapter 4** discusses the methodology typically applied in cross-linguistic comparisons. Languages show a great number of structural variation, however, as it is pointed out, certain phenomena and patterns occur with greater frequency than others. Knowing these frequencies and patterns can be useful in cross-linguistic research. Investigating the patterns can lead the linguists to the idea of universals and to the need to explain the motivations behind them. One possible way to find an explanation lays in language typology, which implies a surface oriented method where generalizations are always made on the basis of collected/naturally occurring data.

The first major clause type investigated in the book is the declarative (**Chapter 5**). Generally speaking, declaratives express statements about the way the world is (in other words declaratives are representations of factual reality) and are used with practically all imaginable illocutionary forces, so they can be applied when asking questions, issuing commands, expressing requests, permissions, and wishes, making promises, giving instructions and so on. Nonetheless, declaratives cannot be linked to any specific illocutionary force at all. Instead of expressing typical illocutionary forces, they normally present information, while the attitude of the speaker is contextually determined.

**Chapter 6 and Chapter 7** deal with polar and constituent interrogatives. Chapter 6 associates polar interrogatives with the prototypical function of seeking information, but it introduces all the non-prototypical functions of interrogatives as well. The chapter makes a cross-cultural comparison between polar interrogatives, tags and declaratives and it is proved that remarkable differences can be found even between related languages. Chapter 7 explores the meaning relationships, illocutionary forces, and use (semantics, pragmatics) of constituent interrogatives. It is argued that it is possible to characterize the meaning of constituent interrogatives in terms of their true answers. The chapter also discusses the social economics behind using constituent interrogatives. Based on Levinson (2012), constituent interrogatives are face-threatening in nature and therefore they should be avoided. Thus, constituent interrogatives are one of the least preferred information-seeking linguistic devices and they are generally connected to a higher social cost than polar interrogatives or declaratives with question forces, since with an explicit content question the speaker confesses his/her ignorance, while in the other cases (s)he just confirms or disconfirms his/her hypothesis.

**Chapter 8** is concerned with imperatives. Imperatives generally express request for certain actions and, just as in the case of interrogatives, a reaction or response is required on the part of the addressee. The chapter focuses on the possible meanings of imperatives and the various illocutionary forces that they express. It raises the problem of analysing the meaning of imperatives; as it is claimed, identifying the core meaning of imperatives is also a problematic area. It is especially the case if we want to tackle all the recognizable illocutionary forces that can be expressed by imperatives. The chapter also investigates the structural properties of imperatives, and concludes that imperatives are non-finite hypothetical verb forms. From a cross-cultural point of view, some languages – in contrast with English – use the imperative

more extensively and the interpretation of imperatives can also involve the first or the third person.

Exclamatives are introduced in **Chapter 9**. An exclamative typically expresses surprise in an unexpected situation, but from the present perspective, it designates a grammatical category referring to the morpho-syntactic representation of exclamations. This means that while an exclamation is similar to a request or a statement (it refers to an illocutionary force expressed by a specific clause type), the term exclamative is the actual name of the clause (like declarative or interrogative). It is also possible to see exclamations as a specific speech act type.

As opposed to other major clauses, the aim of an exclamation is not to utter a certain proposition, but to show an affective reaction to a proposition in the common ground. Structurally speaking, it is hard to find a prototypical construction in expressing exclamations. Apart from *how*- and *what*-exclamatives being discussed extensively in this chapter, other major clause types (such as declaratives or interrogatives) can also be analysed as exclamatives when they are uttered with a special intonation pattern. Exclamatives cannot be treated as a major clause type mainly because they are encoded in a non-sentential form. Cross-linguistically, exclamatives do not form a stable type across languages, since some languages do not even use a prototypical sentence structure to express them. Exclamatives are very hard to distinguish from constituent interrogatives and the chapter argues that there is an intimate relationship between these two types (not just in closely related languages but in genetically unrelated languages as well).

In my opinion, Chapter 9 is one of the most important chapters of the book. Firstly, because the investigation of exclamatives is an under-researched area and a detailed, systematic description and analysis of this clause type has not yet been carried out. Secondly, the phenomena described here can be considered as the biggest evidence for the main argument of the book (the need for a gradient model of clause types). The structural heterogeneity of exclamatives, the overlap of exclamatives with constituent interrogatives and the constant doubt whether exclamatives really belong to the major clause types or the minor ones – explained in extenso in the chapter – furnish sufficient evidence that clause types are not mutually exclusive categories.

**Chapter 10** introduces and discusses minor clause types. *Minor clause types* is an umbrella term for a category that involves various grammatical constructions. These constructions can be related to specific illocutionary forces. Since the number of possible forms and constructions in this category is high, the expected number of functions that can be expressed with the help of them is also high; however, this expectation is not born out. As it is shown, these minor clause types typically express directive or expressive speech acts only.

Chapter 10 provides a detailed taxonomy of minor type clauses (or clause-like constructions). The first group contains a number of finite and non-finite clauses introduced by a specific interrogative word or a *wh*-form (*what if, why don't you, how about, how came*), while the elements of the second group obligatorily contain a modal verb (e.g. *may, would, let*). The third group of minor clause types involves finite and non-finite subordinate clauses (e.g. *if only...*). These forms are subordinate syntactically speaking, but functionally they have a rather independent, main clause-like meaning. The chapter puts a special emphasis on the phenomenon of insubordination. Insubordination is the conventionalized use of a structurally subordinate clause as an independent main clause (Evans 2007).

