

Does Searle's Challenge Affect Chances for Approximating Assertion and Quotative Modal *Wollen*?

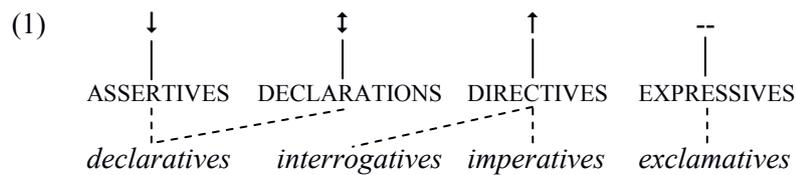
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The possibility of reporting on overheard monologic or "secret" language use by means of the German quotative modal *wollen* shows that a "volitional-epistemic" analysis of the latter is problematic. This finding allows making a further distinction between Searle's and Zaefferer's analyses of assertion, indicating that only the former, based solely on speaker commitment, would be able to properly approximate assertion and quotative *wollen*. However, embeddability of *wollen* under negation casts doubt on the desirability of such an approximation.

Keywords: assertion, quotative evidentials, commitment, volition, embedding

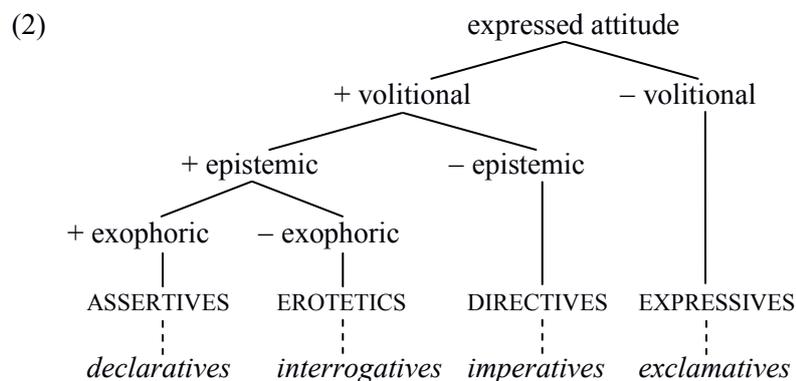
In a fascinating piece of scholarly synthesis, Zaefferer (2001a) offers an alternative to the famous classification of illocution types developed by Searle (1976). One of the design goals of Zaefferer's alternative is to establish a better match with the empirically attested class of natural language sentence types emerging from typological research (cf. König and Siemund 2007; Sadock and Zwicky 1985).

Consider first the scheme deriving from Searle's approach:



Famously, his most principled characterization of illocution types in terms of direction of fit (word-to-world: ↓, world-to-word: ↑; both directions: ⇕, no direction: --) yields the four major categories in (1) (middle row).¹ Mapping these onto their default counterparts in the realm of sentence types (bottom row) results in two well-known mismatches. First, declarations are standardly carried out by using explicit performatives in declarative form (e.g., *I hereby protest against Hektor Baron's policies*). Second, interrogatives must be linked to directives, due to the analysis of question acts as subspecies of requests (Searle 1969: 69).

Zaefferer's alternative classification looks essentially as follows (cf. Zaefferer 2001a: 223):



(2) starts from the assumption that all speech acts express some kind of speaker attitude. Then,

¹ ↑ is usually split into two types according to whose obligation it is to (see to bring(ing) about the change. Directives imply addressee obligation, while the additional category, *commissives*, implies speaker obligation (cf. Searle 1976: 11-12). Commissives are per default carried out by using declaratives, so adding them to (1) would result in an additional mismatch.

[i]f the expressed attitude is not primarily volitional in the sense of some well-defined will [...], it will result in an expressive speech act. All other speech acts express a focused volitional attitude toward either a necessarily epistemic event (that some assumption be made) or another event [...]. An epistemic goal may be either primarily addressee-oriented (exocentric) or speaker-oriented (non-exocentric); in the former case it is reached in general if the addressee assumes the propositional content, i.e. the given proposition, in the latter case it is reached if the speaker assumes the maximal correct part of the propositional content, i.e. all and only the true ones from the given set of propositions. The achievement of a non-epistemic goal may [...] be required, as with the directive speech acts [...] (Zaefferer 2001a: 223).

