An explicit speech act has a characteristic double structure, in that it is composed of both an <u>illocutive</u> (= <u>performative</u>) and a <u>locutive</u> (= <u>propositional</u>) component, corresponding respectively to the relational aspect (between speaker and hearer) and the content aspect (stated or mentioned in the propositional component) of any speech act.

The general pragmatic functions of communicative action are <u>communication</u> (= bringing about a certain kind of interpersonal relations); <u>representation</u> (= reproducing a propositional content); and <u>expression</u> (= uttering intentions).

The theory of speech acts postulates that communicative competence consists in mastery of the rules for using sentences in speech acts. In being uttered as a part of a speech action, a sentence is embedded in certain relations to reality: (1) in a relation to the external reality of what can be thought and spoken about; (2) in a relation to the internal reality of what a speaker wishes to express as his intentions; and (3) in a relation to the normative reality of what is socially and culturally acknowledged. In being embedded in these relations to reality a sentence thereby makes or implies certain claims to validity that it need not fulfill and cannot fulfill as a nonembedded, nonsituated, sentence, which is a purely linguistic, or grammatical, construct. (Considered pragmatically, the grammaticality of a sentence means that, when it is uttered, it is understandable to all who have mastered the rules of the relevant grammar; and this claim to understandability is the one universal claim to validity that can be fulfilled purely immanently, by language itself.)

Communicative action, then, is action directed toward reaching an understanding in which, or whereby, grammatically correct (= understandable) sentences are embedded in three relations to reality by making or implying three further universal claims to validity (i.e., in addition to the language-immanent claim of understandability), and thereby performing the corresponding pragmatic functions of representation, communication, and expression.

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