Indirect speech acts we live by: a case study of daddy-son interactions in extended speech act theory

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Abstract

The interpretation of mental concepts as wel as conceptual thoughts of a speaker is apprehended by the hearer if and only if the non-literal aspects of the illocutionary force of the utterance is understood in terms of the illocutionary understanding of background information shared among the interlocutors in the discourse. Searl-Vandervekean formal speech act theory has shown persuasively that the analysis of literal discourse has to be persued in a general semantics called *the success and satisfaction conditional semantics* and the that of non-literal or indirect discourse be considered in Pragmatics, namely, the *exploitation of Grician Maxim*. In this paper, I will propose a morph-syntactic analysis of the process of illocutionary force understanding which is a theoretical instatiation of the *generalized double semantic indexation* focusing on how daddy and his son use and interpret *indirect speech acts* consciouly or unconsciously, and give a rough sketch of description in line with Searle-Vandervekean speech act theory.

1. Background

In human interaction, what is intended by an interlocutor can be represented only partially in a literal discourse of a natural language, even if he consciously tries to carry out his speech acts to realize the *common discursive goals* shared with other participants of the verbal or non-verbal communication, mainly because we are *minimally rational* or not omniscient (cf.[19]). Moreover, not all intended meanings will be verbalized or symbolized.

An utterance is non-literal or has a non-literal illocutionary force which is the primary and intended speech act of the speaker if and only if it can not be interpreted without *eo ipso* having another illocutionary force which is not his intended primary force. For instance, "Can you open the window?" is non-literal and has the non-literal directive illocutionary force of request, since it has the secondary unintended assertive ilocutionary force of questioning. These are to do with Pragmatics but not Semantics, especially with the Pragmatics of discourse or Discourse Aanalysis of Human Interactions. However, some formal theory of discourse analysis fails to take these facts into consideration, and does not notice that the analysis of literal discourse has to be carried out in the domain of Semantics and the that of non-literal or indirect discourse should be considered in the domain of Pragmatics[1].

Searl-Vandervekean formal speech act theory (cf. [7],[8],[11],[16],[19], on the other hand, realizes the importance of this distinction and proposes the analysis of literal discourse in the success and satisfaction conditional semantics and

the analysis of non-literal discourse with respect to the exploitation of Grician Maxim (cf. [12],[15],[18],[19])[2].

The success and satisfaction conditional semantcs is a general semantics which can give semanatic interpetations to every utterance type, namely assertives, commissives, directives, declaratives, and expressives. Thus, the traditional truth conditional semantics which can give interpretations or truth-value only to assert-ive uterances is considered to be a particular type of the general semantics, but not the reverse. For instance, a assertion is satisfied or given a truth-value if and only if its propositional content fits the world or how the world is. A promise is satisfied if and only if it is carried out by the speaker and a command is satisfied if and only if it is obeyed by the hearer.
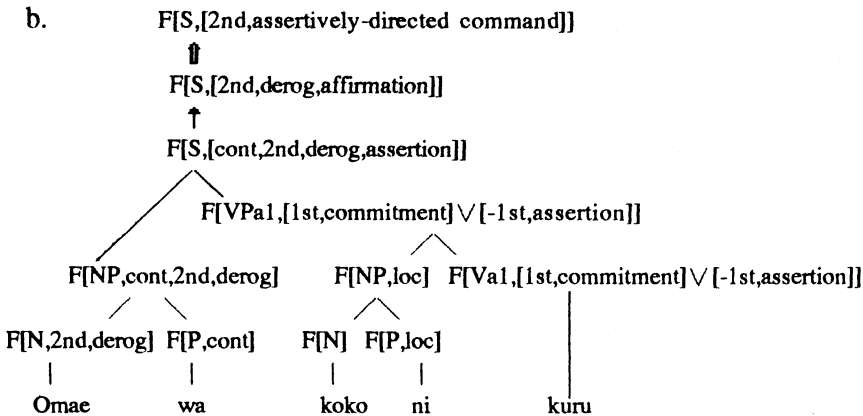
In Kubo([4]), a cognitive model of illocutional force understanding of a single utterance is proposed in line with Vanderveken's generalized double semantic indexation, in which accessible background information is introduced to explain how a hearer can understand the illocutionary force of literal and non-literal utterance of a speaker[3]. For instance, an utterance with literally assertive ilocutionary force of prediction is actually used indirectly as an utterance with non-literally directive illocutionary force of assertively-directed command. (1a) shows the example of the case.

