

A PERSPECTIVE ON JURGEN HABERMAS'S UNIVERSAL PRAGMATICS AS USED  
FOR RHETORICAL METHODOLOGY

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### Dedication

To my Parents without whose support and encouragement  
this thesis would not have been possible.

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## CHAPTER ONE

In recent years scholars from many fields have turned their attention to the works of Jurgen Habermas. Those in speech communication particularly have shown a great deal of interest in the works of Habermas. Some scholars maintain that Habermas's theories can be used in such areas as argumentation and debate. Others claim that Habermas's works are important to the field because they bear a direct relationship to rhetorical criticism, argumentation theory, and the link between rhetoric and epistemology (Burleson & Kline, 1979).

Research on Habermas's works has developed slowly. One reason that the research has been so gradual is Habermas's use of complex grammatical structures and terminology. Another reason for the lag in research is the problem of translation. The translation of German words and phrases is sometimes ambiguous. Translations leave shaded areas that produce some difficulties for readers. However, there are many legitimate translations of Habermas's most difficult works. The present study seeks to advance our understanding of Habermas's rhetorical theory by examining both primary works by Habermas and secondary works by his commentators.

There are many roadblocks to a full understanding of Habermas. For example, Habermas includes many complex theories and traditions such as "German idealism, general systems theory,

Freudian psycho-analysis, pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, and cognitive-developmental theories. . ." (Burleson & Kline, 1979). Habermas also assumes his readers have a working understanding of such theories as Marxism and the traditions of Anglo-American linguistic theories on which he bases his works (Burleson & Kline, 1979). Another requirement for a clear understanding of Habermas is some background in speech act theories. Habermas bases much of his work in these areas on the works of such linguists as John Austin and John Searle. A reader would find background information on the works of these men beneficial. This study will seek to provide such background information as needed for a more complete understanding of his works.

#### Research Question

Although scholars agree that Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics is important to the field of rhetoric, no method for rhetorical analysis has been developed using his theory of universal pragmatics. Because Habermas's notion of universal pragmatics has not been used in rhetorical criticism, the research question becomes: How can Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics be used as a methodology to analyze and evaluate rhetorical situations?

Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics is composed of several related notions. One notion is the matter of validity

claims. The claims of validity are mutually recognized by each actor in a communication situation. At any time an actor may question one or more of the validity claims. In order for successful communication to resume, the claim in question must be redeemed. According to Habermas, the four claims of validity are (1) sincerity, which can only be proven over time; (2) comprehensibility, which concerns grammatical structure; (3) truth, which deals with the propositional content, and (4) rightness, which concerns whether the speaker chooses an utterance which is appropriate for the situation based on a normative background with the second actor (Cushman & Diethrich, 1979).

Habermas also employs the notion of speech acts as the tool for analysis in universal pragmatics. In the view of Habermas, speech acts are divided into four categories, and each category is related with a specific validity claim (Aune, 1979). The categories of speech acts are communicatives, constatives, representatives, and regulatives. The first class are communicatives which "say," "express," and concern the pragmatic meaning of utterances (Aune, 1979). Constatives which "state" or "assert" concern "the cognitive application of sentences" (Thompson, 1982). Representatives which "admit" or "conceal", according to Habermas, "express intentions, attitudes and feelings of the speaker" (Thompson, 1982). The final class, regulatives which "order" or "prohibit", concern norms which can be "broken or

followed" (Thompson, 1982).

These acts and claims are categorized by "which particular world is being discussed" (Thompson, 1982). Habermas claims that every successful utterance has a relationship with each of three domains of reality (Thompson, 1982). These "worlds" are (1) the "external world," (2) the "social world," and (3) a "particular inner world" (Thompson, 1982). The external world deals with those objects about which we can make statements of truth. For example, we can make statements of truth about such objects as tables. Are they tables? Are the tables round or square? The social world deals with societies shared normative background - or the rules, values, and norms by which society judges a communication situation. For example the American experience of personal space (distance to hold personal conversations) might be different from that of a person of another country. These concepts are based on their societies' definition of personal space. The inner world deals with the internal experiences of the speaker. An example might be a person's perception of personal space or table. By using speech acts in relation to claims of validity Habermas attempts to ". . . identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding" (Habermas, 1979).

#### Rationale

Why should scholars in the field of speech communication be concerned with the use of universal pragmatics as a tool for

rhetorical analysis? First, Habermas can provide a new form of analysis that could give scholars a unique perspective for rhetorical analysis. For example, in analyzing a speech such as Kennedy's Inaugural Address, scholars currently could use Burke's pentad or Toulmin's model of scientific arguments as means of rhetorical analysis. Using Habermas's universal pragmatics would give rhetoricians a unique method of analysis, one that goes beyond a Burkean analysis or Toulmin analysis of the argumentative structure. Universal pragmatics may answer new questions about rhetorical criticism and analyze the actual utterances of a speech as well as the intentions of the speaker through Habermas's concept of the four validity claims.

Another advantage of developing universal pragmatics as a tool of analysis is that it can be combined with other methods of rhetorical analysis. No single approach will yield enough information to completely analyze a complex rhetorical event. However, by combining existing approaches with new approaches we can attempt to gain a more complete view of any given rhetorical event (Brock & Scott, 1980). Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics can provide one such approach.

#### Review of the Literature

There are several works that aid the researcher in the task of understanding Jurgen Habermas's universal pragmatics. The first important work is Habermas's Communication and the Evolution



of Society (1979). This work has one of Habermas's most complete explanations of universal pragmatics and theories of communication competence. This work also explained Habermas's theories of communication as they contribute to a theory of socialization and to a third level of social evolution. Communication and the Evolution of Society was translated into English by Thomas McCarthy and is considered to be one of the best translations of Habermas's works.

Another work that would benefit the researcher is Habermas's Knowledge and Human Interest (1968). This work is important because it provides theories of Habermas's notions of society and communication which he expands and builds upon in his newer works.

Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action, (1984) translated by Thomas McCarthy, is another work concerned with the theories of communication competence and universal pragmatics. This work is a further development of the theories in Habermas's Communication and the Evolution of Society.

Thomas McCarthy's The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas (1979) is another important work. This work includes a chapter devoted to Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics.

Habermas--Critical Debates (1982) by John B. Thompson is another important work. This work includes a chapter devoted to Habermas's universal pragmatics. A more important aspect of this book is its final chapter in which Habermas replies to his

critics.

There are several journal articles that offer explanations of Habermas's universal pragmatics. One such article is "A Critical Reconstruction of Jurgen Habermas's Holistic Approach to Rhetoric as Social Philosophy" (1979) by Donald P. Cushman and David Dietrich. This article offers an explanation of the concept of universal pragmatics and explores Habermas's views on rhetoric, the rhetorical process, and the sufficiency of Habermas's analysis.

A second article that will help the researcher is James A. Aune's "The Contribution of Habermas to Rhetorical Validity" (1979). This article emphasizes the role of Habermas's theories in relation to argumentation. Aune's article also discusses Habermas's theories as they are framed within society.

Brant R. Burleson and Susan L. Kline's "Habermas's Theory of Communication: A Critical Explication" (1979) is another work dealing with the communication theories of Jurgen Habermas. This article contains background on Habermas's theories as well as an explanation of universal pragmatics. The article also contains an explanation of speech acts as used by Habermas, and an interpretation of Habermas's view of "discourse."

Other works of related interest are C. Fred Alford's "Jurgen Habaermas and the Dialectic of Enlightenment: What is Theorectically Fruitful Knowledge?" (1985) which concerns

Habermas's theories in light of environmental problems and Ben Agger's "A Critical Theory of Dialogue" (1981) which examines society as it affects and is affected by Habermas's communication theories.

W. G. Regier and H. Peter Reinkordt's "Jurgen Habermas: Under the Macroscope" (1985) can also be used for further reference. This article summarizes several other essays dealing with Habermas and his theories. John Keane's "Elements of a Radical Theory of Public Life: From Tonnies to Habermas and Beyond II" (1984) deals with the problems created by Habermas's use of an ideal speech situation. Kean also argues that present communication analysis is conducted as if the actors in the situation were already competent. Johann P. Arnason's "Universal Pragmatics and Historical Materialism" (1982) is another article dealing with an explanation of universal pragmatics. This article also examines Habermas's theory of evolution as well as Habermas's development of the "three-world model," which suggests that speech acts are classified according to three "worlds" of reality. As indicated earlier, these "worlds" are (1) an "external world" dealing with the "world of objects and events about which one can make true or false statements," (2) an "inner world" dealing with the internal experiences of the speaker, and (3) the "normative reality of society" which consists of a shared normative background based on society (Thompson, 1982).