Again, the sentence types associated per default with these illocution types are added in the bottom row. (2) nicely singles out the three "major sentence types" (cf. Sadock and Zwicky 1985: 160) as encodings of the volitional illocution types.² Importantly, in contrast to (1), (2) directly captures the typologically well-attested distinction between imperatives and interrogatives.³

Now, the upshot of (2) that I will concentrate on in this paper is that the assertive illocution type receives the following analysis:⁴

² I've omitted the further distinction between DIRECTIVES and PERMISSIVES within the volitional non-epistemic illocution type, as this distinction does not (seem to) correspond to a distinction in sentence types. Zaefferer (2001a) stresses its value in approximating illocutionary and (deontic) modal operators (given duality: $\Box p = \text{DIRECTIVE}$, $\neg\Box\neg p = \text{PERMISSIVE}$), an issue we return to below. See also New (1988).

³ Zaefferer (2001a: 211, 224) discusses the differences between his and Searle's approach in some detail. A class of erotetics is also recognized by Wunderlich (1976: 77), and Katz (1980: 205) introduces "erotetic requestives." Surveys of (some) further classifications of illocution types are provided by Hancher (1979) and Rolf (2006). Alternative proposals for matching sentence types and speech acts are made by Croft (1994) and Sadock (1994).

⁴ Cf. Ballmer (1979: 260) and Bach and Harnish (1984: 42). Zaefferer (2001b: 810) speaks of an (expressed) "ich-will-dass-du-weißt-Einstellung," i.e., of an *I-want-that-*

(3) $EXPRESS(S, H, WANT(S, ASSUME(H, p)))$

A second design goal of Zaefferer's approach is to do justice to the "picture [...] confirmed by synchronic typology which shows that force indicators are often paradigmatically integrated into a system with other modal operators like evidentials" (Zaefferer 2001a: 210). In particular, German quotative (evidential) modal *wollen*⁵ – a cognate of "standard" volitional *wollen* ("to want") – is counted among the components of grammar that "are by definition both illocutionary and propositional [...]: Seen from above they are in the scope of the top illocutionary force operator, seen from below they represent the quoted force operator which in turn has the propositional content in its scope" (Zaefferer 2001a: 213). Formally, this leads to the following (decompositional) analysis of quotative *wollen* (cf. Zaefferer 2001a: 217), where H_M represents the addressee of Max's claim.⁶

- (4) a. *Max will reich sein.*
 Max wants.QE rich be
 "Max claims to be rich."
 b. $EXPRESS(S, H, WANT(S, ASSUME(H, WANT(M, ASSUME(H_M, RICH(M))))))$

you-know-attitude. The variable H filling the first argument-slot of *ASSUME* is "hidden" in the actual formulae presented by Zaefferer (2001a), due to the treatment of modality in the particular situation-semantic formalism adopted. Its essential role in distinguishing assertive from erotetic acts comes out clearly in the tree-diagram in (2), where the feature [\pm exocentric] classifies "epistemic goals" as either "addressee-oriented" or "speaker-oriented."

⁵ I follow Zaefferer's terminology – going back (at least) to Palmer (1986: 2.3.3) – and leave out further specification of quotative modal *wollen* as "evidential" in the text. In the glosses, quotative evidential *wollen* is marked with the additional feature *QE*.

⁶ Spelling this out more adequately would require decisions on the treatment of context and indexicality that I sidestep here. See Zimmermann (1991) and Schlenker (2003) for relevant recent literature.

Taking the semantics of quotative *wollen* to be identical to the essential part of the assertion operator is attractive – from the perspective of linguistic argumentation in general and the perspective of the design goal just sketched in particular – because this provides independent lexicogrammatical evidence for the analysis of assertion in (2)/(3) (cf. Zaefferer 2001a: 214).