(1)a. *Omae-wa   koko-ni kuru.*
    You[derog]-con here-loc come
            con=contrastive marker
            derog=derogatory
    lit.(You are sure to come here.)   non lit.(Come here without fail.)

b.
$$F[S,[2nd,assertively\text{-}directed\ command]]$$
$$\Uparrow$$
$$F[S,[2nd,derog,affirmation]]$$
$$\uparrow$$
$$F[S,[cont,2nd,derog,assertion]]$$
$$F[VPa1,[1st,commitment] \vee [\text{-}1st,assertion]]$$
$$F[NP,cont,2nd,derog] \qquad F[NP,loc]\ F[Va1,[1st,commitment] \vee [\text{-}1st,assertion]]$$
$$F[N,2nd,derog]\ F[P,cont] \qquad F[N]\ F[P,loc]$$
Omae   wa   koko   ni   kuru

In Kubo([4]), the process of illocutionary force understanding is explained morph-syntactically[4]: (i) the recognition of the second person pronoun with the feature, [2nd] and the intransitive action verb with the feature, [Va1] by the hearer, lets the hearer choose a possible illocutionary potential out of a set of possible illocution-ary potentials which are logically represented as exclusive disjunction of those potentials in feature representations. In this case, the choice makes the illocutionary

potential of [1st, commitment] to be suppressed and that of [2nd, assertion] to be recognized through the logical operation of conjunction upon the persons. Namely, conjunction of the feature [2nd] person of Noun Phrase given in the feature F[NP, 2nd] and the feature [-1st] person given in the feature F[VPa1, [-1st]] derives the choise of the illocutionary feature [assertion] (i.e. $[2nd] \wedge [-1st] \Leftrightarrow [2nd]$). (ii) The recognition of the contrastive marker with the feature, [cont] by the hearer amplifies the recognized illocutionary potential of [2nd, assertion] and lets the hearer recognize the amplified illocutionary feature of [cont, 2nd, assertion], then, re-recognize the amplified featureas [2nd, affirmation] which has the stronger illocutionary force than [2nd, assertion][5]. Thus the literally assertive illocutionary force of affirmation is understood. (iii) Moreover, under the part-icular mode of achievement of illocutionary point mutually recognized between the speaker and the hearer, namely, the speaker's authority of over the hearer, in a given context, which is clearly represented by a derogatory nominal '*Omae*(= derogatory use of a second person pronoun)', the assertive illocutionary force of affirmation is re-interpreted non-literally as a different illocutionary force, namely, the assertively-directed command, since the hearer understands that the simple assertive interpretation is not strong enough under the given context and recog-nizes the speaker's exploitation of the maxim of quantity based on his back-gruound knowledge about the relation between the two[6].

　　In this paper, I would like to extend the analysis of indirect speeh acts to discourse level focusing on daddy-son interactions. Let us at first observe how indirect speech acts are used consciously or non-consciously by a small child at the age of two and half and how they are interpreted by his father in particular discourses where the shared backgroung information among the participants of the discourse are transparent.

2. Indirect Speech Acts in Daddy-son Interactions

　　The discourse I have chosen is a very typical interaction between a daddy who is always busy with his own works and can not find enough time to spend with his family and to take care of his young child who wants his dad to stay around him and play with him whenever he finds him. Thus, the child has the intentionality such that he does not want his daddy to leave him alone and strongly desires that his daddy will stay and play with him. Father knows clearly what his son desires , however he sometimes has to neglect them according to the degree of strength of son's sincerity to his intention in order to raise him properly or keep his own mental as well as physical condition safe. Thus, the speech acts performed in the follwing discourse by the participants are the chains of collective intentional actions which sometimes involve conflicts of egos. Thus, the discursive goals which are usually sought for in the discourse among adults will not be easily gained by either daddy or his young son in daddy-son interactions(cf.[19]).

