A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION OF UTTERANCES IN CONVERSATION

Amy Tsui Bik May

submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

English Department
Faculty of Arts
University of Birmingham
1986

SYNOPSIS

This thesis is an attempt to characterize the function of utterances in conversation. Following the descriptive principles of Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), it proposes a descriptive framework which is based on the linguistic concepts of 'class', 'structure' and 'system'.

Chapter One argues against the position that utterances are multi-functional and the illocutionary forces they carry are largely indeterminate, hence they are not describable in categorial terms. It points out that such a position is a misconception arising from the lack of consistent criteria when characterizing utterances. It then examines studies in three major areas which would give insight to the setting up of a descriptive framework: speech act theory, conversational analysis and discourse analysis.

Chapter Two gives an overall account of the descriptive framework. Its basic theoretical assumption is that conversation is describable in terms of a hierarchical rank scale, consisting of acts, moves, exchanges, sequences and transactions. Utterances are characterized as different primary classes of acts according to which element of structure of an exchange they operate at. Three primary classes are identified: those operating at the head of an *Initiating Move* are *Initiating Acts*, those operating at the head of a *Responding Move* are *Responding Acts* and those operating at the head of a *Follow-up Move* are *Follow-up Acts*. For each primary class, subclasses are identified according to their predictive assessment of what follows. The choices of subclasses which are available at each element of structure are presented in the form of a system.

Chapters Three to Six discuss the four subclasses of *Initiating Act*, *Elicitations*, *Requestives*, *Directives* and *Informatives* respectively. Chapter Seven discusses *Responding Act* and its subclasses; and Chapter Eight discusses *Follow-up Act* and its subclasses.

In Chapter Nine, the entire descriptive framework is applied to a piece of conversation. Its merits and limitations are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the British Council and the Association of Commonwealth Universities for awarding me the British Council Scholarship (1984-5) and the British Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship (1985-6) respectively. I also thank the Chinese University of Hong Kong for granting me the CY Kwan Fund and the CICHE Scholarship when I was working on this thesis part-time; for granting me two years' study leave and nominating me for the British Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship. My colleagues at the English Language Teaching Unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong have given me tremendous support in every way. I am especially indebted to Shelley Chan, Herbert Pierson, Sharon Bond, Gary Wayne and Michele Lo for allowing me to record their conversations and going over the transcripts meticulously. I am also indebted to Frank Johnson, former head of the English Language Teaching Division, and Gail Fu, head of the English Language Teaching Unit, for their encouragement and support.

As for friends and teachers at Birmingham University, I thank Michael Hoey and Kirsten Mason for the enlightening discussions with them at the early stage of my research and for reading the early drafts; David Brazil for being immensely patient in helping me understand the Birmingham discourse model, particularly the intonation side, and for his detailed comments on Chapter 3; and Martin Hewings for going over the intonation transcriptions carefully. Jeremy Clear and Tim Lane and Antoinette Renouf have given me a lot of help in gaining access to the data from the Birmingham Collection of English Texts (BCET). I thank them for their assistance. Myfvanwy Sinclair has taken very good care of me throughout my entire stay in Birmingham. I thank her for her love and generosity.

A special acknowledgement goes to Malcolm Coulthard who has acted as an informal supervisor. I thank him for being very generous with his time, for his close supervision, insightful criticisms and his professional dedication.

My deepest gratitude, however, goes to my supervisor, John Sinclair, who introduced me to discourse analysis and encouraged me to pursue the present study. I thank him for his patient guidance, unfailing support, the numerous inspiring discussions with him and most of all, for being both a mentor and a friend.

Last but not the least, I thank my family for their moral support, especially my brother Mike for taking care of our parents while I have been away. Most of all, I thank my husband Chi-kin for being most supportive and encouraging, and for his love, without which the past few years would have been much more trying.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TRANSCRIPT NOTATIONS

N.B. (1) The following transcript notations are adapted from those developed by Gail Jefferson and those developed by David Brazil.
(2) For data which are quoted from another source, the original transcript notations will be retained.

1.	[	Overlapping utterances.
2.	=	A single speaker's utterance which is a continuous flow of speech but has been separated to different lines by transcript design in order to accomodate intervening interruption.
3.	-	Short untimed pause within an utterance.
4.	((pause))	Long untimed pause within an utterance.
5.	((2 sec))	Timed pause between utterances. Pauses are timed only when they illustrate a certain point that I wish to make.
6.	.hhhh	audible inhalation.
7.	hhh	audible aspiration.
8.	(( ))	Description of non-verbal elements in the conversation. e.g. ((laugh)), ((knock)).
9.	( )	Doubtful transcription or undecipherable part of the conversation.
10.	capitals	Emphasis. e.g. She has a FORTy!
11.	→	Utterances which I would like to call the reader's attention to.
12.	....	Intervening utterances which have been taken out of the excerpt.
13.	// //	Tone unit boundaries.
14.	p	Proclaiming tone (i.e. falling tone).
15.	r+/r	Referring tone (i.e. rising tone).
16.	YES	Capitals underlined: tonic syllable.
17.	// YES //	High key //YES// Mid key // YES // Low key

VOLUME I

CHAPTER 1

PART I PROLEGOMENA

1.1 Aim

1. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#2]
1 J: ((knock))
2 S: Come in.
3 J: ((knock))
4 S: Come in.
5 J: ((enters))
6 J: I didn't come in because it was so noisy
7 I couldn't hear if anyone said come in.
8 I just wanted to ask you if you happen to
9 have one more stamp, do you by any chance
10 S: I might, yeah.
[
11 J: 'cos I'm totally unorganized and
12 have -
13 S: I have a one-thirty and I have thirties
14 ((pause)) Okay, you can have a choice,
15 you can either have - three thirties - or =
[
16 J: uhuh
17 S: =you can have a one-thirty.
18 J: Three thirties is fine.

Given a piece of data like the above, the questions that this thesis attempts to answer are:

Firstly, how do we characterize what a speaker is doing in an utterance and what are the criteria of characterization. For example, how do we characterize what speaker J is doing in her utterance in lines 8-9? Is she 'asking a question' or making a 'request' or both? How do we characterize what speaker S is doing in her utterance in lines 14-17. Is she 'informing' J or is she 'offering' something to J or both? How do we characterize what

speaker J is doing in line 18? Is she giving a piece of information to S or accepting S's 'offer' or both? What are the criteria that we use in deciding?
Secondly, what is the basic unit of interaction? A single sentence speech act or an entire turn-at-talk? For example, how many units of interaction are there in the entire turn at talk in lines 6-9? How many acts is J performing? one or two or more?
Thirdly, what are the structural mechanisms or sequencing constraints that are at work which enable us to interpret and characterize utterances like the above? For example, how do we know that the utterance in line 18 is responding to the preceding utterance?
Finally, how do we go about delimiting a set of categories of discourse acts to describe utterances? or is this an impossible task since there is an infinite or at least indefinitely large number of uses of language, as Wittgenstein and many others have claimed?

It will be generally agreed that what is going in the above piece of conversation is that J has come to S to borrow a stamp. J's utterance in lines 8-9 checks whether the pre-condition for borrowing a stamp from S obtains: namely, that S does have stamps that she can spare. S, upon hearing J's question, anticipates an upcoming request from J. Therefore, instead of waiting for J to make the request, she offers J a choice of two different kinds of

stamps. J then accepts the offer by stating a choice. The smooth progress of the conversation shows that the interlocutors have correctly interpreted each other's utterances. This suggests to us that there must be some criteria by which the interlocutors judge what act the other party is performing and that there are certain constraints governing the interpretation of utterances. Moreover, the fact that interlocutors are usually able to understand each other, no matter how little knowledge they share, suggests to us that there is likely to be only a limited number of things that utterances can do despite the fact that their linguistic realisations can be limitless. The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to investigate the criteria by which utterances are identified as performing certain acts and the sequential constraints which govern the interpretation of utterances, and to propose a taxonomy of acts which utterances realize.

1.2 The Possibility of Characterizing Utterances

Before proceeding to explain how I shall go about setting up a descriptive framework, an important question to be faced at this stage is : Is it possible to achieve the above aim?

Linguists like Levinson and Leech would look upon what this thesis sets out to do with scepticism. Levinson (1983), in criticizing the basic approach of discourse

analysis, has expressed pessimism over the possibility of delimiting a set of speech act types which are identifiable and characterizable and can be mapped onto utterances. He argues that utterances often have multiple functions: a single sentence utterance can be used to perform two or more speech acts in different clauses, and each clause may perform more than one speech act at the same time (see p.291). Moreover, he argues, the source of the multiple functions often lies outside of the utterance in question, in the sequential environment of the conversation in which it occurs, that is, the discourse context, and since the sequential environment or the discourse context is not restricted in kind, it is therefore not possible to delimit a finite set of categories of speech act. He also questions the possibility of formulating any kind of sequencing rules which will govern the sequential organization of conversation. He argues that any given utterance can be followed by any other utterance in conversation and the sequence will still be interpretable and well-formed. Therefore it is doubtful whether sequential constraints can ever be fully captured in speech act terms.

Along similar lines, Leech (1983) asserts that the characterization of utterances in terms of action-categories represent an unrealistic and unsubtle view of what communication by means of language is like. He argues that utterances are highly ambivalent and that their

illocutionary force is indeterminate. Therefore they must be studied in non-categorial and scalar terms. And because of this, he asserts, it is pointless to attempt a rigid taxonomy of illocutionary acts (see p.225).

Let us take their arguments one by one.

1.2.1 The Multiple Functions and Indeterminacy of the Illocutionary Force of Utterances

Levinson, in arguing that some utterances clearly perform more than one speech act at a time gives the following example,

2. [Levinson 1983:290]
   A: Would you like another drink?
   B: Yes, I would, thank you, but make it a small one.

He asserts that the first utterance seems to be both a 'question' and an 'offer', as indicated by the response. Hence, by analogy, the utterances in lines 8-9 and in lines 14-17 in (1) presented above have multiple functions. J's utterance in lines 8-9 "I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have one more stamp, do you by any chance." would be considered as both asking a question and making a 'pre-request'. S's utterance in lines 14-17, "Okay, you can have a choice, you can either have - three thirties or you can have a one-thirty." would be considered as both giving a piece of information and offering stamps to J. There are problems in this kind of analysis. Let us take Levinson's example first. In his analysis, although he does not say which part of the

response is responding to the 'question' and which part to the 'offer', we can safely assume that "yes I would" is the former and "thank you, but make it a small one." is the latter. Two objections can be raised here.