In his reply to Zaefferer, Searle (2001) defends his own familiar analysis of assertion as having the illocutionary point of committing the speaker to the truth of the asserted proposition. In particular, reiterating in part an earlier argument of his (Searle 1969: 46),⁷ Searle (2001: 288) objects to the alternative in (3) that

it leaves out the fact that the making of an assertion is a *commitment* on the part of the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Second, a speaker can make an assertion quite satisfactorily without giving a damn whether the hearer assumes what he says is true. He might even make this explicit. He might say, "I don't care whether you assume that it is raining, all the same it's raining." If Zaefferer were right, this would be a self contradiction on part of the speaker.

Zaefferer (2006b: 338) calls this "Searle's challenge" and goes on to revise (3) in a way that the challenge can be met. We will come back to this below. Interestingly, however, a finer point of the interpretation of quotative *wollen* seems to confirm – and potentially strengthen – Searle's critique. Thus, consider a situation where someone – let's say Julia – overhears someone else – let's say Max – who in private makes the following utterance to himself.

⁷ Ballmer (1979: 248-249) discusses the overall strategy of keeping perlocutionary effects out of the analysis of illocutionary forces.

- (5) *Ach wie gut, dass niemand weiß, dass ich*
 Oh how good that nobody knows that I
den Mount Everest bestiegen habe.
 the.ACC Mount Everest climbed have
 "Oh, it's great that nobody knows that I climbed Mount Everest."

We do not have to worry about motivations for this Rumpelstilzchen-style utterance. They may have to do with Max's not having paid the fees for entering the Everest territory, or with his trying to avoid being interviewed by hosts of journalists about his feat. What is crucial is that Julia can report (5) by using quotative modal *wollen* as shown in (6).

- (6) *Wisst ihr was? Max will den Mount Everest*
 know you what Max wants.QE the.ACC Mount Everest
bestiegen haben.
 climbed have
 "You know what? Max claims to have climbed Mount Everest."

Now, if (4b) is the correct approach to quotative *wollen*, the second sentence of (6) receives the interpretation in (7).

- (7) *EXPRESS(J, H, WANT(J, ASSUME(H, WANT(M, ASSUME(H_M, CLIMBED(M, ME))))))*

However, since Julia's addressees were not present when (5) was uttered, they cannot infer anything specific about H_M . Clearly, inferring that it doesn't matter who H_M is – which amounts to inferring that Max doesn't particularly care about who assumes that he climbed Everest – would be inadequate. Instead, given the privacy of the situation within which utterance (5) is made, and given the content of the matrix clause in (5), i.e., Max's eagerness to keep his climbing success to himself, the only adequate

interpretations of (6) on the basis of (4b) are the ones in (8).

- (8) a. $EXPRESS(J, H, WANT(J, ASSUME(H, WANT(M, \neg \exists X (ASSUME(X, CLIMBED(M, ME)))))))$
 b. $EXPRESS(J, H, WANT(J, ASSUME(H, WANT(M, ASSUME(M, CLIMBED(M, ME))))))$

Max doesn't want anybody to make the assumption that he climbed Everest, or, on an understanding of monolog as conversation with oneself, Max wants (just) himself to make that assumption. But this part of the putative meaning of (6) is clearly not recoverable for Julia's addressees. In fact, intuitions concerning the meaning of (6) are that no information about witnesses of Max's claim is conveyed, i.e., no such information is part of what Julia says.

Thus, to the extent that one deems it desirable that quotative modal *wollen* "mirror" the standard assertion operator, standard assertion had better not contain explicit appeal to hearer assumptions. This, of course, is the hallmark of Searle's approach to assertion, on which the interpretation of (6) comes out quite adequately, as roughly indicated in (9).