　　In this paper, I will explicate the discourse focusing on child's negative utterances which are marked with "-*nai*" whose literal illocutionary forces are commissives of non-acceptance and assertives of assertion of negative proposi-tions with respect to the context of discourses and how they are interpreted as non-

literal indirect speech acts such as expressives of complaint or pleading or grieving, or directives of begging by his daddy[7,8].

Discourse : (H:Hiromasa(2:6), S:me)
The shared background knowledge between the speakers are as follows:

> H knows that he usually has to go to bed and does not have any chance to play with his dad after he takes a bath in the evening. And S knows that H knows what comes next to the bath. Moreover, both speakers have the definite intentions in the given discourse: namely, S has an intention to let H take a bath by any means, since H does not like to take a bath. H has an intention to play with S as much as he wants.

(2a)
S:*Sorosoro ofuro hairoo-ka.*<directive:proposal>
     (Let's take a bath together, shall we?)
H:*Ofuro haira-nai .*①
  (I won't take a bath. ⇒ I want to play with you more.)
S:*Ofuro-de asobou-ya .* ②
  (How about playing with me in the bathroom? ⇒I have to let my son take a bath.
)
H:*Ofuro-de asoba-nai .*③
  (I won't play in the bath. ⇒ I want to play with you here.)
  O-nikai-de Kishapoppo-de asobou . ④   <directive:proposal>
  (Let's play with locomotives upstairs.)
S:*Ofuro-de omizu-asobi shiyoo-ya..* ⑤
  (Let's play with water in the bathroom, shall we?)
H:*Omizu-asobi shi-nai .* ⑥
  (I won't play with water. ⇒ I want to play with you upstairs.)
S: *Moo ofuro haitte, nenne-suru jikan-da-yo .*⑦ *Otto-san hairu-yo.*⑧
  (It is about time you took a bath and went to bed. I will take a bath now.)

(2b)
H: *Otto-san ofuro haira-nai.*⑨
  (You do not take a bath now. ⇒ I do not want you take a bath now. I want to
play with you now.)
S: *Otto-san hairu-yo.*⑩
    (I will take a bath.)
H: *Otto-san ofuro haira-nai-de.*[stressed][desiderative]⑪
   (I really want you not to take a bath.⇒ I really want to play with you. I am quite
unhappy if you take a bath and leave me alone.)
S: *Hairu-yo.*⑫   *Hair-itaku-nat-tara, oide.*⑬
  (I will take a bath now. If you change your mind, come into the bathroom.
  ⇒ if not, you can not play with me and have to be left there alone.)
H: *Haira-nai.*[week voice]⑭
  (I won't take a bath.)

