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Speech Acts and Failure to Communicate in Thucydides

1) **5.16.1**: “…Nicias, son of Niceratus, the most fortunate general of his time…while still successful and honored, wished to secure his good fortune (διασώσασθαι τὴν εὐτυχίαν), to obtain a present release from toil for himself and his countrymen, and hand down to posterity a name as having never caused his city disaster, and thought the best way to do this was to keep out of danger and commit himself as little as possible to fortune (τύχη), and that peace made this possible.”

2) **4.28**: “Nicias, seeing the Athenians murmuring against Cleon for not sailing now if it seemed to him so easy…told him that for all the generals cared, he might take what force he chose and make the attempt. At first Cleon, thinking the resignation was just a pretense, was ready to go, but finding that he *seriously* desired to give it up (παραδωσείοντα), he drew back…Nicias, however, again repeated his offer and resigned the command…calling upon the Athenians to witness that he did so (ἐκέλευε καὶ ἐξίστατο τῆς ἐπὶ Πύλῳ ἀρχῆς καὶ μάρτυρας τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐποιεῖτο)…”

3) **6.8.4:** “καὶ ὁ Νικίας **ἀκούσιος μὲν ᾑρημένος ἄρχειν**, νομίζων δὲ τὴν πόλιν οὐκ ὀρθῶς βεβουλεῦσθαι, ἀλλὰ προφάσει βραχείᾳ καὶ εὐπρεπεῖ τῆς Σικελίας ἁπάσης, μεγάλου ἔργου, ἐφίεσθαι, **παρελθὼν ἀποτρέψαι ἐβούλετο**, καὶ παρῄνει τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τοιάδε.”

4) **6.19.2**: “Nicias, perceiving that it would now be useless to try to deter them by the old line of argument, but that he might, by the magnitude of his estimates of forces, deter them, came forward again...[6.24.2] just the contrary took place of what Nicias thought: for it was held he had advised them well ([εὖ](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=eu%29%3D&la=greek&can=eu%29%3D0&prior=au)tw=%7C) [τε](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=te&la=greek&can=te0&prior=eu)=) [γὰρ](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=ga%5Cr&la=greek&can=ga%5Cr0&prior=te) [παραινέσαι](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=paraine%2Fsai&la=greek&can=paraine%2Fsai0&prior=ga%5Cr) [ἔδοξε](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=e%29%2Fdoce&la=greek&can=e%29%2Fdoce0&prior=paraine/sai))…”

5) **7.8.2, 7.14.4**: “He feared, however, that the messengers, either through inability to speak, or through failure of memory, or from a wish to please the multitude (τῷ ὄχλῳ πρὸς χάριν τι λέγοντες), might not report the truth, and so thought it best to write a letter… ‘[Nicias’ letter] I might, it is true, have written to you something different and more agreeable than this…besides, I know that it is your nature to love to be told the best side of things, and to blame the teller if something doesn’t turn out as you wished (**καὶ ἅμα τὰς φύσεις ἐπιστάμενος ὑμῶν**, βουλομένων μὲν τὰ ἥδιστα ἀκούειν, αἰτιωμένων δὲ ὕστερον, ἤν τι ὑμῖν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν μὴ ὁμοῖον ἐκβῇ)…”

6) **7.48**: “[Nicias explaining why he won’t lead off the army from Syracuse] Those [Athenians] who would vote upon their conduct, instead of judging facts as eyewitnesses like themselves and not from what they might hear from hostile critics, would simply be guided by the calumnies of the first clever speaker, while many, if not most, of the soldiers on the spot who now so loudly proclaimed the danger of their position, when they reached Athens would proclaim just as loudly the opposite, and would say the generals had been bribed to betray them and return. For himself, therefore, who knew the Athenian temperament (**αὐτός γε ἐπιστάμενος τὰς Ἀθηναίων φύσεις**), would rather die, if he must, at the enemy’s hand than be killed under a dishonorable charge and unjustly at the Athenians’ hands.”

7) **7.69**: “Meanwhile Nicias…thinking as men are apt to think in great crises, that when all has been done they have still something left to do, and when all has been said that they have not yet said enough, again called upon the captains, addressing each by his father’s name and by his own, and by his tribe, and beseeched them not to be false to their personal renown etc…**and added other arguments such as men would say in such a crisis, caring not if someone thinks he is spouting trite clichés/commonplaces – even saying things on wives, children, and national gods quite like what is said on *all* occasions – but loudly invoking them in the consternation of the moment thinking they are useful** (ἄλλα τε λέγων ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἤδη τοῦ καιροῦ ὄντες ἄνθρωποι οὐ πρὸς τὸ δοκεῖν τινὶ ἀρχαιολογεῖν φυλαξάμενοι εἴποιεν ἄν, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἁπάντων παραπλήσια ἔς τε γυναῖκας καὶ παῖδας καὶ θεοὺς πατρῴους προφερόμενα, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τῇ παρούσῃ ἐκπλήξει ὠφέλιμα νομίζοντες ἐπιβοῶνται).”