These are just a few of the major works that deal with the theories of Jurgen Habermas. However, for the purpose of this paper the preceding review of the literature should enable the reader to develop an understanding of universal pragmatics and Habermas's theories dealing with communication competence.

### Methodology

In order to answer the research question, "How can Habermas's universal pragmatics be used as a means of rhetorical analysis?" the principles of universal pragmatics will be applied to Kennedy's Inaugural Address to determine whether a reliable rhetorical methodology can be discerned.

The four claims of validity will be applied to Kennedy's Inaugural Address to determine if the claims are useful for this particular type of rhetorical situation. The domains of reality will be analyzed, and the speech acts assessed to determine their effect upon the communication situation. Accordingly, there will be three more chapters in the study.

Chapter Two is an explanation of domains of reality, validity claims, speech acts, as well as other components of universal pragmatics. Chapter Two also discusses Habermas's basis for universal pragmatics -- the works of John Austin, John Searle, and other theorists.

Chapter Three contains a step by step methodology for rhetorical analysis. The method is derived from the components of

universal pragmatics. Chapter Four applies the methodology developed in Chapter Three to Kennedy's Inaugural Address to demonstrate the applicability of universal pragmatics as a rhetorical methodology.

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## CHAPTER TWO

Scholars in the field of linguistics recognize the distinctions between linguistic performance and linguistic competence (Aune, 1979). "(P)erformance refers to the . . . use of language in concrete situations, competence refers to the ideal speaker--listener's knowledge of his or her own language" (Aune, 1979). A linguist is able to reconstruct linguistic performance by a set of rules such as syntactics and semantics (Aune, 1979). However, at present there is no such set of rules for reconstructing linguistic competence. Jurgen Habermas hopes to develop such a set of rules within his theory of communication competence. These rules would apply to any language of any culture. Habermas calls his theory of rules "universal pragmatics."

Universal pragmatics begins with an ideal speech situation. Two actors, who are already assumed to be competent in communication, are used as the subjects whose communication will be analyzed. Habermas argues that actors in a communication situation naively accept what he labels validity claims (Habermas, 1979). According to Habermas, validity claims must be accepted by both actors in order for correct communication to take place (Habermas 1979).

### Validity Claims

The four validity claims are a unique factor in Habermas's



concept of universal pragmatics. Habermas argues that there are four universal validity claims that are simultaneously raised and naively accepted by both actors in a communication situation (Habermas, 1979). Habermas theorizes that for any spoken utterance both the speaker and listener accept that the utterance is intelligible, that is true--in the sense of propositional content, that the performative component is correct, and that the speaker expresses his intentions sincerely (Habermas, 1979).

For example, when a witness is sworn in before a jury and a judge it is assumed that the witness will give his testimony in language that is understandable, that the witness will tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," that the witness chooses his language (performative component) from a normative background shared with the jury and judge, and that the witness is sincere in his action of testifying. These claims can be called into question at any time during a communication situation; however, Habermas prefers to deal with ideal speech situations -- that all four claims are accepted.

The first claim, intelligibility, concerns the grammatical structures of language. If called into question, the intelligibility claim may be redeemed by analysis using such rules of linguistic performance as syntax and semantics. Intelligibility is perhaps the easiest claim to verify. The claim can be called into question immediately and redeemed at the time

of the communication situation. For example, if two people are involved in a conversation and one person cannot understand the other due to grammatical errors he may stop the conversation and request that the second person use correct grammar. If the second person makes the needed corrections the conversation may be resumed. The other three claims may not be as easy to verify.

Sincerity is an essential feature of serious communication. For example, when a person says, "I do" in a church at a marriage ceremony, both the audience and the marriage partner assume the speaker is sincere in the pledge. Sincerity of the speaker can only be answered over time. Only the course of events will inform the listener about the speaker's sincerity or an attempt to deceive.

The final two claims of validity, truth of propositional content and the correct use of the performative, can only be answered through "discourse" (Thompson, 1982). Discourse, according to Habermas, is a form of communication in which the participants strive to reach consensus about the validity or invalidity or problematic validity claims (Thompson, 1982). Discourse is structured, and each phase of the structure must be fulfilled in order to reach consensus (Thompson, 1982). The structure of discourse is as follows:

- (1) "each speaker must have an equal opportunity to initiate and perpetuate communication (engage in

communication speech acts); (2) each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ regulative speech acts (oppose, permit, forbid) without having to obey one--sidedly binding norms; (3) each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ constutive speech acts, so that no propositional statements are immune from examination; (4) each speaker must have an equal opportunity to employ representative speech acts (be able to express feelings, attitudes, etc.)" (Thompson, 1982)

By using discourse the "truth" of the propositional content - is the content of the utterance correct, and the correct use of the performative, is the language founded in a normative background - can be justified.

The four claims of validity are ideal in their structure. Every time communication takes place these four claims are assumed to be valid, thereby establishing an ideal speech situation. It is this ideal speech situation that is the basis for judging communication using universal pragmatics.

#### Speech Acts

The basic unit of universal pragmatics is the speech act. The speech act theory was first developed in depth by John Austin. Austin pointed out that in uttering something a speaker is also doing something (Habermas, 1979).

The speech act theory, largely based on the works of Austin and Searle, states that there is a fundamental system of rules all adult communicators are capable of following in order to form competent sentence utterances (Habermas, 1979; Thompson, 1982). Habermas believes that this speech act theory is universal for all cultures and all languages (Habermas, 1979). Habermas uses this performative basis for speech as the foundation of universal pragmatics.

Habermas theorizes that utterances dependent on content can, without changing meaning, be replaced by a standard form of the speech act (Habermas, 1979). It is through the successful performance of speech acts that the interpersonal relationship is established between speaker and hearer (Habermas, 1979). This relation is twofold; it is content related and illocutionary (Habermas, 1979). When these two phases of communication are separated the double structure of speech becomes evident.

The standard form of the speech act as set down by Habermas can be represented as follows: "I . . . (verb) . . . you that . . . (sentence) (Habermas, 1979). The double structure of speech is evident in this format. The illocutionary element is represented by a "performative sentence in the first person present indicative with a direct object in the second person. . ." (Habermas, 1979). The content related aspect of the speech act is represented by "a propositional component which contains referring and predicative expressions" (Habermas, 1979). The illocutionary component of the

speech act may vary independently of the propositional component. This division of the two components of the speech act is explained by the two levels a speaker and hearer must reach if they wish to communicate (Habermas, 1979). These two levels are: "(a) the level of intersubjectivity, upon which the speaker/hearer communicate with one another; and (b) the level of objects, about which speaker/hearer come to an understanding (Habermas, 1979). An example of this would be the speech act "I order you to pick up those socks." The content message is "pick up those socks," the relational message is "I order you." The content is clear, someone wants someone to pick up their socks. The relationship is established with the use of the word "order." The use of the word "order" could signal perceived domination on the part of the speaker. Thus there are two parts to this utterance, the content and the relation the speaker wishes to establish with the receiver.

In order to formulate a grammatically correct sentence embedded in a speech act in a particular situation the speaker must be aware of the "relations to reality" (Habermas, 1979). The act of uttering embeds any given speech act in a relation to an "external world," "inner world," and the "normative reality of society" (Habermas, 1979).

The "external world" deals with the world of objects (e.g. table) and events (e.g. school) about which we are capable of making statements of truth or fiction (Habermas, 1979). The "inner world"

deals with the internal experiences of the speaker (Habermas, 1979). For example our perceptions and memories of "tables" or events at "school" constitute our "internal world" about these objects and events. The "normative" reality deals with societies shared norms, values, roles and rules by which society judges a communication. experience (Habermas, 1979). For example, there are norms, values, roles, and rules that apply to graduate students as opposed to undergraduate student or high school students. Thus using a word like "students" entails "normative reality" as well as "inner world" and "external world" meanings. Language is sometimes referred to as the fourth world. Language deals with grammatical structures and norms. These four worlds make up what is referred to as the "domains of reality" (Habermas, 1979). It is in relation to these four worlds that Habermas classifies the four different types of speech acts.