Haira-nai-de.![weaker voice] ⑮
        [desiderative]
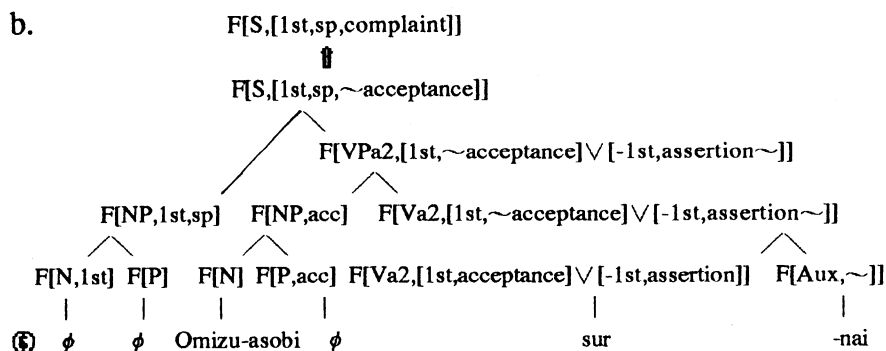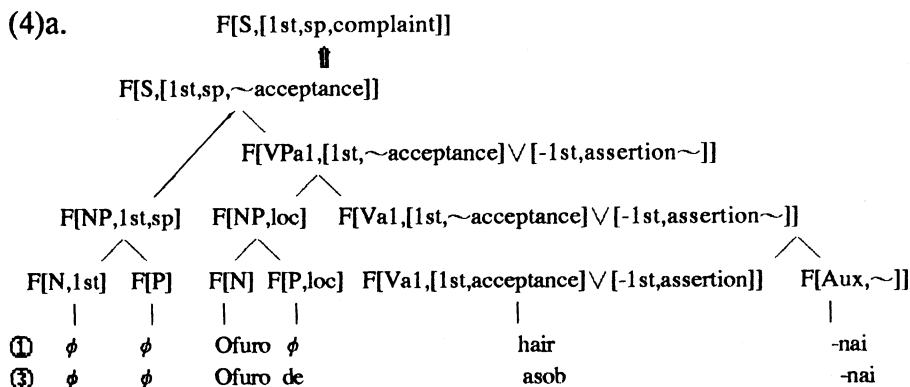(I want you not to take a bath no w.⇒ I really want to play with you now. Don't leave me alone.)
    Haira-nai-de.!! [tonal change] (Cry and weep) ⑯
    (I am pleading with you not to take a bath.⇒ I am pleading with you not to leave me alone.)

In the former half of the discourse, and in the latter half of the discourse, the following indirect speech acts are derived from their literal counterparts as shown in (3a) and in (3b), respectively:
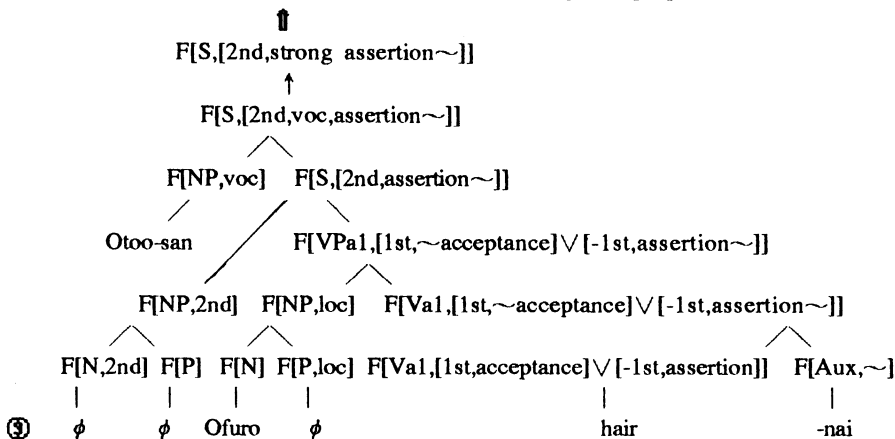

(3a) ①③⑥ : <commissive:non-acceptance> ⇒ <expressive:complaint>
       ②⑤: <directive:proposal> ⇒ <commissive:commitment>
       ⑦: <assertive:informing> ⇒ <directive:urging>
       ⑧: <assertive:declaration>⇒ <commissive:threatening>

(3b) ⑨: <assertive:assertion of negative proposition>⇒ <expressive:complaint>
       ⑩⑫: <assertive:declaration> ⇒ <commissive:threatening>
       ⑬: <directive:invitation> ⇒ <commissive:threatening>
       ⑭: <commissive:non-acceptance> ⇒ <expressive:complaint>
       ⑪⑮: <directive:request> ⇒ <directive: pleading>
       ⑯: <directive:pleading> ⇒ <directive:greiving>