8) **7.86**: “καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιαύτῃ ἢ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τούτων αἰτίᾳ ἐτεθνήκει, **ἥκιστα δὴ ἄξιος ὢν τῶν γε ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῦ Ἑλλήνων ἐς τοῦτο δυστυχίας ἀφικέσθαι διὰ τὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἀρετὴν νενομισμένην ἐπιτήδευσιν** [least deserving to have come to such a depth of misfortune because of his thorough cultivation of the virtue considered customary (traditional?) at the time].”

9) **8.1**: “When they finally acknowledged the truth, they were furious with the orators who had joined in promoting the expedition – as if they had not voted it themselves – and with the soothsayers, and prophets, and all who by the influence of religion had at the time inspired them with the belief that they would conquer Sicily.”

10) **8.81.2-3, 8.82.3**: “[8.81] An assembly was then held in which Alcibiades…greatly exaggerated and magnified his influence with Tissaphernes…he added boastfully great promises such as…[8.82.3] He wished to increase his standing with Tissaphernes and to show him that he had now been chosen general, and could do him a good or a bad turn. Thus Alcibiades used Tissaphernes to frighten the Athenians and the Athenians to frighten Tissaphernes.”

11) **8.56.3-4**: “Alcibiades, who now saw Tissaphernes was determined not to treat on any terms, wished the Athenians to think, not that he was unable to persuade Tissaphernes…finally in the third meeting Alcibiades, fearing he would be detected having no influence with him [δείσας μὴ πάνυ φωραθῇ ἀδύνατος ὤν]…”

12) **Speech Act Theory: Some Terms and Categories**

\**locutionary act* – refers to the phonetic utterance itself, and its syntactic structure and grammar.

\**illocutionary act* – The act one intends to achieve (and does achieve) through saying something (e.g. promising, appointing, ordering, apologizing, betting, and so on).

\**perlocutionary effect* – The effect of the illocutionary act on the hearer (e.g. convincing, frightening, etc.)

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| **Categories of Illocutionary Acts (Austin 1962, 150-63)** | **Meaning/Illocutionary Force** | **Examples** |
| 1) Verdictives (“Declaratives” acc to Searle) | Give verdict; changes some aspect of one’s environment in being performed (as does 2) | pronounce guilty, baptize, rank, rule “out/safe” |
| **2) Exercitives (“Directives” acc. to Searle)** | (a) exercise a power, right, vel sim; or (b) requires one to do something | (a) ***appoint, nominate, resign***, demote, fine, bequeath, dedicate, veto; (b) ***order, command, warn, advise*,** recommend, beg, |
| **3) Commissives** | commits one to a future course of action | ***promise***, undertake, swear an oath, ***guarantee***, side with, plan to, bet |
| 4) Behabitives (“Expressives” acc. to Searle – perh. better) | Expresses speaker’s attitude & feelings toward something | apologize, thank, congratulate, condole, applaud, criticize, bless, curse, welcome |
| 5) Expositives (“Assertives” acc. to Searle) | clarifies reasons, arguments, logic | affirm, deny, state, concede, correct, agree, deduce, define |

13) **Austin’s “Felicity Conditions” for Speech Acts**:

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| **Felicity**  **Condition** | **Description** | **What’s it Called if This Condition is Not Met?** | **If Not Met, Is the Illocution Still Achieved, or Is It Void?** |
| A1 | “There must exist an *accepted conventional procedure* having a certain conventional effect...” | “Misfire” 🡪 “Misinvocation” | Void |
| A2 | “*The particular* ***persons*** *[sc. speaker & audience] and* ***circumstances*** *in a given case must be appropriate* for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked”. | “Misfire” 🡪 “Misapplication” | Void |
| B1 | “The procedure must be executed by all participants both *correctly* and… | Misfire 🡪 Misexecution 🡪”Flaw” | Void |
| B2 | …*completely.*” | Misfire 🡪Misexecution 🡪”Hitch” | Void |
| Γ1 | [paraphrase] When the procedure is designed for people having certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions, the person invoking the procedure must sincerely have those thoughts/feelings/intentions and must sincerely intend to so conduct themselves. (**Σ: Γ1 = being sincere**) | “Abuse” 🡪 “Insincerity” | Achieved  (but not consummated in the sequel: it’s insincere) |
| Γ2 | [They] “must actually so conduct themselves subsequently”. | ? | Achieved  (but not consummated in the sequel: it’s insincere) |

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