

Joining Forces

ABSTRACT

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We follow Frege in distinguishing *sense* and *force* as components of meaning. Particular utterances by speakers of human languages advance one or more senses under one or more forces, typically a single one of each, or, if under more than one force then with one (such as warning) that subsumes others (such as assertion). All forces correspond to kinds of speech act, but not conversely, as for instance saying itself has no force (and neither does asking, in the sense of Higginbotham (1995)). There is a close affinity between notions of force and performative verbs in the sense of Austin; but it is not exact.

In Frege's view, force and sense are utterly distinct; that is, (i) the sense of a sentence is not affected by the force with which it is used, and (ii) marks of force, whatever they may be, may apply to any sense of the appropriate logical variety. A complex sentence may contain multiple senses and forces: such is the case with parentheticals, including appositive relatives. But it is not always easy to determine whether what connects clauses involves combining forces or not.

Following on work in Higginbotham (2004), I will consider as marks of force not only familiar elements such as *he warned me that*, and the grammatical moods, but also expressions such as *he guessed* in (1), *suppose* in (2), *incidentally* in (3), and *anyway* in (4):

- (1) He guessed he'd have a cup of coffee.
- (2) Suppose they gave a war and nobody came.
- (3) Incidentally, John is broke.
- (4) Anyway, I'm going to Paris.

My chief questions will concern the distribution and interpretation of these items, with respect to the presumed compositionality of semantics, and the restrictions on their embeddability.

A special category of marks of force is found in what Higginbotham (2004) dubs the *performatively transparent* Verbs, including those that are raise a "performadox" in the sense of Lycan (1968). They include *deny* as in (5):

- (5) I deny that I have ever belonged to the Workers' Union.

The speaker of (5) is judged to have spoken truly if she never belonged to the Workers' Union, falsely otherwise: but that is not what she said. The solution will involve appeal to David Lewis's notion of "accommodation," as often guaranteeing that "saying it makes it true."