

The Action of Discourse. A Normativist Approach of Illocutionary Acts

The thesis is about discourse as constituting an action. What exactly does this action consist of? What concepts do we need to elucidate it? The action of discourse has been put under examination and described by J. L. Austin as including a special “illocutionary” act. Authors in the Gricean tradition of language analysis gave an intentionalist version of the illocutionary act. However, this stance makes it difficult to properly understand the relationship between illocutionary acts and the normative outputs of utterances. It is also hard to account for the dynamic feature of the illocutionary act constitution – e. g. the potential to negotiate, enforce or block the illocutionary act depending on the balance of power in the speech situation. Drawing from several approaches of speech action – but especially those of J. L. Austin himself, R. Brandom, R. Kukla and M. Lance – the thesis aims to accommodate intentional and conventional features of the performance of illocutionary acts, by arguing for a normativist and pragmatist account of illocutionary acts, where these acts depend on norms implicit in practices and should be defined by normative results of utterances.