Firstly, let us imagine that B had replied, "Yes I would actually" which is a perfectly acceptable response, especially between interlocutors who know each other well, can we then say that B's response indicates that A has asked a 'question' and not made an 'offer'?

Secondly, on what ground can Levinson say that "yes I would" is neccessarily a response to a 'question'? Why can it not be the realization of a response to an 'offer'?

Unless the exchange occurs in a special kind of speech event like 'Twenty Questions', A would still have made an 'offer' for the simple reason that after B's response, **A is under the obligation to give B a drink**. If B's utterance were a response to a 'question', there would be no obligation involved. Moreover, it is not clear by what criteria he identifies a 'question' and an 'offer'. If he is using interrogative form, he is confusing form and function. If not, then what we need is a clear specification of the criterion by which we identify an utterance as performing a particular illocutionary act.

Let us take two utterances, both interrogative in form, "What is the capital of France?", and "Would you like another drink?". The crucial difference between the two lies in the response they elicit. The former elicits a

verbal response and **only** a verbal response. The latter, if responded to positively, will elicit an obligatory non-verbal action. That is, if the addressee responds by saying "Yes I would", then the speaker is under the obligation to give him another drink. Let us say that the former realizes a 'question' and the latter an 'offer'. Given such a characterization, "Would you like another drink?" cannot possibly be both a 'question' and an 'offer' **at the same time** because it would be contradictory to say that it elicits a verbal response and **only** a verbal response and yet it also elicits a non-verbal action **at the same time**.

Obviously, Levinson has confused the **potential** functions that an utterance can perform and the **actual** function that it is performing or is taken to be performing on a given occasion. Most utterances have the potential of performing more than one function, or, to put it in another way, different illocutionary acts may have the same linguistic realisation. There is no lack of examples in the literature. In the above example, "Would you like another drink?" can be an 'offer', in fact, it often is, and it can also be a 'question'. This can be seen from the fact that an ordinary language report of the utterance as an 'offer' and a 'question' would both be "He asked if I wanted a drink." But at any one time, it is performing or taken to be performing one function. Otherwise, human communication would not be possible.

Interestingly, Leech, in claiming that the illocutionary force of an utterance is indeterminate, has made the same mistake of confusing potential and actual function. He asserts that the utterance "Sit down" could have a variable and partly indeterminate force because it might, in different circumstances, be called an 'invitation', a 'suggestion', an 'offer' and an 'order'. He argues that to impose a categorial label onto the utterance would allow no such ambivalence (see p.182). While it is true that the utterance "Sit down" can potentially realize all of the above acts, it does not follow that its illocutionary force is indeterminate and ambivalent. This is because the utterance does not occur in isolation. In a given context, the utterance is performing one of the above acts, or is treated as performing one of the above acts.

Let us take an example from Schegloff (1978) to make the point more clearly.

In the following exchange, W is the wife and H the husband. They are discussing arrangements for visiting another couple since the previous night's scheduled visit had been cancelled. Their one-and-a-half year old daughter plays on the floor.

3. [Schegloff 1978:85]
W: Why is it that WE have to go THERE.
H: Because SHE (head motioning to daughter) can go out more easily than THEIR kid can.

According to Levinson's analysis, W's utterance would be both a 'question' and a 'complaint', a 'complaint' on the part of "us" against "them"; and H's utterance would be both an answer to the 'question' and a defence of "them" against "us". And according to Leech, the illocutionary force of W's utterance would be indeterminate as to whether it is a 'question' or a 'complaint'. However, as Schegloff asserts, H treats W's utterance as a question and answers it by giving a reason.

> *Were W's utterance heard and treated as a complaint in the first place, then a quite different response to it might be in order, e.g., joining the complaint, with possibly quite different consequences for the location, and indeed the occurrence, of the visiting. (1978:85)*

Hence, an utterance is performing, or **treated as**, or interpreted as, performing one particular function at a time. At the most, an utterance can be ambiguous. But ambiguity is quite different from multi-functionality. Even in cases where the utterance is truly ambiguous, or "empirically" ambiguous, to use Schegloff's term (see Schegloff 1978), it is still interpreted as performing one function at a time. Let us look at an example that has been quoted by Levinson from Schegloff (1978). The excerpt is taken from a conversation in a radio phone-in show, A being the radio personality and B a student who "called in". B has been describing to A the difference in opinion between himself and his teacher over the morality of American foreign policy since the time of George Washington. I shall only quote part of the excerpt.

4. [Schegloff 1978:81]

1 B: HE says, governments, an' you know he keeps - he talks about governments, they sh- the thing that they sh'd do is what's right or wrong.
→ 2 A: for WHOM.
3 B: Well he says -// he-
4 A: By what STANdard
5 B: That's what - that's exactly what I mean. He s- but he says...

Utterance 2 is ambiguous between a question asking for clarification of the event that B has been giving an account of and an act of showing agreement. As can be seen from the exchanges, it was meant to be the latter but was interpreted as the former.

Notice here that even in cases where the ambiguity is empirical and not theoretical, the utterance must be **treated as** performing a single function at a time. It was interpreted as a clarification first and then when rectified, it was correctly interpreted as an act of showing agreement. As Schegloff rightly points out, utterances do not appear in practice to be confounded in ambiguity. What is being done is often quite straightforwardly available and analysable. Most theoretically conjured ambiguities never actually arise. This is because actual participants in actual conversations do not come across utterances in isolation and they do not encounter utterances in a range of scenarios, but in actual detailed single scenarios found in specific contexts. When ambiguities do arise, speakers will display their interpretation of each other's utterances through their own utterances and the 'correct'

interpretation or the interpretation which is acceptable to both will become evident, not only to the interlocutors, but to the discourse analyst as well (see ibid:87, 100).

The analysis of the utterance in lines 8-9 "I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have one more stamp, do you by any chance" involves problems of a different kind. According to Levinson's argument, the utterance would be an information question because it is responded to by "Yeah I might." which answers the question. It would also be considered as functioning as a 'pre-request' because the speaker is clearly not just asking a question, she is paving her way, as it were, to make a request. While it is true that the utterance is both a 'question' and a pre-request in this particular instance, it is not true that it is therefore multi-functional because they are different kinds of label. 'Question' is an illocutionary force label whereas 'pre-request' is a sequential label. The latter denotes the sequential location of the utterance in relation to the rest of the discourse. It is seen as a 'pre-request' in the light of the way the discourse is structured to achieve the interactional goal (see Sacks 1972a; Schegloff 1972a, 1972b; Schegloff & Sacks 1974, Edmondson 1981). Take the following piece of data for example.

5. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#2/p.1]
1 H: Do you get the TESOL Quarterly?
2 S: Yeah.
3 H: Did you get this issue?

4 S: What - month is it?
5 H: um number two, June eighty-three.
6 S: Yeah, I think I probably did.
7 H: Can I just borrow this for a day - for a day or two?
8 S: [Yeah

The interactional goal of H is to get S to lend him the TESOL Quarterly. The discourse is structured in such a way that before the 'request' is made, H checks step by step that S does have exactly what he wants. The two 'questions' in lines 1 and 3 lead up to the 'request' in line 7, which is the main purpose of the interaction. It is in this sense that the 'questions' are 'pre-requests'. By first checking that the pre-conditions for the addressee to comply obtain, the speaker has a better chance of getting the 'request' complied with.

This is a conversational strategy that is so commonly used that conventionalisation occurs, so that these strategic utterances are often recognizable as such (see Edmondson 1981). Hence, when H says "Do you get the TESOL Quarterly?", S anticipates an upcoming 'request' due to her knowledge of this conversational strategy (this will be discussed in detail in 4.5). It is extremely important, when characterising utterances, not to confuse labels of different nature.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the scepticism that Levinson and Leech have expressed over the characterisation of utterances in terms of unit acts or action-categories which are identifiable is not justified.

Utterances are characterisable because they are not multi-functional nor are they confounded in indeterminacy, although they can potentially realize more than one function and can be ambiguous at times. The source of the misconception that utterances are multi-functional and ambivalent, and hence not characterizable in unit acts, lies in the confusion between potential function and actual function, the lumping together of labels of different nature and, most seriously, in the lack of a consistent criterion for characterising utterances. The lack of a consistent criterion in turn leads to the misconception that it is not possible to delimit a set of speech act types. But as Searle points out,

> *There are not, as Wittgenstein (on one possible interpretation) and many others have claimed, an infinite or indefinite number of language games or uses of language. Rather, the illusion of limitless uses of language is engendered by an enormous unclarity about what constitutes the criteria for delimiting one language game or use of language from another. (1979:29)*

1.2.2 Sequencing Rules in Conversation

Levinson argues that the sequencing of utterances cannot be captured by rules such as those governing 'adjacency pairs' in which 'questions' are followed by 'answers', 'offers' by 'acceptances' or 'rejections', and 'greetings' by 'greetings' etc. Nor can it be captured by rules which state the expectation of a certain speech act after another speech act, like the rule-bound expectation of an object after a transitive verb in English (see p.293). He gives the following example,

6. [Levinson 1983:293]
   A: What does John do for a living?
   B: (a) Oh this and that.
      (b) He doesn't.
      (c) I've no idea.
      (d) What has that got to do with it?

He argues that A's question can be happily followed by any of the utterances from (a) to (d) and yet none of them are answers to the question: they are partial answers, rejections of the presuppositions of the question, statements of ignorance and denials of the relevance of the question.

Here, Levinson is confusing what **actually** occurs after a particular utterance, or a particular speech act, and what is **expected** to occur. A sequencing rule which states that a question expects an answer does not mean that a question will invariably be followed by an answer. But rather, what **actually** occurs will be interpreted in the light of what is **expected** to occur. As Berry points out,

> *a rule such as A predicts B is not to be taken as a claim that A always will be followed by B; it is a claim that A will always be expected to be followed by B and that whatever does follow A will be interpreted in the light of this expectation. The rule is not inviolable from the point of view of what will actually occur, but it is invariant in that the existence of the rule will always be assumed for the purpose of interpreting what occurs. (1982:38)*

This is fully illustrated by Labov & Fanshel's example in which a speaker makes a joke by refusing to apply the sequencing rule that a 'request' expects either a 'compliance' or a 'refusal'.

7. [Labov & Fanshel 1977:75]
   Would you mind taking the dust rag and dust around?
   No (Does not move).

As they point out, the very fact that such jokes can be played means that the rule **does** operate (see also Stubbs 1983:95). They assert that the joke would not be funny if the rule did not exist and was not obligatory. I would say that it would not even be a joke if the rule did not exist.

It is this kind of sequencing rule which states what is expected to occur that enables us to interpret utterances which seem to be totally unrelated to each other in terms of surface form. Take the example that Levinson gives as a counter-example to sequencing rules.