Concentrating on the performative verb, Habermas develops four classes of speech acts. These four classes are: (1) the communicatives, (2) the regulatives, (3) the representatives, and (4) the constatives. The first class, communicatives (e.g. ask, or say), deal with "the process of communication. . ." (Habermas, 1979). Communicatives are directly related to the validity claim of intelligibility.

Regulative speech acts (e.g. order, or prohibit) deal with the world of society. Regulative speech acts deal with norms and conformative attitudes. (Habermas, 1979). This class of speech acts

deals with the claim of correctness, and is used to establish interpersonal relations between speaker and hearer (Thompson, 1982). For example, the performative verbs order and prohibit deal with standards set by society. Society has set the norms by which we may order someone to do a certain task; for example, a mother may order her son to pick up his room. Society also sets the standards by which we may prohibit someone from doing a certain task. Mothers may prohibit their children from staying out late; teachers may prohibit students from throwing spit-wads. Society also sets the standards by which we may not order or prohibit others. Small children may not order their mothers to cook supper, students do not prohibit teachers from giving "C's".

These performative verbs also set standards for the relationship the speaker wishes to develop with the receiver. The verb prohibits and the verb order may indicate a perceived status on the part of the speaker. The speaker feels that he is in a position of authority that allows him to order and prohibit.

Representative speech acts (e.g. admit, or conceal) express attitudes and intentions of the speaker (Habermas, 1979). Representatives deal with the internal word of reality and emphasize the validity claim of sincerity. For example, the speech act, "I admit to you that I love" deals with the claim of sincerity. Is the speaker sincere in his claim? Perhaps the use of the performative verb admit reveals reluctance on the part of the speaker to reveal the

content. If the speaker is reluctant, there may be some doubt as to his sincerity.

Constative speech acts (e.g. assert, or describe) deal with the external world of reality. Constative speech acts deal with the cognitive application of sentences (Thompson, 1982). The validity claim of truth is emphasized by constative speech acts as they deal with the presentation of facts (Thompson, 1982). The performative verb describe deals with presenting facts about a certain person, object or event. The external world deals with those things we may make factual statements about. For example, a person may set out to describe the new coffee table they purchased. Their description may be checked for facts. If the speaker describes the coffee table as oval with four legs the receiver has only to see the object to check the description thus justifying the claim.

These concepts, which make up universal pragmatics, make up an ideal speech situation. Every competent speaker can use these concepts to construct an ideal speech situation out of any communication situation (Thompson, 1982). It is through the use of universal pragmatics that Habermas hopes to reconstruct all possible modes of understanding. It is Habermas's hope that universal pragmatics will lead to understanding and communication competence -- thus leading society away from distorted communication.

#### Limitations

There are many limitations to universal pragmatics. Two that are



important to the construction of this study are nonverbal actions or bodily expressions and institutionally bound speech acts.

Habermas chooses to ignore nonverbal actions and bodily expressions. Habermas chooses verbal language as the mode of communication and has developed universal pragmatics in order to analyze that communication in order to reach understanding. While a speech act may be influenced by nonverbal behavior, Habermas does not account for such influences. For example, the "tone of voice" a speaker uses may turn an utterance from an insult to a friendly greeting. By focusing only on the linguistic utterance, Habermas fails to account for linguistically identical but paralinguistically different speech acts.

Habermas also limits the types of speech acts used in analysis. As stated earlier, Habermas stressed speech acts formed with performative verbs. Habermas creates another limitation because institutionally bound speech acts can not be used with universal pragmatics. Institutionally bound speech acts are limited by normative meaning, such as christening, appointing, and marrying (Habermas, 1979). Institutionally bound speech acts are limited by a specific set of instructions (Habermas, 1979; Thompson, 1982). For example, marrying expresses as certain institution and ceremony that accompanies this speech act. For the purpose of this paper institutionally bound speech acts will not be used and nonverbal dimensions of rhetoric will not be considered.

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## CHAPTER THREE

In using Habermas's universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical methodology the basic concepts should be included. However, some concepts, such as that of discourse, may be excluded if they do not pertain to the actual analysis of a speech act.

## Choosing the Communication Situation

The first step in using universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis is choosing the communication situation to be analyzed. Some communication situations are not suitable for analysis using universal pragmatics. As far as Jurgen Habermas is concerned, universal pragmatics depends on the performative verb in analysis of language. Some communication situations do not depend on, or perhaps may not contain, performative verbs. At the present level of development of universal pragmatics such situations, for example jokes or poems, can not be evaluated.

Other situations that would not be suitable for analysis using universal pragmatics as the methodology are those situations constrained by institutionally bound speech acts. Institutionally bound speech acts "are bound to a single - repetitious institution" (Habermas, 1979). Propositional content is limited, and institutions "are always involved" (Habermas, 1979). Examples of institutionally bound speech acts are those that contain such performative verbs as marrying, christening, appointing, etc

(Habermas, 1979). Once inappropriate situations have been eliminated, the rhetorical analysis based on universal pragmatics can begin.

#### Judging the Four Claims of Validity

Situations considered for analysis should first be judged by the four claims of validity. Habermas argues that in order for successful communication to take place the four claims of validity must be raised and justified. Thus, any communication situation that is to be analyzed using universal pragmatics must first meet the standards set by the four claims of validity.

#### Sincerity

The claim of sincerity can only be proven over time. Since present communication situations cannot account for sincerity, a past communication situation would best suit this type of analysis. Many past communication experiences can be checked for sincerity. One such event would be a political speech. Recorded speeches such as a political speech could be checked against the chain of events following the speech in order to judge the level of the speaker's sincerity.

The claim of sincerity should also be checked in order to judge if it is justified in part or in whole. The claim may be justified for the situation overall, or it may be justified for certain speech acts. For example, in any given communication situation an actor may not justify the claim of sincerity for one

particular speech act. However, this one speech act does not mean that the entire communication situation is useless. More over, the speaker's sincerity may hold true for the entire situation, if not for individual speech acts. A situation where the claim of sincerity is justified for both situations would be best suited for analysis.

If the claim of sincerity is not valid, according to Habermas's theory, the communication situation is not successful. The rhetorician now has the choice to analyze the situation, or to continue the search for a situation with a justified sincerity claim. If the claim cannot be justified, according to Habermas, the communication cannot be successful. Of course the analyzing of the communication without the redeemed claim may lead to new insights into universal pragmatics and may therefore be valuable to researchers. However, it is not recommended. The communication situation may be judged successful to some degree. If this is true, universal pragmatics may need to be revised in such a way as to leave "gray" areas for such situations. The analysis may also lead to new ideas on speaker credibility as related to sincerity.

### Intelligibility

The claim of intelligibility, or grammatical structure and understanding, should next be considered. Using a present communication situation (ongoing at time of analysis) would allow

for corrections at the time of communication.

Using a past communication situation could lead to problems. For example, if the communication situation has grammatical errors that hamper the discovery of speech acts, the errors would need correction in order to use the communication for analysis. However, correcting mistakes may lead to more mistakes. Correcting for mistakes may interfere with the content or relational meaning of the speech act. Correcting for mistakes and not changing meaning may prove to be a difficult task. The tense of the performative verb should not be changed, if possible, even though the verb may be contributing to the grammatical error.

### Truth

The claim of truth, much like that of sincerity, can be checked in many past communication situations. Again, recorded situations could be checked against the chain of events in order to justify this claim. However, in using a past communication situation for the analysis, caution must be used in searching for discourse. Past communication situations may contain evidence of discourse, as discourse is a different type of communication, it should not be included in the analysis of speech acts.

Using an ongoing communication situation would allow the actors to participate in discourse if the claim is questioned. If the claim -- present or past -- is not justified, the situation should not be used. It is highly improbable that the

communication situation would be judged successful if the claim of truth were not justified.

### Correctness

The claim of correctness deals with the normative background of the speaker and the hearer. This claim is justified in past communication situations through an audience analysis. In this way the rhetorical critic may find the amount of normative shared experiences between speaker and hearer. However, some past communication situations may have no record of the audience. This type of situation would not be useful in analysis.

In a current communication situation, the actors may use discourse if the claim is questioned. The speaker should conduct an audience analysis before the communication situation takes place. This would prevent problems that would deem it necessary to justify this claim through discourse.