(4)a.   F[S,[1st,sp,complaint]]
                          ⇑
            F[S,[1st,sp,∼acceptance]]
                   ╱ ╲
                  ╱   F[VPa1,[1st,∼acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion∼]]
                 ╱   ╱╲
                ╱   ╱ ╲
     F[NP,1st,sp] F[NP,loc]   F[Va1,[1st,∼acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion∼]]
        ╱╲   ╱╲   ╱╲   ╱╲
  F[N,1st] F[P] F[N] F[P,loc] F[Va1,[1st,acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion]] F[Aux,∼]]
      | | | | | |
  ①   φ   φ   Ofuro φ   hair   -nai
  ③   φ   φ   Ofuro de   asob   -nai

b.   F[S,[1st,sp,complaint]]
                          ⇑
            F[S,[1st,sp,∼acceptance]]
                   ╱╲
                  ╱   F[VPa2,[1st,∼acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion∼]]
                 ╱   ╱╲
                ╱   ╱ ╲
     F[NP,1st,sp] F[NP,acc] F[Va2,[1st,∼acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion∼]]
        ╱╲   ╱╲   ╱╲   ╱╲
  F[N,1st] F[P] F[N] F[P,acc] F[Va2,[1st,acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion]] F[Aux,∼]]
      | | | | | |
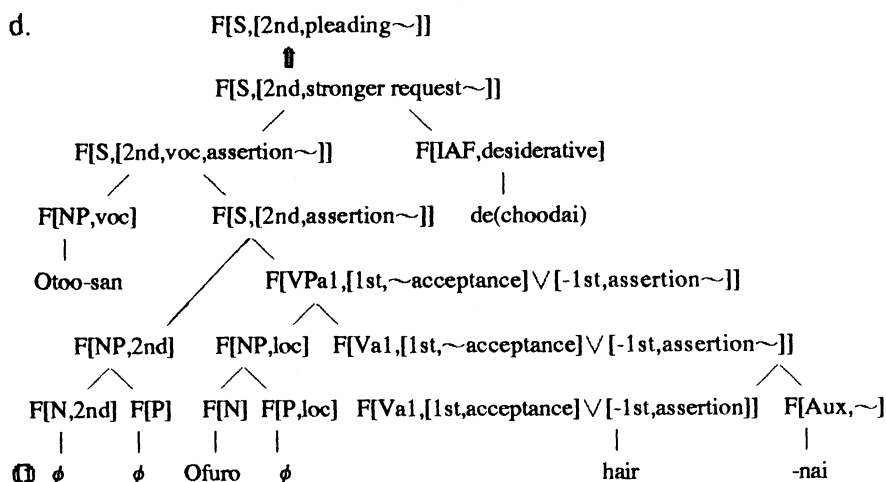 ⑤   φ   φ   Omizu-asobi φ   sur   -nai

The process of illocutionary force understanding of (4a) and (4b) is explained in the folowing manner; (i) the recognition of the first person pronoun with the feature, [1st] and the negative intransitive action verb with the feature, [Va1] or the negative transitive action verb with the feature, [Va2], which is the result of morpho-syntactic concatenation of the intransitive or transitive verb and an auxiliary of negation, "-nai", by Susumu, lets him choose a possible illocutionary potential out of a set of possible illocutionary potentials which are logically represented as exclusive disjunction of those potentials in feature representations. In this case, the choice makes the illocutionary potential of [1st, ~acceptance] to be recognized and that of [-1st,assertion~] to be suppressed through the logical operation of conjunction upon the persons. Namely, conjunction of the feature [1st] person of Noun Phrase given in the feature F[NP,1st] and the feature [1st] person given in the feature F[VPa1,[1st]] or F[VPa2, [1st]] derives the choice of the illocutionary feature [1st, ~acceptance]. Thus the literally commissive illocutionary force of non-acceptance is understood. (ii) However, under the particular mode of achievement of illocutionary point mutually recognized between the speaker and the hearer, namely, daddy's authority of over his son, the commissive illocutionary force of non-acceptance is not successful speech act. Thus, the literal illocutionary force has to be re-interpreted according to the background information of the context of utterances. Here, Susumu continues the dialogue with his son wondering if he can find the contextual key to know whether his real intention is the complaint to his daddy when he really needs his daddy. Then, in the flow of discourse he meets with Hiromasa's utterance ④ in which Hiromasa expresses his desire in the directive illocutuionary force of proposal. Thus, the literal illocutionary force is re-interpreted as an expressive illocutionary force of complaint based upon the consecutive utterances in the discourse. Then, the interpretation of the utterance ⑤ is carried out following the interpretation of the former utterances ① and ③.

