

A4: The semantics and pragmatics of performatives

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Explicit performatives such as

- (1) I claim that the ball has crossed the line.

represent a formal type that has been identified as a clause type *sui generis*, apart from the traditional clause types (Altmann 1993). In generative semantics, there have even been attempts to relate traditional clause types syntactically to underlying explicit performatives (Ross 1970, Rutherford 1970, Grewendorf 1972). Such attempts to reduce clause types to abstract syntactic representations were accompanied by efforts to reduce the semantics (i.e., type of denotation) of traditional clause types to the denotation of explicit performatives (Lewis 1972). This raises the question of which denotation should be assumed for explicit performatives. This question requires a set of analytic clarifications, which have sparked a fervent discussion in the relevant semantic and pragmatic literature. Therefore, the semantics and pragmatics of performatives represent a fundamental problem in the semantic and pragmatic analysis of clause types.

The overall goal of this project is to consider whether it is possible to relate the semantics of clause types to the semantics of explicit performatives. This objective should be approached from two different angles. On the one hand, we want to provide pragmatic analyses of explicit performatives, making use of a theory of speech acts. On the other hand, we want to investigate the consequences the latter analyses have for a model-theoretic semantic account of this type of utterance (and of clause types, if clause types can be reduced to explicit performatives).

First, the speech-act theoretical analyses should clarify whether Austin's arguments against a distinction between constatives and performatives are really valid. For instance, we want to examine how to account for the observation that explicit performatives may be judged according to the facts in the real world (for example, the verdict of a judge may turn out to be wrong). In particular, it must be clarified whether explicit performatives generally have descriptive properties and whether these descriptive properties qualify them for realizing illocutionary acts in an "explicit" way. Furthermore, we want to inspect whether performatives are of a specific type of speech act, namely declaratives, as has been proposed by Searle (1989).

The semantic issues dealt with in this project are primarily concerned with the specific meanings associated with explicit performatives. If the latter are self-verifying statements, they must in some way or other relate to the utterance. Therefore, the semantic analysis has to address the question whether this self-reference has to be described by making use of the elaborate apparatus of token-reflexive interpretation (Kupffer 2001), or whether it constitutes merely a particular specific form of context dependency (Zimmermann 1991). An answer to this question must be based on a specific model-theoretic analysis of explicit performatives, which is a central goal of this project. Further semantic investigations are concerned with the question of whether a truth-conditional semantics alone provides a proper basis for a descriptive analysis of performatives or whether the latter requires semantic correlates of felicity conditions on speech acts.

Potential supervisors for dissertations completed in this project include Prof. Günther Grewendorf, Prof. Thomas E. Zimmermann, and Prof. Jörg Meibauer.