### Selecting Speech Acts

#### Performative Verbs

The next step in using universal pragmatics is to select the speech acts for analysis. Perhaps the easiest way to locate a speech act is to find the performative verbs. Once the verbs have been chosen the speech act that follows the verb should be selected. This may prove to be the most difficult aspect of universal pragmatics. Finding the exact speech act to go with the exact verb will require close and careful analysis. However, if

universal pragmatics is to be used as a tool for rhetorical analysis in its present form, the development of speech acts is necessary.

### One Word Speech Acts

Some speech acts are composed of one word, for example the act of uttering "FIRE" and "HELP". These speech acts present many problems. There is no performative verb explicitly present by which to judge the relational meaning. While a rhetorical critic could make the implicit performative explicit, such tampering with the language is risky. For example, "Duck!" may be interpreted to mean "[I want you to] duck!" but the sentence may have been "[I urge you to look at that] duck!," Such problems interfere with Habermas's concept of the double structure of speech. In choosing a performative verb the relational meaning is at stake. One can never be certain that the correct verb has been chosen.

### Analysis of Standard Speech Acts

#### Constative

Once the speech acts have been chosen they should be placed in the standard form set up by Habermas, ["I...(verb)...you that...(sentence)]. The standardized speech acts should then be classified according to the three worlds of reality and paired with the validity claims they emphasize. For example, a constative speech act would deal with such performative verbs as assert and describe. Constative speech acts deal with the



representation of fact and with the claim of truth. They are a check for the propositional content of the speech act and are related to the world of external nature, or those things in the world about which we can make factual statements.

### Representatives

The inner world of reality deals with a speaker's intentions, for example the validity claim of sincerity. The type of speech act related to this world and claim is that of the representatives. Some of the performative verbs that are classified as representatives are admit and conceal.

### Regulatives

The world of the normative background, or the world of society, deals with the interpersonal relationships between the speaker and the hearer. The class of speech acts related to this world are called regulatives and deal with establishing legitimate social relations. Verbs like order and prohibit are examples of this type.

### Communicatives

One last type of speech act is the communicatives. The communicatives concern what is sometimes called the fourth world of reality -- language. This claim deals with the process of communication and is related to the claim of intelligibility. Examples of such performative verbs are ask and say

### Content and Relational Cues

Once the speech act has been placed in the standard form, the content and relational meaning of the speech act must be examined. This will also prove to be a difficult task. The correct content that was intended to follow the performative verb must be chosen. The relational meaning will be related to the performative verb itself. For example, the relational meaning in the performative verbs ask and order can easily be seen. However, some verbs will not be as clear.

#### Analysis

Once the speech acts have been placed in the standard form, content and relational cues analyzed, and the speech acts placed in their proper class, the analysis of the acts as related to the validity claims can be conducted. At this point a decision about the justification of the claims as related to individual speech acts can be made. The number of justified claims may also have an impact on the original decision about the claims as related to the entire communication situation.

Finally the critic should consider what has been learned from this analysis of a rhetorical situation using universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis. A critic should decide whether the claims were justified, and if so, what impact the claims had on the overall communication. If the claims were not justified, the critic should consider the impact on the overall communication.

The questions to be used by a rhetorical critic employing universal pragmatics can be summarized as follows:

#### Methodology

- I. Choose a communication situation
  - A. some situations are not suitable for use with universal pragmatics.
    1. Some situations do not depend on the performative verb.
      - a. universal pragmatics depends on the performative verb.
      - b. lies, jokes, and poems are some examples of situations that do not depend on the performative verb.
    2. institutionally bound speech acts are not suitable for analysis with universal pragmatics.
      - a. they are bound by ceremony.
      - b. some situations, such as marriages, contain too many bound speech acts to be used with universal pragmatics.

#### Questions to Ask:

1. Is the situation suitable for rhetorical analysis using universal pragmatics?
2. Does the situation depend on the performative verb?
3. Does the situation rely on institutionally bound speech acts?
- B. Judge the situation by the four claims of validity.
  1. sincerity can only be proven over time.
    - a. past situation would allow the sincerity to be checked.
      - 1.) an example would be a political speech
    - b. sincerity cannot be considered in present speech situations.
    - c. claim must be checked to see if it is justified in part or in whole.
  2. intelligibility; or grammatical structure
    - a. for a past communication situation grammatical errors should be corrected only if they hamper the discovery of speech acts.
      - 1.) content meaning should not be changed.
      - 2.) relational meaning should not be

- changed.
- b. for present communication situations the grammatical errors can be corrected at the time of the situation between the two actors.
- c. corrections should be made following such rules as syntax and semantics.
- 3. truth; facts and false statements
  - a. the truth of some statements can be checked if a past communication situation is used.
    - 1.) one example would be a political speech.
  - b. cannot always be corrected for
    - 1.) speaker may not be able to justify remarks.
    - 2.) speaker may be dead.
  - c. present communication situations can resort to discourse.
- 4. correctness; normative background
  - a. needs audience analysis
    - 1.) past communication situation may already have audience analysis.
      - a.) if no audience analysis was conducted it may now be impossible to do so.
    - 2.) present communication situation; could do an audience analysis.
      - a.) could resort to discourse.

Questions to Ask:

- 1. Can the sincerity of the speaker be checked?
  - A. Is the claim justified for the entire situation or individual speech acts?
- 2. Can the intelligibility of the speaker be checked?
  - A. If grammatical errors make difficult the discovery of speech acts can the errors be corrected without changing the interpersonal relations or content of the speech act?
- 3. Can the truth claim of speaker be checked?
  - A. If the claim is not justified can it be redeemed through discourse?
- 4. Can the correctness claim of speaker be checked?
  - A. Can an audience analysis be conducted?
  - B. Can discourse be used to redeem claim?

II. Pick out speech acts

- A. Pick out performative verbs

1. speech act that goes with verb should be selected.
- B. Some speech acts are formulated from one word.
  1. example; "HELP," and "FIRE"
    - a. performative verb not present
    - b. incorrect performative verb may be chosen.

Questions to Ask:

1. Can the speech acts be located by finding performative verbs?
2. Can the content and interpersonal relations of speech act be formulated?
3. If speech act does not have a performative verb (formulated from one word) can the correct performative verb be assigned to the speech act?

III. Limit speech acts

- A. Place speech acts into standard form
  1. "I...(verb)...you that ... (sentence)"
    - a. content meaning that follows performative verb should be checked.
    - b. be sure to follow interpersonal relation of speech act.
- B. Classify due to worlds of reality
  1. external world
    - a. type of speech act -- constatives
    - b. validity claims -- truth
  2. inner world
    - a. type of speech act -- representatives
    - b. validity claim -- sincerity
  3. normative background
    - a. type of speech act -- regulatives
    - b. validity claim -- correctness
  4. language
    - a. type of speech act -- communicatives
    - b. validity claim -- intelligibility

Questions to Ask:

1. Have speech acts been limited?
2. Have all institutionally bound and one word speech acts been removed?
3. Have speech acts been placed in standard form?
4. Have speech acts been classified due to worlds of reality?

Overall Questions for Universal Pragmatics:

1. What will universal pragmatics contribute to the field of rhetoric?
  - A. Universal pragmatics can be used with other

methods of rhetorical analysis to examine such areas as speaker credibility.

1. The claims of validity can be used to prove speaker credibility.
  - a. Is the speaker expressing his true intentions?
  - b. Is the speaker speaking in a truthful manner?
  - c. Did the speaker conduct an audience analysis?
  - d. Is the speaker speaking in a manner that is understandable?
- B. The analysis of language (speech acts) using universal pragmatics as the method of analysis may lead to an understanding of why certain rhetorical methods do not work in certain situations.
- C. Analysis of a communication situation (for example a speech) that is not successful may lead to the cause of the misunderstanding, and may lead to the prevention of misunderstanding.
- D. Universal pragmatics (used as a means of rhetorical analysis) may lead to a new understanding of the audience analysis with the emphasis on language.

Universal pragmatics may prove to be a useful tool in rhetorical analysis. In order to provide a methodology a series of critical questions has been presented. In the following chapter, the methodology will be applied to a communication situation in order to judge the effectiveness of universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address has been chosen as the communication situation for analysis using Jurgen Habermas's universal pragmatics as the rhetorical methodology. Chapter Three outlined the steps of the methodology based on Habermas's theory of universal pragmatics. This analysis will attempt to follow those steps, and to identify any modifications necessary to use universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis.