- (9) $COMMITTED.TO(J, COMMITTED.TO(M, CLIMBED(M, ME)))$

Julia is committed to the truth of Max being committed to the truth of Max having climbed Mount Everest.⁸

⁸ It may be worth noting that Max's commitment in (5) does not come about by direct assertion but as a consequence of the presupposition triggered by the factive (use of the) verb *wissen* ("to know") wrt its complement *that*-clause. As pointed out to me by Mathias Schenner (p.c.), this seems to go against (the matching condition on) the anaphoric account of *say*-reports by Brasoveanu and Farkas (2007), which requires that "contentful presuppositions of the source sentence cannot appear as part of the at-issue content of the complement clause." They take this to be responsible for infelicities of the following kind:

(i) Sam: *Mary stopped smoking.*

Analysis (9) makes the interesting prediction that by using quotative *wollen* one can report on commitments that haven't actually come about by proper speech acts. This prediction is borne out.⁹ Thus, imagine there is a particular medal that only climbers of Mount Everest are allowed to bear. Imagine further that one day, Julia – knowing that Max is a passionate mountaineer – sees Max bearing such a medal. Taking this behavior as evidence for the commitment in question, Julia can report on it by uttering (6).¹⁰

As I will argue next, however, both (4b)/(7)/(8) and (9) may be incorrect in privileging the illocutionary aspect of quotative *wollen* over its "content-oriented" nature as function from propositions to propositions. It is well-known that force operators – by and large – resist embedding.¹¹ The inacceptability of (10), for example, shows that the *ASSERT*-operator arguably involved in the licensing of the German modal particle *ja*

(ii) Sue: # *Sam said that Mary used to smoke.*

To reconcile the conflicting evidence, one could argue that *say*-reports are not (entirely) like "*wollen*-reports."

A reformulation of (5) that puts the part reported on by Julia in (6) in a declarative main clause would look like (*Toll!*) *Ich habe den Mount Everest bestiegen. Wie gut, dass das niemand weiß!* ("Great! I climbed Mount Everest. How good that nobody knows that!"). Readers who feel uneasy about the "naturalness" of monologic (5) may want to replace it with *Sag's nicht weiter, aber ich habe den Mount Everest bestiegen.* ("Don't tell anybody, but I've climbed Mount Everest."), addressed by Max to a good friend.

⁹ Thanks to Leila Behrens (p.c.) for making me aware of this kind of example. It remains to be seen whether her ambitiously broad characterization of modality, evidentiality, and assertion in the study of "metadiscourse" (Behrens this volume) leads to an overall more refined picture of quotative evidentials.

¹⁰ The ostensive bearing of the medal by Max in the situation just described may still be construed as an act of communication. It seems to me that Julia could even use (6) to report on a situation where she secretly enters Max's study and finds the medal in one of his drawers. If this intuition is correct, any approach to quotative evidential *wollen* in terms of communicative intentions (of the referent of the subject of *wollen*) would eventually be misguided. The usage just described would thus also count against the following variant of (7) based on one of its entailments:

EXPRESS(J, H, WANT(J, ASSUME(H, ∃X(WANT(M, ASSUME(X, CLIMBED(M, ME))))))

¹¹ Conditions on (limited) embeddability of force operators have recently been explored by – among others – Krifka (2001), Truckenbrodt (2006), and Gärtner and Michaelis (2010).

(roughly translatable as "as you know") (cf. Jacobs 1991) is incompatible with occurring in the scope of negation.

- (10) *Niemand, der (*ja) den Mount Everest bestiegen hat,*
nobody who MP the.ACC Mount Everest climbed has
würde sich so verhalten.
would himself thus behave
"No one who (* – as you know –) climbed Everest
would behave in such a way."

If quotative *wollen* introduced (the equivalent of) an *ASSERT*-operator, it should behave like modal particle *ja*. (11) shows that this is not the case.

- (11) *Niemand, der den Mount Everest bestiegen haben will,*
nobody who the.ACC Mount Everest climbed have wants.QE
würde sich so verhalten.
would himself thus behave
"No one who claims to have climbed Everest
would behave in such a way."

The acceptability of (11) suggests that quotative *wollen* is a propositional operator like standard modals.¹² As a consequence, a less direct relation between force indicators and modal operators than the one envisaged by Zaefferer (2001a; 2001b) may seem to be called for.¹³

Let us return to the revised analysis of assertion by Zaefferer (2006a; 2006b; to appear) and check whether it leads to different conclusions. In order to meet Searle's challenge, Zaefferer (2006b: 339)

¹² This result is in line with the truth-conditional analysis of "reportative" *wollen* by Schenner (2008: 556). Remberger (2010) discusses parallels between German quotative *wollen* and epistemic modals. Further information on the use and historical development of quotative *wollen* is provided by Diewald (1999).