8. [Levinson 1983:293]
   A: Is John there?
   B: You can reach him at extension thirty-four sixty-two.

Levinson asserts that the above example demonstrates that, in conversation, not only is a question not neccessarily followed by an answer but also that inventive co-operative responses may be preferable to answers. But I would argue that it is precisely the sequencing rule that states that a question sets up the expectation of an answer that enables us to interpret B's utterance as a co-operative response to A's question and a version of "no".

It is also this kind of sequencing rule that enables us to see that when the expected response does not occur, it is either deliberately withheld or there is a breakdown in communication. For example,

9. [Schegloff 1972:107]
   1 A: I don't know just where the - uh - this address//is
   2 B: Well where do - which part of the town do you live.

3 A: I live at four ten east Lowden.
4 B: Well, you don't live very far from me.

A's first utterance asks for direction from B. But, as we can see, B does not provide the expected response until utterance 4. In other words, at utterance 2, the expected response is, and is interpreted as, deliberately withheld because B needs more information before he can give A directions. That a sequencing rule of this kind is operating can be supported by the fact that if B continues to withhold the expected response, A is likely to protest by saying "You haven't answered my question." As Halliday points out,

> *There is always, in language, the freedom to act untypically - but that in itself serves to confirm the reality of the concept of what is typical. (1979:226)*

Therefore, the scepticism that Levinson has expressed over the possibility of formulating sequencing rules governing the organization of conversation in speech act terms is not justified. Utterances are related to each other in a systematic way and, as Stubbs (1983) points out, discourse is analysable in terms of the syntagmatic constraints on possible sequences of utterances (see p.17). It is sequencing rules such as those stated above that account for coherence in discourse and enable us to interpret each other's utterances. The source of his scepticism lies in his confusion between what **actually** occurs and what is **expected** to occur, or, to put it in Halliday's terms, what is **untypical** and what is **typical**. As Berry points out,

The rules specify what is typical, thereby providing a basis for explanation of our recognition, interpretation and evaluation of the untypical. (1982:39)

In the above discussion, I have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve the aims of this thesis. I have pointed out that utterances are characterizable and identifiable because they are not multi-functional, nor are their illocutionary forces indeterminate. They do not occur in isolation, but rather in specific contexts. In any given context, an utterance can only be performing, or interpreted as performing, a single discourse function. I have also pointed out that utterances are characterizable also because there are sequencing rules or constraints which govern their interpretation. In Part II, I shall be looking at the existing studies which will give insights to the setting up of a descriptive framework for the characterization of utterances.

PART II SPEECH ACT THEORY, CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this section, I shall discuss three major areas of study which will give insights to the setting up of a descriptive framework for the characterisation of utterances: speech act theory, conversational analysis and discourse analysis. I shall discuss how each of them would answer the questions set out at the beginning of Part I and what insights they offer. Based on these insights, I shall then propose an overall descriptive framework which will be presented in the following chapter.

1.3 The Characterisation of Utterances and Its Criteria

1.3.1 Speech Act Theory: Utterances as Speech Acts

For a long time, philosophers had assumed that all utterances are statements which describe some state of affairs or state some facts and that they are either true or false.

Austin's work How to do things with words (1962) draws our attention to the fact that there are some utterances which fall into none of the grammatical categories, except 'statement', and yet they do not describe or report anything and are not "true or false", but rather are the doing of an action. For example, "I do" as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony; "I name this ship the

Queen Elizabeth" as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem; "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" as occurring in a will etc. He writes,

> *In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to <u>describe</u> my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. (1962:6)*

He calls these utterances performative utterances or performatives. Later in his work, he observes that in fact all utterances are performatives. In other words, in making an utterance, we are performing an action of some kind.

Hence, in (1) J's utterance in lines 8-9 and S's utterance in lines 14-17 (see p.1) will not be characterized as stating or describing something which is "true" or "false", but rather as performing a certain action. But how do we characterize what action the speakers are performing? Searle (1969), on developing Austin's notion of 'felicity', formulates a set of conditions which are necessary and sufficient for the successful and non-defective performance of an act in a given utterance. The conditions consist of the Propositional Content Condition which pertains to the content of the proposition expressed in the utterance; the Preparatory Condition which has to do with real-world prerequisites to each illocutionary act and the speaker's beliefs about these prerequisites; the Sincerity Condition which pertains to the speaker's feelings and intentions,

and finally the Essential Condition which states what the uttering of certain sentences counts as. The question to ask is: how far do these conditions characterize what the speaker is doing in making an utterance?

Let us take S's utterance in lines 14-17 for example. Our intuition tells us that S, by saying "Okay, you can have a choice. You can either have - three thirties - or you can have a one-thirty." is actually offering her a choice of two kinds of stamp. But can we identify what S is doing by checking against the felicity conditions? Apparently not. The act of 'offering' has been characterized as a conditional 'promise' in which the speaker commits himself to perform a certain course of action if it is accepted by the hearer (see Searle & Venderveken 1985). Therefore we can assume that the felicity conditions of an 'offer' would be the same as those of a 'promise' with the additional feature that the action is conditional upon the hearer's acceptance. Hence, the Propositional Content Condition of an 'offer' would be something like "in expressing the proposition P, the speaker S predicates a future act A of S upon the acceptance by the hearer H". Immediately, we come across a problem. In S's utterance, there is no mention of a future action of S at all in its propositional content. The future action can only be derived from the context. Similar problems can be found in the analysis of J's utterance in line 18 "Three thirties is fine." The

interpretation of the utterance as accepting S's 'offer' can only be derived from the discourse context, not from its propositional content. The Preparatory Condition of an 'offer' would be that "S believes H would prefer his doing A to his not doing A". However, there is no way that we can ascertain whether this condition obtains because H's preferences and S's beliefs about H's preferences are not open for inspection (see Edmondson 1981). The Sincerity Condition, "that S intends to carry out A upon acceptance by H", is hardly a characterization criterion since whether the speaker is sincere or not does not affect whether the act of 'offering' has been performed (see Searle 1969:62). The Essential Condition, "that S intends that utterance T will place him under an obligation to do A upon acceptance by H", is, as pointed out by Edmondson, merely a dictionary definition of the notion of an 'offer'.

We can see from the above discussion that the felicity conditions deal mainly with beliefs and intentions which are of interest to philosophers, but as far as the characterization of utterances in discourse is concerned, they are of little value. Felicity conditions are formulated by analyzing isolated and idealized utterances from the point of view of an omnipresent being. But, as I have pointed out before, utterances do not occur in isolation and they are hardly ever in the form of a full-blown performative formula, except when they occur in

extremely formal situations. Much of the meaning of an utterance is derived from the linguistic and extra-linguistic environment in which it occurs. Interlocutors do not have access to each other's mind and the meaning of their utterances is subjected to the here-and-now interpretation of the other party. The characterization of utterances must therefore take into consideration the linguistic and extra-linguistic environment in which they occur. This is an aspect of utterance characterization in which conversational analysis has much to offer,.

1.3.2 Conversational Analysis: Utterances in Context

Different from speech act theorists, conversational analysts do not examine idealized and isolated utterances, but utterances occurring in natural conversational data. Utterances are characterized according to their sequential location in the discourse in which they occur. The importance of this dimension in utterance characterization can be best seen in utterances which derive their character as actions entirely from placement considerations. For example, an answer to a question. Schegloff & Sacks write,

> *there do not seem to be criteria other than placement (i.e., sequential) ones that will sufficiently discriminate the status of an utterance as a statement, assertion, declarative, proposition, etc.,from its status as an answer. Finding an utterance to be an answer, to be accomplishing answering, cannot be achieved by reference to phonological, syntactic, semantic, or logical features of the utterance itself, but only by consulting its sequential placement, e.g. its placement after a question. (1973:299)*

Hence, by consulting the sequential location of J's utterance in line 18, "Three thirties is fine.", which is a placement after an 'offer', we are now able to identify it as a positive response stating one of the choices offered in the preceding utterance, hence realizing an acceptance of the 'offer'. The relation between S's and J's utterances is captured in notion of 'adjacency pair' which will be discussed in 1.5.2.

Not only do conversational analysts look at the sequential location of an utterance, but also its location in the overall structural organization of a conversation when characterizing the function of an utterance. In looking at the unit "a single conversation", Schegloff & Sacks observe that a conversation does not simply end; it is brought to a close. Therefore, preceding the 'closing section' of a conversation, there are typically utterances which signal the speaker's intention to bring the conversation to a close. They call such utterances 'pre-closing' initiations. And it is this structural organization which assigns meaning to the arrowed utterances in the following data.

10. [Schegloff & Sacks 1973:313]
B has called to invite C, but has been told C is going out to dinner.

→ B: Yeah. Well get on your clothes and get out and collect some of that free food and we'll make it some other time Judy then.
→ C: Okay then Jack.
B: Bye bye
C: Bye bye.

As Schegloff & Sacks point out, the function of B's utterance arrowed above is not to command C, despite its imperative form, but rather to initiate a closing; and C's "Okay" is not an agreement to a command to get dressed, but rather an agreement to an invitation to close the conversation. They write,

> *no analysis - grammatical, semantic, pragmatic etc - of these utterances taken singly and out of sequence, will yield their import in use, will show what co-participants might make of them and do about them. That B's utterance here accomplishes a form of closing initiation and C's accepts (sic) the closing form and not what seems to be proposed in it, turns on the placement of these utterances in the conversation. Investigations which fail to attend to such considerations are bound to be misled. (1973:313).*

Hence, the function of S's utterance in lines 14-17 (see p.1) as offering J the stamps and not giving J a piece of information, despite its declarative form, can be derived from its sequential location, a placement after an exchange in which the pre-condition of making a request for stamps is confirmed by S to obtain.

This kind of analysis made by conversational analysts looks at utterances in interaction and their observations of the sequential aspects of conversation have given us valuable insights into the function of utterances. Unfortunately, little work has been done by them on the exact characterization of the units that are sequenced (see Goffman 1981, Labov and Fanshel 1977). Units of conversation and their functions are often determined intuitively and the descriptive categories that they propose are largely idiosyncratic and ill-defined. This

can be fully illustrated by the analyses of data by Schenkein (1978) and Jefferson (1972) quoted in Hyland (1984).