## Choosing the Communication Situation

Performative Verb

First, the method calls for a critic to determine if the situation depends on the performative verb. However, the ideas and language presented in the speech are rather abstract. Kennedy was vague on key issues and made few concrete statements. This use of abstract language and vague content follows with the purpose of the speech which is to outline the term in office to follow, not to make political promises (Linkugel, Allen, & Johannesen, 1982). Another purpose of the inaugural address is to bridge the gap with the opposing political party. Kennedy's use of abstract language and general ideas may have been an attempt to bridge the gap without antagonizing members of the opposition.

Here can be seen the first modification in Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics to make it a viable tool for rhetorical critics. When using universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical



analysis, the purpose of the communication situation should be considered. With Kennedy's Inaugural Address the use of abstract language and vague concepts seems to contradict the validity claims of truth and sincerity. How can Kennedy's sincerity be judged if he made no statements that tested it? How can the claim of truth be justified if Kennedy made no factual statements? These questions can be answered by considering the purpose of the speech and considering the idea that the validity claims of the address cannot be disproven.

At this time a variation on universal pragmatics has been considered. The purpose of the communication situation may have a direct effect on validity claims and the way in which these claims may be justified.

#### Institutionally Bound Speech Acts

The communication situation has been chosen -- Kennedy's Inaugural Address. The next step in using universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis is to eliminate institutionally bound speech acts. Kennedy used only one performative verb bound by ceremony. In the first paragraph Kennedy stated, "For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago." The performative verb, sworn is what makes this statement an institutionally bound act.

According to Habermas, any speech act bound by a ceremony

cannot be used in universal pragmatics. The performative verb swear, the present tense of sworn, can be connected with a particular ceremony known to Americans, being sworn in court in order to make testimony believable to a jury or judge. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth..." is a phrase known to Americans through books, television, radio, and experience. This phrase is firmly planted in American minds to the extent that the word swear has taken on a particular meaning. Kennedy's use of this particular verb seems to echo this idea. Kennedy used this verb in relation to a vow he had taken; he had been sworn in as the President of the United States. The verb swear is used, and thought of, in terms of a certain ceremony that makes one's word truthful. Other verbs such as pledge and promise might have the same connotative meaning for certain situations, but none have the strong denotative meaning of the verb swear. Habermas excludes the performative verb from the development of universal pragmatics. This paper will follow his format.

#### Judging the Communication Situation

##### Sincerity

The next step in the methodology is to judge the sincerity of the speaker. As stated before, Kennedy made many vague and abstract statements that make it difficult to judge his sincerity. The critic must account for this discrepancy.

One way a critic might deal with this problem is to consider the purpose of the speech. The purpose of the inaugural address is to allow a president to outline intended stances and to bond with the opposing party (Linkugel, Allen, & Johannesen, 1982). Political promises are not expected -- these were made during the campaign. In order to bond with the opposing party, Kennedy avoided any statements that might challenge his sincerity. Kennedy left his statements open to interpretation. When the interpretation of meaning is left up to the audience, the receiver will assign a meaning symmetrical to his/her own normative background (Williams, 1980). In this way, it is the audience rather than Kennedy assigning meanings.

Another consideration is the credibility Kennedy had with the nation. Even though the vote was very close, the elected President of the United States had an initial perceived status with the voting public, as well as other members of his vast audience. Perhaps Kennedy's high status could account for a high level of perceived sincerity with the audience.

However, sincerity is more than just credibility. Kennedy was taken as meaning his utterances sincerely. In other words, according to Habermas, in order to be sincere Kennedy must mean his utterances, or "seriously and exactly intends what is expressed" (Burleson & Kline, 1979). At this point the analysis returns to the original argument, how can an utterance be judged

as sincere if the utterance is too vague?

Exactly what did Kennedy mean? This question can only be answered to a degree of certainty. The critic must overcome this problem, and the suggestions presented, looking at the situation and Kennedy's credibility, may be used by the critic in order to deal with this problem.

One tactic used by Kennedy is the use of the pronoun we. Kennedy used the pronoun we in place of the first person I. The use of the plural pronoun could be an attempt to identify with his audience. In order to successfully communicate with his audience the speaker must first identify with them (Blankenship, 1972). Language is a strong tool of identification (Blankenship, 1972). If the audience identified with Kennedy -- felt that he was "one of them" -- the chances that this sincerity would be challenged by the audience is low.

One problem with judging the sincerity of the speaker when dealing with universal pragmatics is the absence of the nonverbal dimensions. Habermas eliminates the use of nonverbal communication in his development of universal pragmatics. Judging the speaker's sincerity is more difficult without the nonverbal vocal cues. In the case of Kennedy's address, a typed manuscript can be used. However, there are audio and video recordings of the speech which would be useful if the use of nonverbal communication were included in the concept of universal pragmatics.

### Intelligibility

Perhaps the easiest claim to verify is that of intelligibility. In the case of Kennedy's Inaugural address a typed manuscript is used. The manuscript allows for the evaluation of the grammatical aspects of the speech. In the case of Kennedy's Inaugural Address, the grammatical structure is such that no corrections are warranted. In this case, as long as one is using the grammatical rules of English, the claim can be justified.

### Truth

The validity claim of truth is perhaps the most difficult to justify using universal pragmatics as a rhetorical tool on Kennedy's Inaugural Address. Kennedy made no concrete statements or promises in his speech. Statements such as "To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required . . . because it is right," can be interpreted in many ways. "(W)e pledge our best efforts" makes no specific statement as to what our effort shall be. Kennedy made no statement that our form of aid would come in the form of financial assistance, or in the form of military aid. Kennedy might have been referring to volunteer work, or educational assistance. Kennedy's use of the word effort instead of a more concrete promise of money and/or assistance leaves this

statement open for interpretation.

The phrase, "to help them help themselves" might suggest a "hands-off" offer of help. However, with such an example as the Korean police action, many may have interpreted this statement as a hint of military of occupation. Kennedy did not commit himself to definite action. "(B)ecause it is right" is the reason given by Kennedy for this action. By whose standards did Kennedy judge this action to be right? This statement seems to be based on morals, which are difficult to be judged as true or false.

There is a great deal of difficulty in judging the above quote as true. On the other hand, how could it be proven false? Will we "give our best efforts" to the countries and the people that need them? Since Kennedy made no promise as to what form this aid would take, it is difficult to claim truth, or to judge this claim as false. Any aid to any country could be judged as the fulfillment of this statement. In this way Kennedy once again covered himself with the use of vague statements. Because he was vague, the people would apply their own interpretations to the statements (Williams, 1980). Thus, if there were any question about the truth of this statement, the question would be aimed at the people and not at Kennedy.

#### Correctness

The final claim of validity is that of correctness. This claim states that the speaker must use a normative background

between himself/herself and the receiver in order to have a successful communication situation. In wording his speech Kennedy needed to look at the occasion of the speech, and at the vast audience he was addressing.

It is a social "rule" that a president deliver an inaugural address every four years on a certain day in a certain place. A judge will swear the new president in, with his wife (the president's) looking on. After he is sworn in as the president, he must present a speech, or inaugural address. The new president must consider what is expected of him by the audience. Other inaugural addresses have been given on this sight, and the audience is expecting an address that will follow the same basic form of previous speeches. One part of that format is the language.

The people standing below the new president expect to hear a speech that they can understand without consulting a dictionary. On the other hand, the vast audience includes more than the Americans witnessing the actual event. The audience also includes those who watched on television, listened on the radio, and those who would read about the address in the following day's newspaper.

The audience was composed of other important elements. The people listening were from a variety of backgrounds. Some were scholars, some average housewives, some members of the audience were farmers, some high school students and some were children.

Another element of the audience was the leaders of foreign nations. Kennedy's address was probably important to them. But perhaps the new president was more concerned with the audience composed of United States citizens. Still, the bulk of Kennedy's audience was the American people, and he would choose his language to suit their needs, while keeping the presence of world leaders in mind.

One example of this choice is the word pledge. Of course Americans start their education pledging allegiance to the flag. This is a term most Americans can identify with. It is also a term that world leaders would probably consider acceptable. World leaders understand the term pledge because they use similar terms in their own countries. All countries have some term that promises, made stronger by the fact that it is connected to politics.

Another example of Kennedy's choice of language based on a normative background ties in with his use of abstract language and ideas. For example, "Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: That both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction," is a quotation that uses the normative background to fill in the blanks. The "dark powers of destruction" can be interpreted in different ways. Some might



have seen this phrase as meaning people who hold the communist doctrine, while others might have interpreted it as the idea of war and/or weapons. At the time of Kennedy's Address the Second World War was still on the minds of many Americans. Most of the voting age population was old enough at the time of the war to remember the effects of the first atomic bomb. America's fear of the bomb was evident in the building of home bomb shelters in the fifties. This fear was still with the American public at the time of Kennedy's address.