¹³ It could be argued, however, that presence vs. absence of the predicate *EXPRESS* is sufficient for making the correct distinction.

reduces the "specification of the goal the given volition aims at to some unlocalized activated knowledge." "Unlocalized" here means that no specification of speaker- or addressee-orientedness is given. Zaefferer (2006a: 372) spells this out as follows:

- (12) (Dec) In uttering a declarative sentence with propositional content p , the respective agent makes it inferable that her aim is activated knowledge of p .

The effect of (Dec) is as follows (Zaefferer to appear):

Since the intended possessor of this knowledge is not specified this entails a nice account of an example that Searle rightly produced as an argument against an earlier version of the new picture: It is consistent to say *I don't care whether you assume that it is raining, all the same it's raining [...]*. This is at variance with the earlier version (Zaefferer 2001[a]) which analyzed Representatives as aiming at the assumption of the content by the addressee, but not with the current version, which entails that given that the intended possessor of the knowledge cannot be the addressee it must rather be the speaker himself, and which secondarily invites the inference that the addressee is intended to infer this (*Whether or not you accept it, I know it.*)¹⁴

Let us capture (Dec) by reformulating the analysis of assertion in (3) as follows:¹⁵

¹⁴ Recall that Searle refers to assertives alternatively as "representatives" (e.g., Searle 1976: 1).

¹⁵ By meaning postulate it has to hold that:

$$BE.ASSUMED(p) \Leftrightarrow [ASSUME(S, p) \vee ASSUME(H, p)].$$

Note that this modification amounts to removing the feature [\pm exocentric] from the classification in (2). This in turn means that differences regarding (canonical) speech act impact between declaratives and interrogatives are no longer due to encoding at the illocutionary level but to their different contents (proposition vs. set of propositions) (cf. Zaefferer 2006a: 374f.). Zaefferer (to appear) develops a much more

(13) *EXPRESS(S, H, WANT(S, BE.ASSUMED(p)))*

(13) allows the assumption an assertion calls for to be fully private. Yet, when we recast the translation of (6), in terms of (13), we are left with the original problem.¹⁶

(14) *EXPRESS(J, H, WANT(J, BE.ASSUMED(WANT(M, BE.ASSUMED(CLIMBED(M,ME))))))*

Although Julia was able to infer that Max's assumption about climbing Everest was meant to be private – Julia is aware of the content of (5) and knows who H_M refers to – this will again not be recoverable for Julia's addressees. Thus, (14) wrongly suggests that Max invites anyone who can to make the assumption that he climbed Everest. This clearly misrepresents Max's explicit intentions in uttering (5). So, to repeat, since (6) is a possible report of (5), neither (4b)/(7) nor (14) can be an adequate rendering of the meaning of German quotative *wollen*. We are thus forced to conclude that approximating the analyses of illocution types and modal operators is affected by (a variant of) Searle's challenge. If semantic "mirroring" of assertion and quotative *wollen* is a design goal, the Searlean approach in (9) possesses definite advantages.¹⁷

fine-grained version of (2) compatible with the modified approach.

It is clear that the revised picture puts more weight on pragmatic inference on part of the addressee involved in "speech act recognition." This does not mean that the account has to be less principled, as more and more sophisticated models of pragmatic reasoning are being developed (cf. Benz this volume). Alternatively, more elaborate discourse representations and update procedures could support the addressee's task (cf. Farkas and Bruce 2010; Portner 2004).

¹⁶ As before (cf. fn. 6), adjustments concerning the treatment of context have to be made for the meaning postulate introduced in the previous footnote to apply to the second occurrence of *BE.ASSUMED* in (14).

¹⁷ One may still defend the "intention on part of S that H believe p " as the "functional prototype" of assertion, where "function" is to be understood in the sense of Millikan (1984) as "what causes a particular behavior to be repeated" (cf. Jary 2010: 10). A

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theory of mapping typologically salient sentence types onto illocutionary prototypes would have to be explored.

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