11. [Schenkein 1978:69]

Mike:	we used t'have a good time around the ginny.	((Identity-rich puzzle))
Stan:	the ginny?	((pass))
Mike:	Yeah, the ginny, People'd jump innit 'n get all nice 'n cooled off, and - uh, o'course it was no place t'get caught skinny dipping since o'man Walters was church council president r' something hee heh, but we, y'know, managed t'spend part of every hot day dipping in the ginny hehh hehh heh	((solution))
Stan:	sounds like fun.	((comment))

3. [Jefferson 1972:318]

A:	If Percy goes with - Nixon I'd sure like that.	((Statement))
B:	Who?	((Misapprehension))
A:	Percy, that young fella that uh - his daughter was murdered	((Clarification))
	(1.0)	
B:	Oh yea:h. Yeah	((Terminator))

Both extracts exhibit similar sequential organization and the units that are sequenced appear to have similar functions, yet they are given completely different labels. There does not seem to be enough justification, for example, for giving the first utterance in each excerpt different labels since they both have the same function of introducing a topic. As pointed out by Hyland, in the numerous studies in conversational analysis, new categories are constantly generated, resulting in "a plethora of labels and rapidly diminishing returns on generalisability."(1984:114)

The lack of rigor in their descriptive categories undermines to a considerable extent the validity and generalizability of their description of conversational units. It does seem that conversational analysts, in emphasizing the "observable-reportable" (Garfinkel 1974), have overlooked the importance of formalization in making descriptive statements of any kind. A prerequisite to a powerful and meaningful description is that it must be replicable. This requires that the descriptive categories be clearly-defined, their criteria of recognition be consistent and explicitly stated (see Sinclair 1973). This is where the descriptions made by discourse analysts have clear advantages over those made by conversational analysts. Let us therefore turn to the studies in discourse analysis.

1.3.3 Discourse Analysis: Utterances as Discourse Acts

In discussing the studies in discourse analysis, I shall be looking mainly at the study of Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) (hereafter referred to as S & C) because it is the first attempt to produce a rigorous and comprehensive description of spoken discourse. A brief summary of their descriptive system will be useful at this point. The system is based on the notion of "linguistic structure" and is closely modelled on Halliday's Categories of the Theory of Grammar (1961). It proposes discourse as a separate level distinct from other levels,

consisting of descriptive units ordered in a hierarchical manner similar to those at the level of grammar. The units consist of act, move, exchange, transaction and lesson, with units of lower rank combining to form units of higher rank. An act is defined according to its function in the discourse and is the smallest unit or the lowest rank. A move is made up of an obligatory head and optional pre-head and post-head. An exchange is made up of three moves: initiating, responding and follow-up moves. Transaction and lesson, however, do not have identifiable structures.

In characterizing an utterance, S & C look at its discourse function. The questions that they ask are "whether it is intended to evoke a response, whether it is a response itself, whether it is intended to mark a boundary in the discourse and so on."(p.14) In other words, similar to the conversational analysts, they take into consideration the location of an utterance in the discourse structure. They write,

> *It is place in the structure of the discourse which finally determines which act a particular grammatical item is realizing.(p.29)*

Hence in characterizing S's utterance in lines 14-17, the first question that S & C would ask is where it occurs in the discourse. Take S's utterance and compare it with B's utterance in the following.

12. A: Can I borrow one of these stamps from you?
→ B: Okay, you can have a choice. You can either have - three thirties - or you can have a one-thirty.

According to S & C, there would be an important difference between S's utterance and B's utterance above. The latter is solicited whereas the former is soliciting. They have very different discourse functions. They therefore realize two different discourse acts.

How then do we decide what kind of soliciting act S's utterance realizes? How do we know whether it is an 'offer' or giving a piece of information? S & C's answer to this would be to look at the response that it expects or predicts. They propose the concept of "continuous classification" and the concept that "the meaning of an utterance is its predictive assessment of what follows."(p.120). Utterances are characterized according to the kind of response they expect. For example, an utterance which expects a linguistic response is characterized as an 'elicitation' and one that expects a non-linguistic response is characterized as a 'directive'. Based on this criterion, we can now decide that S's utterance is an 'offer' and not giving a piece of information because a positive response from J would put S under the obligation of carrying out the non-linguistic action of giving J the stamps.

What about J's utterance in lines 8-9, "I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have one more stamp, do you by any chance."? How do we characterize it? How do we decide whether J is asking a question or making a request? Searle (1979) would characterize it as an 'indirect request'.

According to S & C, however, it would be characterised as an 'elicitation' because it prospects a verbal response which informs J whether S has one more stamp or not. How then do we account for the fact that the 'elicitation' can also be responded to by a non-verbal response?

13. J: I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have another stamp, do you by any chance.
S: Here you are (+NV)
J: Thanks

According to S & C, "the *discourse value* of an item depends on what linguistic items have preceded it, what are expected to follow and **what do follow.**" (p.34, emphasis mine). In other words, J's utterance in 13 may be intended as an 'elicitation' preliminary to a 'request', as can be seen from the use of hedges like "happen" and "do you by any chance" which indicates the likelihood of an upcoming 'request'. However, as I have already pointed out before, S interprets it as a 'request' instead of waiting for the upcoming 'request'. Therefore, it is re-classified as a 'request'. In other words, its "discourse value" is a 'request'. The re-classification of the meaning of utterances happens all the time as interlocutors do not have access to each other's intentions. But in characterizing utterances, we are dealing with their moment by moment classification. In other words, on the one hand, the meaning of an utterance is its predictive assessment of what follows and on the other hand, it is subjected to the here-and-now interpretation of the

interlocutors. This kind of characterization is dynamic and looks at utterances from an interactive point of view.

Hence, while the descriptive categories proposed by speech act theorists are defined according to intentions and beliefs which are not available to the interlocutors or the discourse analysts, and those proposed by conversational analysts are largely intuitive, those proposed by S & C are clearly defined according to two dimensions: the sequential location of the utterance and the response that it expects. An 'elicitation', an 'informative' and a 'directive' can be differentiated from a 'reply', an 'acknowledge' and a 'react' on the basis of their sequential location. The former three in turn can be differentiated from each other in terms of the response they expect. An 'elicitation' expects a 'reply', an 'informative' expects an 'acknowledge' and a 'directive' expects a 'react'. The specification of what constitutes the actual "discourse value" of an utterance enables us to re-classify the meaning of an utterance as the discourse unfolds. This kind of characterization looks at utterances from a dynamic and interactive point of view and in the context of discourse. The descriptive categories are clearly defined according to their discourse function and have explicit criteria of recognition.

So far, we have been discussing the characterization of an utterance as performing a certain kind of act. This

seems to imply that a single utterance is the unit of interaction. But this is clearly not true. An utterance can be of different sizes: it varies from a word, a phrase to a clause and even several clauses. It can be one unit or more than one unit of interaction. When the latter is the case, how do we decide how many units of interaction there are? This leads us to the second question raised at the beginning of the chapter: what is the basic unit of interaction?

1.4 Unit of Interaction

1.4.1 Illocutionary Act as an Interactional Unit

According to speech act theorists, illocutionary acts are realized by a single sentence, performative or otherwise. If an illocutionary act is to be taken as an interactional unit, then we will have difficulties in characterizing utterances in naturally occurring discourse because they are often longer than a sentence. Hence, speech act theorists would have difficulties in characterizing the following utterance.

14. A: Why are you standing? Do sit down.

There are two sentences here, an interrogative and an imperative. But how many speech acts are there? One or two? If there are two, presumably an 'elicitation' and an 'invitation' to sit down, is the addressee supposed to respond to both? If there is only one, which is it? Our intuition tells us that the illocutionary force of the

entire utterance is an 'invitation' to sit down and the addressee's response to the 'invitation' is obligatory. If the addressee responds by giving a reason for standing, his response will be interpreted as a response to the 'invitation' and not just the 'elicitation'. For example,

15. A: Why are you standing? Do sit down.
    B: Well, I've been sitting all day.

B's response will be interpreted as declining the 'invitation'. This is supported by the fact that A cannot then challenge B for having responded merely to the 'elicitation' and not the 'invitation'. If B responds by sitting down, A cannot and will not challenge B for not responding to his 'elicitation'. If this is the case, then how do we account for "Why are you standing?"?

Similarly, speech act theorists would have difficulties in characterizing S's utterance in lines 14-17, "Okay, you can have a choice. You can either have - three thirties - or you can have a one-thirty." There are two sentences here, but how many acts are there? One or two. According to the speech act theorists, S would be performing two acts of 'offering', one realized by "Okay, you can have a choice" and the other by "You can either have - three thirties- or you can have a one-thirty." But this is clearly counter-intuitive.

1.4.2 'Turn' as an Interactional Unit

Sacks et al (1974) suggest the notion of 'turn' as an interactional unit. In their formulation of the turn-taking system in conversation, Sacks et al (1974) state that a conversation is organized in terms of one speaker having one turn-at-talk at a time. There may be overlaps of talk at times, but the basic form of organization is one turn-at-talk followed by another. A turn-at-talk is referred to as a 'turn constructional unit' and the unit-type contained in it may be of different sizes; it may be a single word, a sentence, a clause or a phrase. A 'turn constructional unit' may contain one such unit-type or more than one. The latter happens when, at the completion of one unit-type, none of the interlocutors self-select and the current speaker continues. In other words, the boundary of a 'turn-constructional unit' is marked by a change of speaker. Sacks et al assert that while there is a minimal turn size, there is no maximum turn size. Hence the above utterance "Why are you standing? Do sit down." would be considered a 'turn'. This is a more satisfactory description of an interactional unit than a single sentence illocutionary act. It is able to account for the function of utterances consisting of more than a single sentence. However, it is not without problems, as has been noted by many (see for example Goffman 1977, Goodwin 1981).

Firstly, consider S's utterance in line 4, "Come in." and J's utterance in lines 6-9, "I didn't come in because it was so noisy I couldn't hear if anyone said come in. I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have one more stamp, do you by any chance." Both utterances would be considered by Sacks et al to be one interactional unit. However, it is obvious that while in the former, J is doing one thing, in the latter, J is doing two different things: the first being an explanation of why she knocked twice and the second being what she has come to S's office for. There is an obvious boundary at line 8. As Goffman points out,

> *the talk during an entire turn (which) can't be used ...for, as suggested, one of the main patterns for chaining rounds is the one in which whoever answers a question goes on from there to provide the next question in the series, thereby consolidating during one turn at talk two relevantly different doings. (1981:23)*

Secondly, talk during two different turns can function as one interactional unit. It is not uncommon for interlocutors to step in and finish off the current speaker's sentence. An interlocutor may also step in, finish off the current speaker's sentence and then supply a response. When this happens, we have in one turn-at-talk, two different parties' contribution to the dialogue (see Goffman 1981:24). Lines 27-29 in 16 below, which occurred in the same conversation as (1) exemplify the former and lines 29-30 exemplify the latter.

16. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#2]
27 S: I'd love to get rid of those thirties
28 because
[

29 J: because they're no good any more.
30 Yeah.

Thirdly, according to Sacks et al, if a silence occurs at the completion of a 'turn constructional unit', the same speaker who was talking before the silence may continue. The talk before and after the silence would be considered one turn at talk and the silence would be an intra-turn silence. Hence, lines 13-17 in (1) would be considered one turn-at-talk and hence one unit of interaction.

1. 13 S: I have a one-thirty and I have thirties
14 ((pause)) Okay, you can have a choice.
15 You can either have - three thirties - or=
[
16 J: uhuh
17 S: =you can have a one-thirty.

But this is not convincing. Line 13 is replying to the preceding question and lines 14-17 is offering J a choice of stamps. There are clearly two units of interaction.

Fourthly, the question of how we account for the two parts in the utterance in 14 or the three parts in lines 13-17 in (1), "Okay" being one part, "you can have a choice" and "you can either have - three thirties or you can have a one-thirty." being the other two, remains unanswered.

1.4.3 'Move' as an Interactional Unit

S & C propose the concept of 'move' as a minimal interactional unit and that a 'move' may consist of one or more than one act. Their proposal does seem to be able to

solve the problems thrown up by the proposed analyses of both the conversational analysts and speech act theorists.

S & C first proposed 'utterance', which is similar to 'turn', as a minimal interactional unit. It is the discovery of the possibility of a boundary existing within an utterance that led them to abandon this proposal. In examining the following piece of data, they observed that an obvious boundary occurs in the middle of the teacher's second utterance.

17. [S & C 1975:21]
Teacher: Can you tell me why do you eat all that food? Yes.
Pupil : To keep you strong.
→ Teacher: To keep you strong. Yes. To keep you strong.
Why do you want to be strong?

They therefore propose that an utterance, or 'turn', can consist of more than one interactional unit. Each unit is called a 'move'. Each 'move' either solicits a response or responds to the preceding 'move'. Given this description, we will be able to characterize S's turn at talk in lines 13-17 in (1). Line 13 "I have a one-thirty and I have thirties" is part of a 'move' which responds to the preceding 'move'[1] and lines 14-17 is another 'move' which solicits a response.

According to S & C, a 'move' may be made up of a single act, but it may also be made up of more than one act. When the latter happens, one of the acts will be the obligatory head act carrying the illocutionary force of the entire 'move' and the rest will be the optional pre-head or post-

head acts depending on whether they precede or follow the head-act. The example that Coulthard & Montgomery give is:

18. [Coulthard & Montgomery 1981:13]
T: Q1 and when you are working, what are you using apart from you muscles?
Q2 What does the food give you?

They assert that there are two questions but one 'elicitation' to which the pupil is expected to respond. The first question is "pushed down" or "edited" and replaced by the second question. The first question is named a 'starter' whose function is "to provide information about or direct attention to or thought towards an area in order to make a correct response to the initiation more likely."(S & C 1975:40). The illocutionary acts in the speech act literature are, in S & C's terms, head acts of a 'move'.

Given this description of 'move' structure, we will be able to characterize S's utterance in line 4 "Come in" as a one-act move and her utterance in lines 13-17 as a move consisting of two pre-head acts and one head act. "Okay" will be a a 'marker', "you can have a choice" will be a 'starter', both of which are pre-heads, and "you can either have - three thirties or you can have a one-thirty" will be the head realized by an 'offer' of a choice of two kinds of stamps. We will also be able to characterize the utterance "Why are you standing? Do sit down." as a 'move' consisting of two acts: the first being a pre-head realized by a 'starter' and the second being a head

realized by an invitation to sit down, which is the illocutionary force of the entire utterance.

The utterances that we have been examining so far are mainly soliciting. Let us now turn to utterances which are solicited. The third question that I have raised at the beginning of the chapter is what are the sequential constraints or structural mechanisms which enable us to interpret utterances which we intuitively know are responding to the preceding utterance?

1.5 Sequential Constraints and the Interpretation of Utterances

1.5.1 Gricean Maxims

Grice (1975) accounts for utterance relation and utterance interpretation by formulating a general principle of conversation which participants are expected to observe - the Co-operative Principle:

> *Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged. (p.45)*

He further proposes four maxims which participants are also expected to observe: the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner (see ibid:45-6). He asserts that it is the Co-operative Principle and the maxims that enable us to interpret B's utterance in the following:

19. [Grice 1975:51]
A: I am out of petrol.
B: There is a garage round the corner.

He argues that B would be infringing the Maxim of Relevance unless he thinks that the garage is open and has petrol to sell, and therefore he is implicating that the garage is or may be open. Hence, the implicature of B's utterance is worked out by the assumption that the Co-operative Principle and the maxims are observed. He also asserts that a speaker may also flout a Maxim. On the assumption that he is observing the overall Co-operative Principle, the flouting of a maxim "characteristically give(s) rise to a conversational implicature"(p.49).

Hence, J's utterance in line 18, "Three thirties is fine." is interpretable as a relevant response to S's utterance in lines 14-17, "Okay, you can have a choice. You can either have - three thirties - or you can have a one-thirty." according to the Co-operative Principle and the maxims: that J is being co-operative and her utterance is relevant to the purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged.

The Co-operative Principle and the maxims are general guiding principles of conversation. While they explain to a certain extent the coherence between utterances, even when they appear to be totally unconnected, they do not explain how utterances are related. For example, both S's utterance in line 10 "I might. Yeah" and J's utterance in line 18, "Three thirties is fine." are, according to the Co-operative Principle and the maxims, responding to the

preceding utterance. But they are clearly related to the preceding utterance in different ways. S's utterance is a reply to a 'question' whereas J's utterance is an acceptance of an 'offer'. There is no way we can differentiate between the nature of these two responding utterances simply by examining whether the maxims are observed or flouted. In order to be able to characterize them, we need some rules or mechanisms which state the constraints governing the sequencing of acts in discourse. The notion of 'adjacency pair' proposed by Schegloff & Sacks (1973) captures to a considerable extent the sequential constraints governing the organization of conversation and is a powerful mechanism for interpreting and characterizing utterances.

1.5.2 Adjacency Pairs

Schegloff & Sacks (1973) characterize 'adjacency pairs' as follows:

Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are:

> i) adjacent.
> ii) produced by different speakers.
> iii) ordered as first part and second part.
> iv) typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second (or a range of second parts) - e.g. offers require acceptances or rejections, greetings require greetings and so on. (quoted from Levinson 1983:304).

The basic rule of 'adjacency pair' operation is as follows:

Given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type of which the first is recognizably a member.(Schegloff & Sacks ibid:296)

Hence, according to Schegloff & Sacks, utterances are related to form a 'pair-type' so that a particular first pair part requires a particular second pair part, or a range of second pair parts.

Given the notion of 'adjacency pair', we are now able to characterize S's utterance in line 10 in (1), "I might. Yeah" as a 'reply' because it is a second pair part to J's 'question' in lines 8-9, "I just wanted to ask you if you happen to have one more stamp, do you by any chance"; we are also able to characterize J's positive response in line 18 "Three thirties is fine." as an 'acceptance' of an 'offer' because it is a second pair part to S's 'offer' in lines 14-17.

The notion of 'adjacency pair' not only enables us to see how utterances are related to each other but also enables us to distinguish between utterances which have identical surface structures but yet very different functions or vice versa. For example,

20a. → A: Did you get the papers?
B: Here you are.

20b. → A: Did you get the papers?
B: Yes, thank you.

21a. → X: What can I offer you?
Y: Tea please.

21b. → X: Would you like a drink of something?
Y: Tea please.

In the first two exchanges, we can distinguish between A's two utterances which have identical surface structure by looking at the pair-type to which they belong. The first belongs to a 'request-comply' pair-type whereas the second belongs to a 'question-answer' pair-type. In the last two exchanges, we are able to tell that both of X's utterances have the same function despite their different surface forms, because they are the first part of the same pair-type: 'offer'. Therefore, despite the fact that some of the conditions of the adjacency formula and the rules governing its use are too strongly stated, for example, the second pair part may not be adjacent to the first pair part and both pair parts may be produced by the same speaker etc, the notion of 'adjacency pair' does capture the structural relationship between utterances.

Levinson (1983), however, argues against the descriptive power of the notion of 'adjacency pairs', as I have mentioned before. He asserts that there is a large number of acceptable seconds to a first pair part and that this undermines the structural significance of the concept of adjacency pair. He writes,

> *Unless for any given first part there is a small or at least limited set of seconds, the concept will cease, it seems, to describe the tight organization in conversation that is its principal attraction. (p.307)*

Let us examine closely his counter-example which has been quoted above.

22. [Levinson 1983:293,307]
    A: What does John do for a living.
    B: (a) Oh this and that.

(b) He doesn't.
(c) I've no idea.
(d) What's that got to do with it.?
(e) Better ask John.

All of the utterances in (a) to (e) are considered by Levinson to be acceptable seconds. This means that not only an answer to the question is an acceptable second, but also protestations of ignorance, 're-routes' like (e) (see p.293), refusals to provide an answer, challenges to the presupposition or sincerity of the question etc (see p.307). He concludes that while responses to a first pair part may be restricted, they do not constitute a small set.

The validity of Levinson's criticism hinges on what constitutes an acceptable second. From the above example, it is apparent that Levinson takes whatever follows a first pair-part, is related to it, and which is not the beginning of an insertion sequence prior to an answer to be an acceptable second. This is clearly different from Schegloff & Sacks' understanding of a second pair part. According to Schegloff & Sacks, a second pair part is not only an utterance which is related to the first pair part but also is related to it to form a **pair type**. They write,

> *That relatedness is partially the product of the operation of typology in the speaker's production of the sequences. ...A given sequence will thus be composed of an utterance that is a first pair part produced by one speaker directly followed by a different speaker of an utterance which is (a) a second pair part, and (b) is from the **same pair type** as the first utterance in the sequence is a member of." (p.296) (emphasis mine).*

In other words, unless the utterance following the first pair part forms a 'pair type' with the latter, it is not a second pair part. Question and answer form a 'pair type'; hence anything which is not an answer is not a second pair part. Of course what constitutes an answer is controversial but we shall not go into that here. The description of question and answer as a pair type is a powerful one, not only because this is a frequently observed pattern of interaction, but, more importantly, because it captures the basic motivation for human interaction. As Davis (1980) points out, when we say something, we do not just want to be understood, we want to achieve certain effects. We ask questions to elicit answers, we make requests to get others to do our biddings etc. We do not ask questions and expect them to be re-routed, or the presupposition or sincerity of the question to be challenged. It certainly does not make sense to say that question and re-routing, or question and challenge form a 'pair type'. Seen in this light, some of the utterances given in 22 above are in fact **not** second pair parts, although they may be possible next utterances, that is, utterances which actually occur (the concept of 'possible next utterance' will be expounded in Chapter 7). Here, as I have pointed before, Levinson is confusing what is expected to occur with what actually occurs. The number of second pair parts therefore **is** limited and the

structural significance of the notion of 'adjacency pair' is retained.