"(B)oth sides" held a strong meaning with the public of America, but could still be interpreted in different ways. Some Americans might have considered this phrase to refer to all communists, others might have seen it as referring to the Soviets. Americans were just leaving behind the feelings of the Cold War with Russia. This fact makes it reasonable to infer that the public would assign Russia the "other side" of the issue. Once again Kennedy left the exact interpretation up to his audience.

It is obvious that Kennedy's language choice was the result of some type of audience analysis. Kennedy used words such as pledge , with which the audience could identify. Kennedy also left the interpretation of his statements to his audience. In this way Kennedy was able to rely on the audience's normative background to fill in the gaps.

### Performative Verbs

The next step in using universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical analysis is to locate the speech acts. One way to discover the content of a speech act is to look for the performative verbs. In Kennedy's speech many performative verbs can be found. However, many of the performative verbs in Kennedy's address are of the same type. For example, the performative verb pledge appears four times in the speech.

### Pledge

The performative verb pledge will be the first verb concentrated on in this analysis. Once the verb has been chosen the speech act that follows the verb must be selected. In the case of the verb pledge there are four instances of occurrence; the first being in the fifth paragraph of the address, printed in "Contemporary American Speeches" By Wil A. Linkugel, R. R. Allen and Richard L. Johannesen (c. 1982).

The fifth paragraph consists of one sentence, "This we pledge -- and more." With this paragraph composed of only one sentence it becomes necessary to look for the components of this speech act elsewhere. The performative verb is pledge, but it must be discovered what was pledged. In paragraph five "this much" is pledged. The critic must now decide what "this much" is.

In the preceding paragraph many vague promises are made. In paragraph four Kennedy stated that the nation would "pay any

price, bear any burden . . . to assure the survival of liberty." To the American people Kennedy seemed to be pledging the continuation of liberty. In the same instance Kennedy promises that America would pay for this privilege. To whom was Kennedy talking? Perhaps it was a warning to other countries that Americans would not stand by and let another take their freedom. It could also be an assurance to the American people that Kennedy intended to protect their rights.

#### Standard form.

Now that the performative verb has been chosen, and the speech act selected, the information should be placed in the standard form of the speech act. In the standard form this speech act would read, "I (Kennedy) pledge (verb) to you (America) the continuation and protection of liberty." This speech act might also read, " I (Kennedy) pledge to you (those that would threaten liberty) that we (America) will fight for our rights."

#### Content and relational cues.

Now that the speech act is in the standard form, the content and relational cues must be analyzed. The content cues of the speech act can be understood from the content of the speech itself. However, the relational cues are not easily followed.

Pledge, used as a performative verb, does have a milder force than such performative verbs as order and permit. The verb alone does not provide enough information to make an assumption concerning

the relationship between Kennedy and the audience.

Perhaps the content of the speech act itself is a stronger clue to the relationship established between Kennedy and his audience. For this analysis, as the American people made up the bulk of his audience, the speech act directed at the American people will be used. The speech act reads as follows: "I (Kennedy) pledge (verb) to you (American public) the continuation and protection of liberty." The word liberty has both a connotative and denotative meaning with the American public. The connotative meaning of the word liberty is very strong with the American populous. Kennedy was aware of the strong feelings America associates with this word. Liberty, or freedom, is one of the basic human needs (Surles & Stanbury, 1960). Americans have a strong sense of this need, after all, America is the "sweet land of liberty." Kennedy therefore was promising to protect one of the basic human rights Americans feel entitled to. In this way Kennedy may have been trying to assume the image of the protector. In essence, Kennedy may have been telling the public that he would be the one to protect their rights. Kennedy may also have been trying to take on the role of the father figure. "If you are threatened, I will protect you," seemed to be his message.

However, Kennedy did not use the first person pronoun I in the actual utterance. Kennedy used, in this instance and throughout the address, the pronoun we. Kennedy's use of this

particular pronoun may have been an effort to make his words those of the American people. Not only would he protect them, but the people would protect their rights as well. Kennedy seemed to be taking on two roles. On one hand he was the protector, on the other he was only a member of the public which would protect its own rights. Of the roles Kennedy may or may not have chosen to take on with his audience, only the role chosen by the audience was important.

At best it would only be an educated guess as to what role the audience felt Kennedy used. A survey of the audience may show that many people interpreted Kennedy in many different roles. At this point in the development of universal pragmatics the relation between a speaker and his audience cannot be judged from the speech act alone. This particular area of universal pragmatics may depend too heavily on the actors themselves, and therefore, would not be able to be analyzed in all situations.

#### Classification of speech act.

As a performative verb pledge is classified as a constative. The regulative speech act deals with the validity claim of truth. This claim is based on the speaker's propositional content and are related to the world of external nature. At this point the analysis of this speech act becomes difficult. The constative speech act deals with the validity claim of truth. How can we be sure Kennedy was telling the truth? Kennedy used such abstract

language and concepts that it is difficult to judge the truthfulness of this statement.

Modifications.

In the analysis of this speech act many concepts not considered, or not well developed, in Habermas's universal pragmatics have become evident. First, Habermas does not take into consideration the fact that one performative verb may be part of more than one speech act. In the case of Kennedy's address more than one audience is addressed. In order to handle this situation Kennedy developed his sentences in such a way as to have a separate meaning for each audience, as can be seen in the standard form of the speech act for the American public and for, perhaps, the Soviets.

Another element of universal pragmatics that has proven to be underdeveloped is the concept of the relational content of a speech act. As this analysis shows, the relational content of a speech act cannot always be determined. In order to judge the significance of these findings further analysis is needed.

The performative verb pledge is classified as a constative and any situation using this verb would deal with the validity claim of truth and the external world of nature. Therefore, it is not necessary to analyze the other instances where pledge is used as a performative verb. In order to fully develop universal pragmatics as a tool of rhetorical methodology another

performative should be used. This change in verbs would give the critic a chance to analyze different claims of validity.

### Offer

A different performative verb used in Kennedy's Inaugural Address is offer. Offer is found twice in Kennedy's address, once in the sentence "To our sister republics south of the border, we offer a special pledge -- to convert our good words into good deeds -- in a new alliance for progress -- to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty," which is found in paragraph ten. The second instance is in paragraph twelve of the address. The speech act contained in paragraph ten will be used for analysis.

### Standard Form.

In the standard form of the speech act the utterance would read, "I (Kennedy) offer (verb) to you (countries of the South American border) our help in fighting poverty." However, if the critic looks closer this speech act is also directed at another audience. Kennedy could have used this tactic as an indirect way of telling the American public that, if needed, America would send aid, such as military aid, to those South American countries. In this case the speech act might read, "I (Kennedy) offer (verb) our help (Americas') to . . ." Since the first speech act is the obvious speech act it will be used in the analysis.

### Content and relational cues.

In order to observe the relation intended by Kennedy the critic must first turn to the performative verb. Offer, much like the performative verb pledge, does not lend enough information to the critic. Once again the content of the speech act must be taken into consideration.

The tone set by this performative verb seems to be one of friendship. Kennedy is offering Americas' help to the South American countries. Kennedy also uses the pronoun we. In this case Kennedy seems to be offering not only his friendship, but also that of Americas'.

Once again Kennedy used vague terms and language. Kennedy offered to "convert our good words into deeds" Kennedy did not state what these deeds would be. Was Kennedy referring to military aid, or perhaps educational services for the poor? Kennedy could have been referring to medical aid, or to technical help.

#### Classification of speech act.

Offer, as performative verb, is classified as a constative speech act. A constative speech act deals with the cognitive application of sentences (Habermas, 1979). Constative speech acts emphasize the validity claim of truth. As stated earlier in this chapter, Kennedy used language that was abstract and vague. The utterance can be interpreted in many ways by its audience. The important aspect of this speech act is the fact that the language



is vague enough to make it difficult to disprove the validity claim of truth. In the case of Kennedy's Inaugural Address no concrete promises or offers are made. Any type of aid could be seen as fulfillment of this utterance. In considering the particular speech act and its situation, the claim of truth, and constative speech acts, are not suitable for analysis.