Chapter 10 attempts to fill the gap in the pertinent literature on clause types. Minor clause types have not been investigated or classified in a consistent manner so far. Although there

are some reference books (e.g. Huddleston & Pullum 2002) and some surveys (König & Siemund 2007) that touch upon the phenomenon, there are no articles or monographs dedicated to their comprehensive analysis. As for insubordination in different languages, grammar books typically do not recognize insubordination as a distinct grammatical phenomenon, so no real description or explanation is available in the literature. Chapter 10 tries to answer the emerging questions concerning these issues and its novelty makes the chapter one of the biggest strengths of the book.

The phenomenon discussed in **Chapter 11** is the lexical encoding of social actions *i.e.* the use of performative verbs. In general, performative verbs have been mainly scrutinized from the perspective of philosophy so far, however this chapter also considers linguistics and sociology when analysing speech acts.

Two different types of performative verbs – based on their abilities to represent social complexities – are described in the chapter. Members of the first type are equivalent to the social actions – carried out completely and successfully – that they describe. These performative verbs coexist with their corresponding social actions (e.g. *baptizing*). The other group contains performative verbs designating only certain parts of complex actions. For example apologizing can start with uttering the performative verb *apologize*, however this is just a starting point of the whole social act and it is not complete in itself (for instance, describing the situation, explaining the committed offense, taking on responsibility or offering a repair can be all part of the same social action).

The chapter also discusses a possible classification of English performative speech acts based on Vanderveken (1990), according to which some performative verbs can be regarded as having a more general meaning (*suggest, direct, declare*) and some of them have a very specific meaning (*certify, castigate*). In his classification, Vanderveken (1990) orders performative verbs hierarchically, and creates a tree diagram to illustrate his point. Performative verbs with the most general meaning are at the top of the hierarchy, while verbs with a more specific meaning are located below them.

**Chapter 12** summarizes the main findings and the most important message of the book. As it is highlighted, exploring clause types includes investigating their semantics, pragmatics, and both their morpho-syntactic and distributional properties. These properties depend on one another, are interrelated and represent broad, though universal tendencies across languages.

It is also reiterated that the traditional dichotomy of major and minor clause types should be replaced with a gradient model assuming a continuum of clause types (*i.e.* they are not mutually exclusive). Declarative clauses are placed at one pole of the continuum, while minor types can be found at the opposite pole (interrogatives, exclamatives and imperatives are positioned between the two poles).

## Concluding remarks

The primary aim of *Speech Acts and Clause Types* is to serve educational purposes, namely to be used as a course book in university courses. Both students of English and students of general linguistics can find it interesting. Each chapter ends with exercises being arranged at three levels (specifically basic, intermediate, and advanced levels) and provides recommendations for further reading and research, suggesting many ideas for various self-contained empirical projects. These components make *Speech Acts and Clause Types* a good course book for any students interested in linguistics. From a theoretical point of view, the

book does not argue for any theory or linguistic model of clause types. It rather tries to introduce and describe the advantages and limits of the competing approaches being present in the field. This discussion of different approaches is more appropriate for the purposes of a textbook since it can provide an overview of the relevant theories, while trying to reach a possible synthesis of different approaches. Moreover, the huge amount of cross-linguistic data presented in the book requires some flexibility, so it would not be practical to insist on applying only one theory.

It is possible to read this book as one moving from a categorical view of clause types to a gradient notion. The concept of grammatical gradience is not new in linguistics but applying it to clause type systems is a relatively innovative idea. Another novelty of the book is investigating clause types from a cross-linguistic point of view. It focuses on English, but besides English a great range of data from other languages is also presented. Altogether, the book contains 93 tables that illustrate the linguistic phenomena described and deepen our knowledge about clause types and reveal more information about their similarities and differences.

From time to time, the volume itself points out its own limitations and unresolved questions. For example, intonation as an influential and definitional criterion in the analysis and classification of clause types is left aside, because intonation can take priority over the force of all clause types resulting in a rather independent expressive level of investigation. However, ignoring intonation is mentioned as one of the biggest limitations of the book. Nevertheless, it gives place for further research in which the investigation of clause types occurs from the point of view of suprasegmental phonology. Two unresolved questions in the book are connected to exclamatives and imperatives. As mentioned above, it is problematic to decide whether exclamatives should be categorized as major or minor clause types, while regarding the imperative, the problem lies in defining its core meaning. Though these questions remain unanswered, they are not real limitations of the book since they can motivate and incite further development in the field or provide basis for further research of the relevant phenomena.

Overall, *Speech Acts and Clause Types* provides a comprehensive summary of what we know about clause types, illocutionary forces and their taxonomies and the relationship between the morphological properties of sentences and their illocutionary forces. The book widens the horizon in the field of pragmatics, semantics and even in morpho-syntax and it can be regarded as an invaluable contribution to speech act studies as well. The book contains a great variety of examples and illustrations and provides a big amount of cross-linguistic data to help the reader in the understanding of the theoretical and empirical research background. The book has a clearly stated aim with a consistent, well-built, easy-to-follow structure and these features make it suitable for its original aim, *i.e.* that it is to be used as a university course book. Theoretically speaking, *Speech Acts and Clause Types* argues for developing a gradient model of clause types – that is quite different from the traditional distinction between major and minor clause types – and this argument can bring the breath of new times into the field of linguistics.

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Margarita Németh  
University of Debrecen  
Institute of English and American Studies  
H-4002 Debrecen  
Pf. 400  
margarita.nemeth@gmail.com