While 'adjacency pairs' is a powerful description of discourse sequencing, it must be pointed out that it has its inadequacies. Consider the following two excerpts (which are extracts from the same conversation as 1) according to 'adjacency pairs'.

23. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#2]

27	S:	I'd love to get rid of those thirties	
28		because	(1st pair part)
		[	
29	J:	because they're no good any more.	
30		Yeah.	(2nd pair part)
31	S:	Yeah.	(?)

24. [ibid]

42	S:	I think you better just keep it because	
43		I don't have any change anyway.	(1st pair part)
44	J:	Well, next time I'm in the money as far	
45		as stamps are concerned.	(2nd pair part)
46	S:	((laughs))	(?)

In both excerpts, there are three parts which are coherent and they form a discourse or conversational unit. If we analyze them according to 'adjacency pair', we would have difficulties in characterizing S's utterance in line 31 (in 23). It follows a second pair part and yet it is not a first pair part because it does not invite a second pair part. Unless it is seen as related to the second pair part, it would be impossible to characterize or interpret what the utterance is doing.

In 24, S's laugh is clearly a form of non-verbal acknowledgement of the preceding utterance. However, if we were to analyze it in terms of 'adjacency pair', we would

not be able to account for S's non-verbal contribution to the discourse.

From the above analysis, we can see that although 'adjacency pair' enables us to characterize and interpret a large number of utterances in conversation, there are some which its fails to characterize. An alternative description has been proposed by discourse analysts to account for the sequential constraints in discourse - the concept of a 'three part exchange', which I shall now discuss.

1.5.3 Exchange Structure

S & C observe that a sequencing pattern that is recurrently displayed in classroom discourse is that of the teacher asking a question followed by an answer from the pupil, which in turn is followed by an evaluation from the teacher. The reason for the recurrence of this pattern is obvious. As S & C point out,

> *A special feature of the classroom situation is that a number of individuals have (been) gathered together for the specific purpose of learning something. They answer questions and follow instructions and they need to know whether they are performing adequately. A teacher rarely asks a question because he wants to know the answer; he asks a question because he wants to know whether a pupil knows the answer. (pp.36-37).*

Therefore S & C propose that a typical exchange consists of three parts: an 'initiation', a 'response' and a 'feedback'. The moves which occur in these three parts are defined in terms of their function in the discourse: moves in the initiation slot cause others to participate in the

exchange, hence they predict the occurrence of a response; moves in the response slot conform to the constraints and fulfil the prediction of the preceding move; and moves in the feedback slot are evaluative of what comes in the second slot. The labels for these moves are later revised to 'initiating', 'responding' and 'follow-up' moves (see Coulthard & Montgomery 1981). An exchange which consists of two parts is perceived as the marked form in which the third part is withheld for strategic reasons.

The proposal of exchange structure captures an important aspect of discourse organization: that there is a structural relationship or a sequential constraint between the three elements of an exchange. This is a powerful description because it not only accounts for coherence, or the lack of it, in discourse, but also enables us to interpret utterances which seem to be totally unrelated to each other. As Coulthard & Brazil (1981) point out,

> *The powerful structural relationship between I (initation) and R (response) means that any move occurring in the I slot will be heard as setting up a prediction that there will be an appropriate move in the R slot. The result is the speaker will make every effort to hear what follows his initiation as an appropriate response, and only in the last resort wil he admit that it may be an unrelated new initiation. (p.100)*

S & C's proposal of an exchange as consisting of three parts has been considered classroom-specific and of little generalisability by other discourse analysts who suggest that exchanges in social discourse typically consist of two parts (see for example Burton 1980, Stubbs 1981). But

this is not true: three part exchanges are by no means uncommon in social discourse (see examples 23 and 24; see also Berry 1981). Although the acts realizing each element of structure of a social exchange may be different from those realizing each element of structure of a classroom exchange, the basic structure of these exchanges is the same. As Sinclair (1980) asserts, a three part exchange is a primary structure for interactive discourse in general (see also Goffman 1981:48).

Given the exchange structure proposed by S & C, we are now able to account for utterances which the notion of 'adjacency pair' fails to do so. S's utterance in 23, "Yeah." and her non-verbal contribution in 24, ((laughs)), will be characterized as the third part of an exchange, a 'follow-up move' in which S provides feedback to the preceding interaction.

How then do we account for the fact that there are exchanges which consists of only two parts and the third part is **not** withheld, like the following:

25. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.7]
K: but I mean you have decisions, such high level decisions like for couple hundred dollars.
X: That's pathetic, frankly.

I suggest that exchanges are best perceived as **potentially** three part. In some exchanges, a third part is obligatory whereas in others, it is not. In the former, when the third part is absent, it is deliberately withheld for

strategic reasons (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8).

Indeed, it is much more satisfactory to consider the discourse as organized in **potentially** three-part exchanges, with the third part withheld at times for strategic reasons than to consider it as organized in two part exchanges or 'adjacency pairs', leaving the utterance following the second part unaccounted for. Take the following excerpt (which is a continuation of (1)) for example.

```
26. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#2]
 I  8  J: I just want to ask you if you happen to
    9     have one more stamp, do you by any chance
 R  10 S: I might, yeah.
                  [
{I} 11 J:           'cos I'm totally unorganized and
    12    have
    13 S: I have a one-thirty and I have thirties
 I  14    ((pause)) Okay, you can have a choice,
    15    you can either have - three thirties - or you=
                                                  [
<R> 16 J:                                          uhuh
    17 S: =can have a one-thirty.
 R  18 J: Three thirties is fine.
 I  19    That's only ninety cents?
{R} 20 S: Well, that -
 R  21 J: No, oh that's not enough, right.
 I  22 S: Or you can have four thirties, if you're
    23    down with twenty.
                     [
 R  24 J:             I'm down with twenty, okay, thanks.
    25    ((pause)) ((laugh)) I that's what I need
                               [
 F  26 S:                      That's alright.

N.B. I=Initiating Move R=Responding Move. F=Follow-up Move.
     { } attempted move  < > interpolated move
```

The framework provided by S & C enables us to account for the discourse structure exhibited. The entire excerpt

constitutes a sequence in which the business of J's borrowing a stamp from S is completed[2]. Leaving aside the exchange which is constructed by the same speaker J (lines 19 and 21), the first two exchanges consist of only two parts because the business is still under negotiation. The absence of a third part is an indication that the business is not completed yet. It is only when it is completed that the third part of an exchange is produced (again see Chapter 8 for a detailed discussion).

Coulthard et al (1981), in observing the occurrence of a fourth utterance following a 'Follow-up Move', which is clearly not a new 'Initiating Move', modify the exchange structure to allow a repetition of the 'Follow-up' component. For example,

27. [Coulthard et al 1981:19]
I D: but it's only the last three months that its been making you feel ill.
R P: ill with it yes
F D: yes yes
F P: yes doctor

Hence, an exchange consists of potentially three elements and a theoretically infinite repetition of the 'Follow-up Move'. However, as Coulthard et al point out, exchanges which have more than three 'Follow-up Moves' seldom occur.

We can see from the above discussion that a potentially three-part exchange with an optional fourth or fifth part is a more powerful description than a two part exchange or an 'adjacency pair' because it not only captures the structural relationship between utterances or

illocutionary acts, but also accounts for discourse organization. Moreover, a three part exchange allows us to encompass an 'adjacency pair' as well.

The notion of an exchange and its elements of structure are formulated on the basis of classroom discourse data. Because classroom discourse is highly structured, consisting mainly of teacher elicitation, pupil response and teacher feedback, the description of the relation of the elements of an exchange is not delicate enough to account for the various ways in which the relations are realized. For example, acts in the 'responding move' may be related to the same 'initiating move' in different ways. A response to an 'offer' can be a positive one or a negative one. Although they are both responses, their status is different and their different status is reflected in the way they are realized. The notion of 'preference organization' proposed by conversational analysts enables us to differentiate between them.

1.5.4 Preference Organization

Pomerantz (1984) points out that not all responding utterances are of equal status; some are "preferred" and others "dispreferred". Levinson (1983) asserts that the notion of "preference" is not a psychological claim about the speaker's or hearer's desires, but is a label for a structural phenomenon close to the linguistic concept of markedness, especially used in morphology. He draws an

analogy between categories in morphology and responding utterances. In the former, unmarked categories tend to have less morphological material than marked categories and they are more likely to exhibit morphological irregularity. By the same token, "preferred" seconds to first pair parts have less material than "dispreferred" seconds. By contrast, "dispreferred" seconds not only have more material, but also have much in common among themselves, such as the component of delays and parallel kinds of complexity. The following examples that Levinson quotes from Atkinson & Drew (1979) will make this clear.

28. [Atkinson & Drew 1979:58]
    A: Why don't you come up and *see* me some//times
  → B: I would like to.

29. [Atkinson & Drew 1979:58]
    A: Uh if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of *co*ffee
  → B: hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you, I don't think I can make it this morning. .hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and-and uh I have to stay near the phone.

Levinson observes that in 28, the acceptance of an invitation is simple and given without delay. By contrast, the refusal of an invitation in 29 contains features of delay (hehh, .hh, uhm), the use of the particle "Well", mitigated refusal ("I don't think I can") and an explanation of the refusal. Levinson suggests that the difference in the realizations of an acceptance and a refusal is evidence for distinguishing the former as

"preferred" second from the latter as "dispreferred" second.

This notion of "preferred organization" gives us linguistic evidence for differentiating different types of responding utterances. Hence, by looking at the linguistic realizations of S's response in line 11 in (1), "I might. Yeah." and J's response in line 18 "Three thirties is fine.", we are able to tell that both of them are "preferred" responses as they are given immediately, without hesitation or pause or fillers etc.

The usefulness of this notion in helping us decide whether a response is "preferred" or not can be best seen in utterances responding to assessments which involve value judgment of some kind.

Consider the following examples provided by Pomerantz.

30. [Pomerantz 1984:65]
A: Isn't he cute
→ B: O::h he::s a::DORable

31. [Pomerantz 1984:72]
R: ...you've really both basically honestly gone your own ways.
→ D: Essentially, except we've hadda good relationship et home.