#### Modifications.

In this case the critic must now face another modification in Habermas's universal pragmatics. In this particular case the validity claim of truth is not suitable in analyzing the address. Therefore, the critic using universal pragmatics must take into consideration the use of abstract language and ideas. As with the verb pledge, any further analysis of the verb offer would yield the same results. At this time it would benefit the critic to turn to another verb for analysis.

#### Renew

Another performative verb found in Kennedy's speech is renew, located in the eleventh paragraph. In this paragraph Kennedy stated "To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations . . . we renew our pledge of support -- to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective -- to strengthen its shield of the new and weak -- and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run." In this speech act, as with the speech act that used the verb pledge, Kennedy was addressing more than one audience.

Kennedy was addressing both the American people and all nations that belonged to the United Nations at the time of his address.

Standard form.

In the standard form of the speech act this utterance would read: "I (Kennedy) renew to you (United Nations) our (America's) Pledge of the past (to support the United Nations, etc.). This speech act might also read: "I (Kennedy) renew for you (America) our pledge of the past to the United Nations.

Content and relational cues.

As with the preceding speech acts the content can be judged from the speech act alone; the relational cues require further analysis. In this speech act Kennedy was renewing a pledge. Renew does not have a strong connotative meaning with the American people. There are no real lines drawn by this verb. Anyone may renew contracts, anyone may renew old friendships. It is the particular situation that gives this verb its meaning. Kennedy is renewing for America. Only in particular situations may one person renew a promise or a pledge for another.

Perhaps it is the word pledge that gives this speech act its power. The word pledge was discussed earlier in this chapter. The word pledge holds a strong connotative meaning, and it could be this word's connotative meaning that gives power to this speech act -- not the performative verb.

From the verb alone the critic finds few clues as to the

relationship between Kennedy and his audience. Therefore, the critic must turn to the content of the speech act. Kennedy used the word our in this speech act. As when Kennedy used the pronoun we, Kennedy used our in order to identify with his audience. The pledge that Kennedy made for his audience was now his own.

Kennedy also stated that the United States would support the United Nations, but he did not state in what form this support would come. Perhaps Kennedy was playing the role of protector, not wanting to alarm the public. More than likely, Kennedy simply did not wish to make any controversial statement on his first official day in office.

Kennedy did try to identify with his audience, but this alone is not significant enough for the critic to make a judgement about Kennedy's intended relationship with his audience. As with the preceding speech acts, no sound judgement can be made about the relational cues.

#### Classification of Speech Act.

Renew, as a performative verb, is classified as a constative. A constative speech act deals with the cognitive application of sentences (Habermas, 1970). Constative speech act deals with the validity claim of truth. Here, as with the verb offer, Kennedy made few statements that could be judged as true. Kennedy renewed support, but what is support? In what form will it come? Any action taken by the United States could be seen as a fulfillment

of this statement. However, the abstract language used by Kennedy makes it difficult to disprove any of his statements. In rhetorical analysis one should keep in mind that being unable to disprove something is not a basis for exceptance.

As with the verb offer, renew is not suitable for analysis in this particular situation. Since Kennedy makes few statements that can be proven true, constative speech acts are not suitable for analysis.

#### Dare

The next verb to be analyzed using Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics is dare. Dare is used in the third and thirteenth paragraphs. In the third paragraph the speech act reads, "We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution." In the thirteenth paragraph the speech acts reads, "We dare not tempt them with weakness." Since dare, as with offer and pledge, is used as the verb in both speech acts, only one speech act needs to be analyzed.

#### Standard form.

For the speech act "We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution" the stand form of the speech act would read: "I (Kennedy) dare you (America) not to forget that we are the heirs of that first revolution." Dare, as the performative verb, has a stronger connotative meaning than such verbs as offer and renew. As children we often dare one another

to conduct dangerous acts. Dare is not a word often used by adults. There are few situations where it would be allowed for one adult to dare another.

#### Content and relational cues.

The content of this speech act can be judged from the speech act alone. However, the relationship intended by Kennedy is not as easy to make judgements about.

As stated earlier, the verb dare brings to mind childhood play. Was Kennedy treating his audience as children? Kennedy was far too shrewd to insult the intelligence of his audience. Kennedy softened the connotative blow of the verb by using the pronoun we. Once again Kennedy attempted to identify with his audience. Therefore, he was not only daring the audience, he was daring himself. Kennedy may have used the verb dare in place of another verb, challenge, which would seem to be the more appropriate verb. However, the verb challenge does not hold a strong connotative meaning with the audience. Kennedy may have chosen the verb dare with the intention of arousing the emotions of the audience.

In this instance the relationship between Kennedy and his audience seems crossed. Kennedy dared them, much like he would a child. On the other hand Kennedy dared himself. One tactic seems to cancel out the other.

#### Classification of speech act.

Dare classifies this speech act as a regulative. Dare deals with the world of society and the relationship between the speaker and his audience.

In the analysis of this speech act the emphasis Kennedy placed on the normative background he shared with audience is evident. Kennedy spoke of "that first revolution," one which all Americans would identify as the American revolution. In case there was any doubt as to what revolution he was speaking of, Kennedy stated in the preceding paragraph "and yet the same revolutionary believes for which our forebears fought are still at issue." In using the pronoun our Kennedy made it clear that he was speaking of a background he shared with his audience.

Dare itself is evidence of Kennedy's knowledge of the normative background he shared with his audience. As stated earlier, dare is a word we are aware of since childhood. In choosing this verb Kennedy could be certain it would be recognized by all Americans.

Dare also deals with society and its rules. Children may dare one another, but adults may not. Dare is a word not often associated with adults. Only in certain situations may one adult dare another. In this case Kennedy is the President, a position that allows him to use his verb in relation with other adults.

Unlike the preceding speech acts, this speech act is aimed at one audience. For this reason this speech act would better fit

Habermas's concept of universal pragmatics. However, as before, the relational content is difficult to judge.

### Summons

The next performative verb used by Kennedy is summons, located in the twenty-third paragraph. In this speech act Kennedy "summons us again -- not as a call to bear arms, though arms are needed -- not as a call to battle, though embattled we are -- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle . . . a struggle against the common enemies of man: Tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself." In short, Kennedy calls upon the American people to continue the struggle against "Tryanny, poverty, disease, and war itself."

### Standard form.

In the standard form this speech act would read: "I (Kennedy) summon you (America) to continue the struggle against the common enemies of man: Tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself." This speech act is rather difficult to place in the standard form. The paragraph begins "Now the trumpet summons us . . .," who is, or what is, the trumpet? In reality there is not a trumpet, but what does Kennedy mean by using this word? Throughout the speech Kennedy called the people to "bear the burden, to pay any price." Kennedy, therefore, is the trumpet of his address. Why use the word trumpet in place of the first person pronoun I? Throughout his speech Kennedy also avoided

using I, or any term that would have him pledging or daring the audience. Using a word such as trumpet instead of the usual tactics, such as using we or our, could have been a tactic to arouse the emotions of the audience. In doing so Kennedy developed a strong device to promote social cohesion.

#### Content and relational cues.

If the trumpet of this address is Kennedy, how then does the critic come to the conclusion that us is the America. In the preceding paragraph Kennedy addressed his "fellow citizens," or fellow American citizens. Kennedy also referred to "each generation of Americans who have been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty." It is to this same audience Kennedy addressed his comments found in paragraph twenty-three.

Unlike the preceding speech acts we do not pledge, offer, or renew: "The trumpet summons us." The audience is summoned, but not by a particular person. Kennedy used the pronoun us, making him part of the summons. Kennedy chose his language carefully in this speech act. He himself did not summon the audience, a trumpet did. Kennedy was himself a member of the summoned group. In this way, as in all cases, Kennedy tried to identify with his audience. Kennedy's relationship with his audience is clearer in this speech act than in preceding ones.

#### Classification of speech acts.

Summon, as a performative verb, is classified as a



regulative. Society decides who may summon whom, and when. A parent may summon a child, a teacher may summon a student, but not vice versa. Society sets the rules for who may and may not summon another.

At this point the critic has analyzed the speech acts that follow Habermas's format for universal pragmatics. In all there are nine performative verbs present in Kennedy's address. However, this analysis will not here. One more modification on the concept of universal pragmatics will be considered.