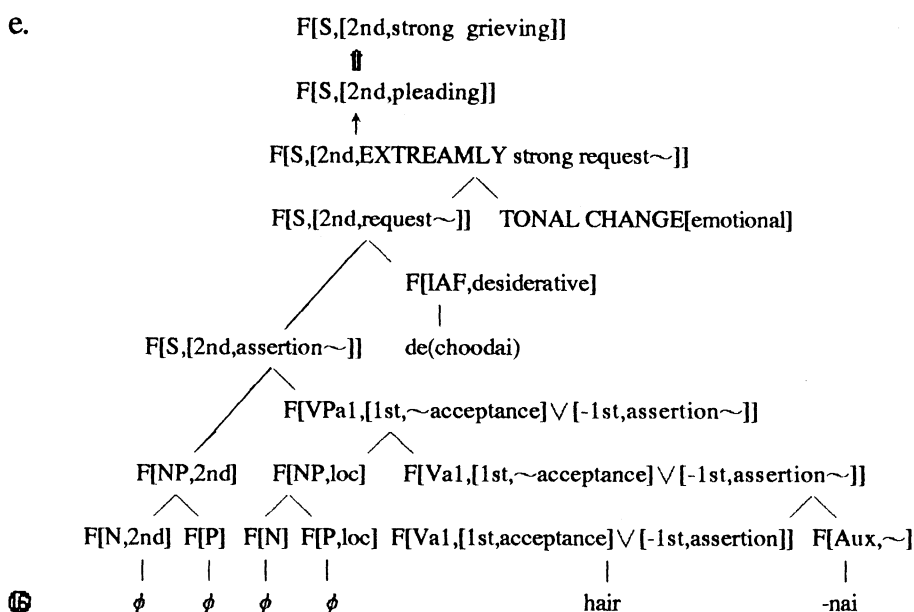c.   F[S,[2nd, assertively-directed command of negative proposition]]

⇑

F[S,[2nd,strong assertion~]]

↑

F[S,[2nd,voc,assertion~]]

F[NP,voc]　F[S,[2nd,assertion~]]

Otoo-san　　F[VPa1,[1st,~acceptance]]∨[-1st,assertion~]]

F[NP,2nd]　F[NP,loc]　F[Va1,[1st,~acceptance]]∨[-1st,assertion~]]

F[N,2nd]　F[P]　F[N]　F[P,loc]　F[Va1,[1st,acceptance]]∨[-1st,assertion]]　F[Aux,~]

③　　φ　　　φ　Ofuro　φ　　　　　　　　　hair　　　　　-nai

In the same way, the process of illocutionary force understanding of (4c) is explained in the folowing manner; (i) the recognition of the second person pronoun

with the feature, [2nd] and the negative intransitive action verb with the feature, [Va1] which is the result of morpho-syntactic concatenation of the intransitive verb and an auxiliary of negation, "-*nai*", by Susumu, lets Susumu choose a possible illocutionary potential out of a set of possible illocutionary potentials. In this case, the choice makes the illocutionary potential of [1st, ~acceptance] to be suppressed and that of [-1st, assertion~] to be recognized through the logical operation of conjunction upon persons. Namely, conjunction of the feature [2nd] person of Noun Phrase given in the feature F[NP,2nd] and the feature [2nd] person given in the feature F[VPa1,[-1st]] derives the choise of the illocutionary feature [2nd, assertion~]. (ii) Moreover, the feature [voc] of vocative NP amplifies the degree of strength of sincerity condition of illocutionary force. Thus, [2nd, voc, assertion ~] is re-interpreted as the illocutionary force of [2nd, stronger assertion~]. Thus the literally commissive illocutionary force of stronger assertion of neg-ative proposition is understood. (iii) However, in the thread of discourse, and given information in the former context, Susumu understands that the simple assertion of negative proposition, even if the assertion itself is strong, is not strong enough to fullfil Hiromasa's intention and recognizes Hiromasa's exploitation of the maxim of quantity based on his backgrouound knowledge about how Hiromasa understands the relation between the two, namely, Hiromasa is talking to his dad-dy, but not to a stranger. Thus, the assertive illocutionary force of stronger assertion of negaive proposition is re-interpreted non-literally as a different illocu-tionary force, namely, the assertively-directed command of negative proposition.