The first responding utterance, which agrees with the preceding assessment, is straightforward and given without delay. The second one, which disagrees with the preceding assessment, is prefaced with "Essentially" and qualified with "except" similar to the kind of "yes but" format which typically realizes a disagreement. The first one is

therefore a "preferred" second whereas the second one is a "dispreferred" second (see Levinson 1985:338).

Consider now the following examples and compare them with 30 and 31.

32. [Pomerantz 1975:95]
A: Oh it was just beautiful.
→ B: Well, thank you. Uh I thought it was quite nice, And uh

33. [Pomerantz 1975:99]
A: Good shot.
→ B: Not very solid though.

The first responding utterance agrees with the preceding assessment and yet it contains the features of a "dispreferred" second. By contrast, the second responding utterance disagrees with the assessment and yet its realization is typical of a "preferred" second. This suggests to us that for this particular type of assessment, which is a positive assessment directed towards the addressee commonly referred to as 'compliments', the "preferred" response is disagreement and the dispreferred response is agreement (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion).

This notion of 'preference organization' is very useful when characterizing responding utterances.

In the above discussion, I have explored the ways in which an utterance is characterized as performing one act or more, and the sequential constraints governing discourse organization. I have also discussed the criteria

for identification. I have pointed out that a prerequisite to a meaningful and powerful description is that the descriptive categories must be clearly defined and have explicit criteria for recognition. There are two other prerequisites to a meaningful and powerful description: the number of descriptive categories must be finite and comprehensive. As Sinclair (1973) points out, unless the descriptive system is finite, one is saying nothing at all, but merely creating the illusion of classification. In other words, the number of descriptive categories must be limited, constituting a finite set, and they should be able to account for all the data. This then leads us to the last question raised at the beginning of the chapter: how do we go about delimiting a set of descriptive categories, to which we shall now turn.

1.6 Taxonomies of Acts

1.6.1 Austin's and Searle's Taxonomies

Let us start by looking at the two most influential taxonomies proposed by speech act theorists. Both Austin and Searle set up a taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Their taxonomies demonstrate that there are not limitless uses of language, as Searle points out, or an infinite number of speech acts, each completely different from another, but rather that there are a limited number of basic things that we do with language and hence a limited number of basic categories of illocutionary acts. As Stubbs (1983)

asserts, an unordered list of functions of language is artificial because some functions are more basic than others. He points out that to inform and to enjoin someone to do something are so basic that it is difficult to imagine a language which is not used to perform these functions (see p.6)

Austin proposes five classes of illocutionary acts:

1. 'Verdictives', which are typified by the giving of a verdict by a jury, arbitrator or umpire. Some examples of Verdictives are 'assess', 'rank', 'estimate', 'rule'.

2. 'Exercitives', which are the exercising of powers, rights or influence. Some examples are 'appointing', 'ordering', 'advising', 'warning'.

3. 'Commissives', which are typified by promising or otherwise undertaking. They include acts like promise which commits us to do something, and acts like 'declarations' or 'announcements' of intention.

4. 'Behabitives', which have to do with attitudes and social behaviour. For example, 'apologizing', 'congratulating', 'condoling'.

5. 'Expositives', which make plain how utterances fit into a course of argument, how we are using words. For example, 'I reply', 'I argue', 'I concede', 'I postulate'.

Austin's taxonomy points the way to finding systematicity out of what seems to be a vast sea of illocutionary acts. However, as Searle points out, it is by no means a satisfactory taxonomy becuase it is a

classification of illocutionary verbs and not illocutionary acts. He writes,

> *Austin seems to assume that a classification of different verbs is eo ipso a classification of different kinds of illocutionary acts, that any non-synonymous verbs must mark different illocutionary acts. (1979:9)*

He asserts that the verb 'announce' for example, which Austin classifies as an 'Exercitive', is in fact a way of performing an illocutionary act, such as 'announcing orders, promises' etc rather than an act in itself. He further points out that the most serious weakness of Austin's taxonomy is the lack of a clear or consistent principle or set of principles on the basis of which the taxonomy is set up. This, together with the confusion between illocutionary verbs and illocutionary acts, results in not only a great deal of overlap but also a great deal of heterogeneity within some of the categories.

Searle, therefore, proposes an alternative taxonomy based mainly on the criteria of illocutionary point, direction of fit and expressed sincerity condition. He proposes five basic categories of illocutionary acts:

1. 'Assertives'. The point or purpose of the members of this class is to commit the speaker in varying degrees to the truth of the expressed proposition; they are all assessable on the dimension of assessment which includes true and false. The direction of fit is words-to-world and the psychological state expressed is "belief".

2. 'Directives'. The illocutionary point of members of this class is an attempt to get the hearer to do something. They may be modest attempts such as inviting the hearer to do something or insisting that the hearer do it. The direction of fit is world-to-words and the sincerity condition is want or wish or desire. Some members of this class are 'ask', 'order', 'request','beg', 'invite'.

3. 'Commissives'. The illocutionary point of this class is to commit the speaker in varying degrees to some future course of action. The direction of fit is world-to-words and the sincerity condition is intention.

4. 'Expressives'. The illocutionary point of this class is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about the state of affairs in the expressed proposition. There is no direction of fit because the speaker is neither trying to get the world to match the words nor the words to match the world, but rather the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed. The sincerity condition in this class is not specified. Searle asserts that there is a range of psychological states expressed in the performance of illocutionary acts in this class. Some examples are 'apologize', 'condole', 'deplore' and 'welcome'.

5. 'Declarations'. The illocutionary point of this class is to bring about some alterations in the status or condition of the referred to object(s) solely by virtue of

the successful performance of the declaration. The direction of fit is both world-to-words and words-to-world and there is no sincerity condition. Examples of members of this class are utterances like "I resign", "You're fired", "Your're guilty".

Searle's taxonomy is definitely an improvement on Austin's. The categories are more clearly defined and the classification is based on consistent criteria (whether we agree with these criteria is another matter). The latter is essential if classification of any kind is to be meaningful. Using the criterion of illocutionary point, Searle is able to separate out illocutionary verbs which denote an illocutionary act and those which mark other features of an illocutionary act, or those which denote more than one category of illocutionary act. For example, the verb 'advise' can denote an assertive or a directive: "I advise you to leave" is a directive whereas "Passengers are hereby advised that the train will be late." is an assertive. This kind of classification brings us closer to the understanding of the nature of utterances for the focus is, or is claimed to be, on what is actually involved when an utterance is made, and not the language that is used to describe it. As Searle points out, "Differences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide, but by no means a sure guide, to differences in illocutionary acts." (1979:2)

Searle further proposes that illocutionary acts can be performed indirectly. The utterance "Can you reach the salt?" is a nonliteral primary illocutionary act of 'request' performed by way of performing a literal secondary illocutionary act of a 'question'.

Let us therefore apply Searle's taxonomy and his concept of "indirect speech act" to the conversation in (1).

(NB. ? means that none of the categories can characterize the function of the particular utterance. A category label with a question mark means that the characterization is dubious.)

1 J: (knock)		?
2 S: Come in.		Directive?
3 J: (knock)		?
4 S: Come in.		Directive?
5 J: (enters)		?
6 I didn't come in because it was so noisy		Assertive
7 I couldn't hear if anyone said come in.		
8 I just wanted to ask you if you happen to		Directive?
9 have one more stamp, do you by any chance		
10 S: I might. Yeah.		?
11 J: ['cos I'm totally unorganized and		
12 J: have -		
13 S: I have a one-thirty and I have thirties		
14 ((pause)) Okay, you can have a choice.		
15 You can either have - three thirties - or=		Commissive
16 J: [uhuh		
17 S: =you can have a one-thirty.		
18 J: Three thirties is fine.		?

From the above analysis, we can see that Searle's taxonomy enables us to distinguish between those acts whose function is to get the addressee to do something and those whose function is to express the speaker's belief in something being the case. For example, the utterances in lines 2 and 4 are basically different from the utterance

in lines 6-7. It also distinguishes between those which attempt to get the addressee to do something and those in which the speaker commits himself to do something. For example, lines 2 and 4, and lines 14-17. However, there are problems.

Firstly, J's utterance in lines 8-9 would be characterized as a Directive, specifically an 'indirect request' performed by way of a secondary illocutionary act of 'asking a question'. However, given the context, it is difficult to see how utterances can be characterized according to his schema without contradiction. If the above utterance satisfies the Preparatory and Sincerity Condition of a 'question', which means that J does not know and wants to know if S has one more stamp, then it cannot possibly satisfy the Preparatory Condition of a 'request', which is, that S is able to give her a stamp and J believes that S is able to give her a stamp. In other words, it cannot possibly be performing a 'request' **by way of** performing a 'question' (see Chapter 4:4.5).

Secondly, there is no category to account for the non-verbal action in lines 1 and 3, which are contributing units of the discourse. If we characterize them as contributing units, then the nature of the Directives in lines 2 and 4 is different from that in lines 8-9. While the former is responding to the preceding non-verbal unit, hence solicited, the latter is not; it is soliciting. Thirdly, there is no category to account for responses,

verbal and non-verbal. For example, lines 5, 10, 13 and 18. Surely, if the taxonomy is set out to classify the basic things that we do with language, then one of the basic things is to respond.

The problems thrown up by the application of Searle's taxonomy to conversation arise from the fact that the taxonomy is not based on the characterization of utterances in interaction. As Edmondson (1981) points out, what Searle classifies are not units of conversational behaviour but rather concepts evoked by a set of lexical items in English, the illocutionary verbs. This is further supported by the fact that he uses the performative as the canonical form of each illocution and as the basis of his classification (see also Holdcroft 1978). It is ironic that Searle makes the same mistake that he criticizes Austin for. Therefore, although Searle's taxonomy has given us valuable insights into how utterances can be classified, it is basically inadequate in handling utterances occurring in natural discourse. Let us therefore turn to a taxonomy which is set up on the basis of an analysis of utterances in discourse - that proposed by S & C.