#### Hidden Speech Acts

Habermas eliminated the use of one word speech acts in his present concept of universal pragmatics. It would be too easy to choose the incorrect verb for a one word speech act. For example, the speech act "help" could contain many verbs. Without the nonverbal cue we do not know if the person was yelling, or whispering. Were they asking for help, or ordering someone to help them? However, in certain cases it would be possible to discover the verb that fits a particular speech act. One such case can be found in Kennedy's Inaugural Address.

In Kennedy's address the utterances that do not have an obvious performative verb are not one word speech acts, but complete sentences. Paragraphs twelve through twenty one of Kennedy's address read as follows:

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves

our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request:  
That both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before  
the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science  
engulf all humanity in planned or accidental  
self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only  
when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be  
certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of  
nations take comfort from our present course -- both  
sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both  
rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom,  
yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of  
terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew -- remembering on both sides  
that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity  
is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out  
of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us  
instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate  
serious and precise proposals for the inspection and  
control of arms -- and bring the absolute power to  
destroy other nations under the absolute control of all

nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah -- to "undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor; not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

In order to find the performative verb that fits all of the speech acts found in this quotation the critic must turn to the quotation found in the twelfth paragraph. In this paragraph Kennedy "offer(s) not a pledge but a request." Even though request is not used as a verb in this quotation, and it is not present in the following speech acts, request is the performative verb that completes the speech acts present in paragraphs thirteen through twenty.

Kennedy requests that "both sides begin anew." In the following paragraphs Kennedy develops the request: that both sides explore, that both sides formulate proposals, that both

sides invoke science for good, and both sides unite. In these speech acts the performative verb is hidden.

Request is also used as the performative verb in the quotation "Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country" found in the twenty-seventh paragraph. In the standard form the speech would read "I (Kennedy) request that you (American citizens) ask (or consider) yourselves what you can do for your country, not what it can do for you." This speech act is different from previous ones in that it contains two verbs classified as performatives, request and ask. However, a speech act may contain only one performative verb.

In the quotation, "Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country," ask appears to be the performative verb. In this speech act Kennedy used the verb ask in the command form. Thus, Kennedy was not asking a question; rather, he was telling the public to consider what they might be able to do for their country. Kennedy used the verb ask, but was not asking. Therefore, ask is not used as a performative verb.

This quotation is simply a continuation of the request Kennedy began on paragraph twelve. Kennedy requested that the people consider what they could do for their country. As Kennedy was requesting that they consider what they might do, request becomes the hidden performative verb of the speech act.

### Classification of Speech Act.

In each of the above speech act request is classified as a communicative. Only one speech act needs to be analyzed as each would yield the same results. For this reason the speech act "I (Kennedy) request that you (American citizen) consider what you can do for your country, not what it can do for you.

Communicatives deal with the "relationship between a speaker and the linguistic medium of the utterance" (Burleson & Kline, 1979).

This verb focuses on the fact that Kennedy was requesting -- requesting becoming the medium by which he chose to transfer his message. Kennedy chose to request rather than order or prohibit. The justification of his speech act hinges on one question, did Kennedy's audience understand that this was a request and not a command? The performative verb request was placed in the twelfth paragraph, and the audience may have lost the significance of the verb by the twenty-seventh paragraph. However, Kennedy's use of the verb ask in the twenty-seventh paragraph may have lead the audience to believe that the quotation was a question. The verb ask is usually associated with a question. Therefore, even though the verb was used in the command form, the public probably did not percieve the quotation as a command.

Communicatives also deal with the grammatical structure of utterances. In this particular case no corrections in the

grammatical structure are needed to make the speech act intelligible.

### Conclusions

Using Habermas's universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical methodology has lead to several modifications not considered by Habermas himself. Analysis has shown that the purpose of the speech (or utterance) must be taken into consideration. As shown by this analysis Kennedy used vague terms and concepts for a specific purpose. On his first official day in office Kennedy did not want to alienate any one country, or person. Kennedy made pledges and promises, without making any specific and pledges promises. Kennedy may have used the words, but a critic cannot make a definite statement as to what Kennedy or pledged promised. Therefore it would be better for a critic to choose a communication situation that has a concrete basis for its utterances. In developing universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical methodology using claims that can be proven true or correct would yield better insight to the usefulness of universal pragmatics.

Another modification that must be taken into consideration is the judgement of the relational content of an utterance. As shown in this analysis, it is often impossible, or at best difficult, to make a definite statement about the relationship intended by the speaker. In the particular case of Kennedy's address, Kennedy

used performative verbs that were somewhat mild in comparison to such verbs as order. Only the verb dare holds a connotative meaning comparable with such verbs as order and prohibit. Yet even with the verb dare the speech act does not provide enough information to make a sound judgement about the relationship Kennedy intended to develop with his audience. A different type of speech situation may yield better results with this aspect of Habermas's universal pragmatics.

A third modification concerns the claim of truth. Kennedy's use of abstract language made it impossible to justify this claim. For this particular situation the validity claim of truth, and the constative speech act that emphasizes this claim, are not suitable for analysis. It would benefit the critic to use a speech situation in which all validity claims can be justified.

A final modification concerning Habermas's universal pragmatics is the concept of the hidden performative verb. As shown in the analysis of the verb request, a performative verb may be hidden within the speech situation. The verb may simply be in a different utterance, or it may not be present at all, but can be discovered from the content of the speech act.

The analysis of Kennedy's speech has led to the conclusion that Habermas's universal pragmatics needs development in the above areas. Thus, as a whole, and at its present level of development, universal pragmatics holds little insight into the

field of rhetorical analysis. However, it may be possible to use parts of universal pragmatics, perhaps as a check for other methodologies.

Some last areas of consideration deal with the choice of Kennedy's Inaugural Address as the communication situation for analysis. Throughout his address Kennedy used nine obvious and at least nine hidden performative verbs. This is a rather large amount for a speech written to gain the favor of its audience. In comparison, Ronald Reagan's Inaugural Address contains far fewer performative verbs, the first of which is not found until the twenty-ninth paragraph.

Kennedy's address is rather short as compared to other addresses, such as Reagan's. Kennedy's address contains twenty-nine paragraphs, Reagan's is composed of eighty-four.

The overall tone of Kennedy's address is optimistic. Kennedy seemed to believe that he could fulfill the pledges he made, and obtain the requests.

Kennedy's speech was chosen for the above reasons. Kennedy's address contains far more than the expected amount of performative verbs. It does not contain as many as everyday conversation, but it has the added advantage of being in print, which makes it easier to analyze. There is of course a draw back in the amount of performative verbs in Kennedy's address; many of them are the same. In fact, Kennedy's address does not contain a



representative speech act for analysis.

Kennedy's address is short, making it manageable. Kennedy's tone is optimistic which makes it difficult to disprove what can not be proven. For example, in the case of the validity claim of truth, it is the tone of the speech act as well as the abstract language that makes it difficult to disprove the validity claim.

The claims of validity may give insight into the credibility of a speaker. Is he truthful? Is he sincere? One major area that universal pragmatics may prove helpful in is audience analysis. Habermas, perhaps more than other rhetoricians, deals with the idea of choosing language from a normative background shared by speaker and audience. Universal pragmatics may prove to be a valuable tool in analyzing a speaker's analysis of an audience.

At this final stage of the analysis the conclusion on the usefulness of universal pragmatics as a tool for rhetorical methodology is divided. On the one hand many areas need further development. This development may show universal pragmatics to be useful only under certain situations and only with particular communication situations. On the other hand, universal pragmatics may, used in part, prove to be a strong check on other types of rhetorical analysis.

#### Areas for Further Research

In light of the fact that universal pragmatics may prove to

be an excellent check on other types of rhetorical analysis, a study combining universal pragmatics as a method of rhetorical analysis and other types of rhetorical analysis may provide many insights into the usefulness of universal pragmatics, as well as suggestions for further development.

As this study was conducted on a particular communication situation that dealt with vague ideas and abstract language, and proved to make many justifications impossible, another study using a communication situation tht dealt in facts might provide useful insight into the development of these claims.

Another consideration in choosing the communication situation should be that all types of validity claims and speech acts are present. Kennedy's address does not contain representaive speech acts, thus the analysis of the address has lead to no conclusions about this type of speech act.

An important area for further research deals with the concept of the hidden performative verb. As shown by the analysis of Kennedy's address, performative verbs may not be present in speech acts, or in the speech act to which they belong. Habermas's does not deal with this aspect in his present development of universal pragmatics. However, any situation will contain utterances without performative verbs.

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