d.
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                        F[S,[2nd,pleading~]]
                                ⇑
                        F[S,[2nd,stronger request~]]
                              ╱          ╲
        F[S,[2nd,voc,assertion~]]        F[IAF,desiderative]
              ╱        ╲                        │
    F[NP,voc]     F[S,[2nd,assertion~]]    de(choodai)
        │            ╱╲
    Otoo-san        ╱  F[VPa1,[1st,~acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion~]]
                   ╱          ╱╲
         F[NP,2nd]   F[NP,loc]  F[Va1,[1st,~acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion~]]
           ╱╲          ╱╲                                    ╱╲
   F[N,2nd] F[P]   F[N] F[P,loc] F[Va1,[1st,acceptance]∨[-1st,assertion]]  F[Aux,~]
      │      │      │     │              │                        │
      ⓞ     φ      φ   Ofuro  φ         hair                     -nai
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The process of illocutionary force understanding of (4d) is explained in almost the same manner as (4c) until Susumu gets the first approximate possible literal illocutionary force of vocative assertion of negative proposition, or vocative prop-ositional negation (i.e. [2nd,voc, assertion~]) . However, (4d) is conjoined with a conjunctive particle "*de*" which is actually the abbrebiation of "*de-choodai* (desiderative)". And, since the illocutionary force of an agglutinating language like Japanese is strongly affected by the force of sentence ender, the possible illocu-tionary force of the utterance is recognized as the illocutionary force of [2nd,

stronger request~]. Thus the literally directive illocutionary force of stronger request of propositional negation is understood.Then, in the thread of discourse, and given information inthe former context, Susumu understands that the directive illocutionary force of stronger request is not strong enough for Hiromasa to fullfil Hiromasa's mental state and intention, since his real desire to play with his dad has been neglected and he might be left alone. Therefore, Susumu recognizes that Hiromasa is exploiting the maxim of quantity based on his backgruound knowledge about how Susumu behaved in the past when Hiromasa appealed to his daddy, and Hiromasa is expecting kind and tender reaction from his dad. Thus, the assertive illocutionary force of stronger request of negative proposition is re-interpreted non-literally as a expressive illocutionary force of pleading.

e.

$$F[S,[2nd,strong\ grieving]]$$
$$\Updownarrow$$
$$F[S,[2nd,pleading]]$$
$$\uparrow$$
$$F[S,[2nd,EXTREAMLY\ strong\ request\sim]]$$

F[S,[2nd,request~]]   TONAL CHANGE[emotional]

F[IAF,desiderative]
|
de(choodai)

F[S,[2nd,assertion~]]

F[VPa1,[1st,~acceptance] $\vee$ [-1st,assertion~]]

F[NP,2nd]   F[NP,loc]   F[Va1,[1st,~acceptance] $\vee$ [-1st,assertion~]]

F[N,2nd] F[P] F[N] F[P,loc] F[Va1,[1st,acceptance] $\vee$ [-1st,assertion]] F[Aux,~]

⑮ | | | | | |
       φ   φ   φ   φ   hair   -nai

Finally, the process of illocutionary force understanding of (4e) is explained in almost the same manner as (4d) excepting that it lacks vocative NP but carries the special realization of speaker's mental state of sincerity expressed with tonal change which represents strong epistemic emotion and which is followed by the act of crying. Thus, even if the literal ilocutionary force of (4e) is recognized as a directive illocutionary force of extremely strong request of negative proposition, namely, pleading, [2nd,pleading] which is the indirect reading of (4d). However, in the thread of discourse, and given information in the former context, Susumu understands that the expressive illocutionary force of pleading is not strong enough to fullfil H's mental state and intention, since his real desire to play with dad seems to have been neglected and he is now left alone. Therefore, Susumu recognizes that Hiromasa is exploiting the maxim of quantity based on his backgruound knowledge about how Susumu behaved in the past when Hiromasa strongly appealed to his beloved daddy with crying, and Hiromasa is expecting kind and tender reaction from his dad such as hugging. Thus, The expressive

illocutionary force of pleading is re-interpreted non-literally as the expressive illocutonary force of grieving.

3. Tentative Conclusion

In this paper I have shown a morph-syntactic analysis of the process of illocutionary force understanding focusing on how daddy and his son use and interpret indirect speech acts consciouly or unconsciously, and have given rough sketch of description in line with Vandervekean speech act theory. Through the observation of child discourse, we have observed that even a small child at the age of two or so already has the potentials or basis of negotiative capacity which is to be needed for the discourse among adults with discursive goals.

Present analysis is not formal from logico-semantic point of views even though I used the word "interpretation" throughout this paper . Formal analysis in line with the generalized double semantic indexation will soon appear separately in the forthcoming paper, *Illocutional Force Understanding in Formal Semantcs*.

Notes:

1.'...whenever a speaker performs an indirect speech act, the literal speech act is secondary and is only a means to performing the indirect speech act which has stronger conditions of non defective performance or of satisfaction. Thus, whenever by asking "Can you pass the salt?" the speaker indirectly requests the hearer to pass the salt, the primary speech act of the utterance is the indirect request and not the literal question about the hearer's abilities. That indirect request is strongerthan the literal question. Indeed it is not possible for the hearer to satisfy the request (e.g. to pass the salt) without at least implicitly answering the literal question.(cf.[19])'

2. '... all indirect speech acts are cases of exploitation of the maxim of quantity. The indirect speech act of an utterance is always stronger than the literal speech act.(cf. *op. cit.*)'

3. With his generalised semantic indexation, Vanderveken(cf.[20]) clarifies the steps of evaluation of a sentence as follows:In the first step, each sentence is evaluated as expressing in every context a certain literal illocutionary act whose nature is entirely determined by the linguistic meaning of that sentence as well by the relevant contextual aspect.... In the second step, each illocutionary act that is the meaning in a   context of a sentence is then evaluated in its turn in every interpretation as having a success and a satisfaction value in each possible context of utterance.

4. Every one of the expressions used in the tree diagrams represents morpho-pragmatic category as shown below: "F" stands for a set of features. "S", "NP", "VP" , "NP", "N" and "P" are morpho-syntactic categorial features which sometimes compose complex categorical features such as "VPa1" and "Va1" standing for respectively one-place active verb phrase and one-place action verb with an aspectual feature "a(=action)" and an argument feature "1(=one-place)", and person features such as "1st", "2nd", "3rd" and "-1st" which respectively represents 1st, 2nd, 3rd and non-frist person. These features are defined recursively in Illocutionary Categorial Morphology as shown in [3]. Other features such as "commitment" , "assertion", and so forth are illocutionary features representing illocutionary potentials.

5. A sentence with contrastive subject noun phrase such as (1a) illocutionarily entails another sentence with non-contrastive subject noun phrase. In other words, the former expresses in every possible context of utterance an illocutionary act that the speaker cannot perform without also performing the speech act expressed by the latter. Thus, the former expresses stronger illocutionary force than the latter (cf.[4],[19]).

6. Searle(eg. [8]) proposes the similar illocutionary type, called assertivedeclaration. However,the declative illocutionary force does not respect the sincerity condition of the speaker on the one hand, the assertively-directed command has strong sincerity conditon of the speaker, on the other hand.

Thus, the assertively-directed command is different from that type of declaratives.

7. For the detailed study of negation in Child Language, see [1].

8. 'In the assertive sense to deny a proposition is to negate that proposition by asserting the contrary or opposite proposition (cf. [16])'. Thus, 'denial' is a propositional negation. In contrast, 'A rejection is the illocutionary denegation of the acceptance of an offer, while a refusal is the illocutionary denegation of a request (op.cit.)'. In this paper, illocutionary denegation and propositional negation are represented respectively as '~F' and 'F~'(i.e. ~acceptance, assertion~).

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