1.6.2 Sinclair and Coulthard's Classes of Discourse Acts

Based on the concept of 'class' proposed by Halliday (1964), S & C have identified twenty-two classes of acts

to account for all the utterances in their data. Halliday defines 'class' as follows,

> *To one place in structure corresponds one occurrence of the unit next below, and at each element operates one grouping of members of the unit next below. This means that there will be certain grouping of members of each unit identified by restriction on their operation in structure. The fact that it is not true that anything can go anywhere in the structure above itself is another aspect of linguistic patterning, and the category set up to account for it is the 'class'. (1976:64)*

Hence, among the twenty-two classes of acts, there are those which realize the head of an Initiating Move, 'elicitation', 'directive' and 'informative', 'check'. The first three are the major ones which, according to S & C, can probably be found in all types of discourse. There are those which realize the head if a Responding Move, such as 'reply', 'acknowledge' and 'react' and those which realize the head of a Follow-up Move, such as 'accept' and 'evaluate'. Others are subordinate to the head, that is, they realize pre-heads or post-heads, such as 'starter', 'comment', 'prompt' and 'clue'. Still others mark the boundaries of the discourse, for example, 'marker' and 'statement' and 'conclusion'. Acts occurring at the same place in the discourse structure are further distinguished from each other according to their predictive assessment of what follows. Hence an 'elicitation' is differentiated from a 'directive' by the fact that it predicts a verbal response whereas the latter predicts a non-verbal response.

This is a taxonomy in which, for the first time, the structural location of an act is taken as a criterion of classification, a criterion which cannot be ignored by any taxonomy which is set up to account for utterances in interaction. However, it would be even more satisfactory if the twenty-two classes of acts are grouped into three classes at primary delicacy: those realizing the Initiating Move constitutes a class, those realizing the Responding Move and the Follow-up constitute two other classes. Each of twenty-two acts would then be a subclass of these three primary classes.

S & C specify that their descriptive system is intended to handle classroom discourse only. However, it would be useful to apply their descriptive categories to (1) and see where it succeeds in accounting for the discourse and where it fails.

1 J: ((knock))		?
2 S: Come in.		directive?
3 J: ((knock))		?
4 S: Come in.		directive?
5 J: ((enters))		react?
6 J: I didn't come in because it was so noisy		informative
7 I couldn't hear if anyone said come in.		
8 I just wanted to ask you if you happen to		elicitation
9 have one more stamp, do you by any chance		
10 S: I might. Yeah		reply
[		
11 J: 'cos I'm totally unorganized and		
12 have -		
13 S: I have a one-thirty and I have thirties		reply(cont'd)
14 ((pause)) Okay, you can have a choice,		marker, starter
15 you can either have - three thirties - or=		informative?
[		
16 J: uhuh		acknowledge?
17 S: =you can have a one-thirty.		
18 J: Three thirties is fine.		acknowledge?

We can see from the above analysis that there are certain advantages that S & C's taxonomy has over Searle's taxonomy. Firstly, we are not only able to characterize initiating utterances but also responses. Secondly, utterances which have different discourse consequences would be characterized as different acts. For example, J's utterance in lines 8-9 would be characterized as an 'elicitation' whereas S's utterances in lines 2 and 4 would be characterized as a 'directive'.

However, there are problems. Firstly, similar to Searle's taxonomy, there are certain contributing moves in the discourse that it fails to account for. For example, the non-verbal moves in lines 1 and 3. If they are taken as contributing moves, then the entire description of lines 1 to 5 would have to be changed. As I have pointed out above, S's utterances in lines 2 and 4 would be Responding Moves. This means they can no longer be characterized as 'directives' because, according to S & C, 'directives' can only occur as head of an Initiating Move. We need another category to account for them. We also need another category to account for the non-verbal move in line 5 since it would no longer be a response to a 'directive', but an act which occurs in the Follow-up Move.

Secondly, according to the linguistic realizations that S & C specify for each category, utterances which clearly have different functions will be characterized as

realizing the same category. For example, lines 6-7 and lines 14-17 will be both characterized as 'informatives'. But it is obvious that in the latter, S is not giving J a piece of information but rather offering her a choice of two kinds of stamps. J has to actually make the choice and once she has done so, S is under the obligation to give her what she has chosen. No obligation of this kind follows if she were just giving a piece of information.

Thirdly, the categories are not delicate enough. There is, for example, no way of distinguishing different kinds of 'elicitations', 'directives' or 'informatives'. A's utterance in the following would be characterized as an 'informative'.

34. A: You're looking very nice today.
    B: Thank you.

But it obviously is a different kind of 'informative' from that realized by J's utterance in lines 6-7. It not only just gives a piece of information, but also asserts A's positive judgement. The response that it prospects is different from the latter.

This, however, is not so much due to the weakness of the descriptive system, but rather due to the fact that social discourse differs considerably from classroom discourse. The latter is much more simple: the basic interaction pattern is that of the teacher checking the pupils' knowledge or imparting knowledge to the pupils and providing evaluations to the pupils' responses. Therefore,

most utterances can be accounted for by categories at primary delicacy. For example, the categories 'informative', 'elicitation' and 'directive', can adequately account for the majority of the utterances in a classroom. Moreover, the relationships between the interlocutors and the interactional goals are different. In the classroom, the teacher has authority over the pupils and the interactional goal is the imparting of knowledge. In social encounters, however, the relationship between the interlocutors is often not fixed: it can vary from exchange to exchange. For example, in a social encounter between a teacher and a pupil, the relationship may be equal or authoritative, depending on the subject matter or the attitude of the individual. The interactional goal is also much more varied. As a result, the kinds of categories that can be found differ: acts like 'bid', 'evaluate', 'cue' which frequently occur in classroom discourse seldom occur in social discourse. On the other hand, acts like 'invite', 'offer', 'minimize' seldom occur in the classroom. Also, the linguistic realizations of the categories necessarily differ a great deal. Therefore the application of the same categories to social discourse and the characterization of utterances according to the specified realizations necessarily renders the description not only not informative enough, but may even be inaccurate.

Despite the fact that the S & C taxonomy is not adequate for handling social discourse, the criteria on which the taxonomy is set up are valid. The two dimensions on which utterances are characterized, namely, their place in the discourse structure and their predictive assessment of what follows, are explicit and recognizable. Based on these criteria, the taxonomy can be modified and more delicate categories can be set up. Subsequent studies in discourse analysis have already headed in this direction and have come up with interesting descriptions (see Burton 1981, Berry 1981, Stubbs 1981, 1983, Coulthard 1981, Coulthard & Brazil 1981, Hunston & Francis 1986).

1.7 Concluding Remarks

From the above disucssion, we can see that, contrary to the belief of some, discourse analysis has much to offer in the characterization of the function of utterances. The descriptive system prposed by S & C is, so far, the most rigorous. The rigour in their descriptive system is a result of their willingness to look for theoretical motivation and to formalize. As Labov points out, "formalization is a fruitful procedure even when it is wrong: it sharpens our questions and promotes the search for answers."(1972:121). As mentioned before, their description is based on the notion of linguistic structure and closely modelled on Halliday's Categories of the Theory of Grammar. The employing of the methodology and

theoretical principles in mainstream linguistics by discourse analysts has been considered quite inappropriate to the domain of conversation and fundamentally misconceived (see Levinson 1983: 294, 288). I would argue that it is precisely these theoretical principles governing linguistic patterning that enable us to observe and account for the patterns regularly exhibited in discourse and to make descriptive statments which are not based on pure intuition and speculation.

It is the concept of 'hierarchical rank scale' that enables us to account for the way discourse is organized: that the basic organizational unit is an exchange consisting of moves, which in turn consist of acts.

It is the linguistic concept of 'structure', which is the highest abstraction of patterns of syntagmatic relations (Halliday 1964), that enables us to account for the relation between the moves and the acts in an exchange. And it is the structural relation between the three elements of structure of an exchange and the concept of 'continuous classification' that provide a way of interpreting and assigning meaning to utterances that do occur. For example, it is the structure of the phrase " a grief ago" and its identity of structure with "a week ago" or "a month ago" that enables us to interpret or reclassify the word "grief" as a time expression (see Stubbs 1983:97). Similarly, it is the structure of an exchange that enables us to assign meaning to utterances.

Take J's utterance in the following exchange which occurs in the same conversation as (1) for example.

35. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#2]
S: I think you better just keep it because I don't have any change anyway.
→ J: Well, next time I'm in the money as far as stamps are concerned.

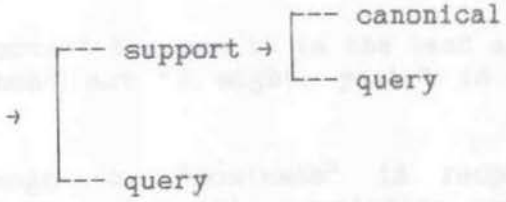
J's utterance means that she will accept S's suggestion to keep the stamps. This meaning is not retrievable from the syntactic or semantic organization of the utterance, but only from its structural relation with the preceding utterance, or, to put it in other words, from the structural constraint imposed by the preceding utterance (see Stubbs: ibid). Of course this kind of structural relation is not entirely comparable to that in grammar because there is no way that an utterance can place an absolute constraint on what will follow, in the way that the elements of structure in grammar can. But whatever follows will be interpreted in the light of the structural constraint imposed by the preceding utterance.

It is the concept of 'class' that enables us to see that the place in the structure of the discourse is an important structural criterion in utterance characterization and classification. It is only by consulting its structural location that we will be able to distinguish an 'informative' from a 'reply'. Using the concept of 'class', we will be able to distinguish between say an 'offer' and a 'promise' because they belong to two different primary classes. The former is soliciting and

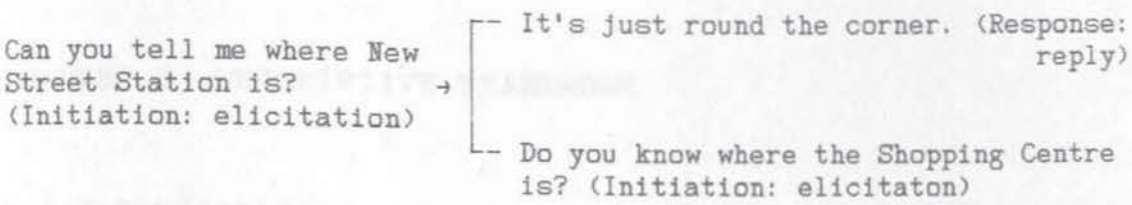
hence belongs to the class of acts which realizes the Initiating Move whereas the latter is solicited and hence belongs to the class that realizes the Responding Move (see also Schneewind 1966, Roulet 1977, Edmondson 1981, cf. Leech 1983). We will also be able to see that an 'offer' is similar to an 'elicitation' and a 'request' in the way that a 'promise' is not. Conversely, a 'promise' is similar to a 'reply' and an 'accept' in the way an 'offer' is not. 'Offer', 'request' and 'elicitation' belong to the same primary class and 'promise', 'reply' and 'accept' belong to a different primary class.

Hence, while 'structure' accounts for the syntagmatic relations in discourse, 'class' accounts for the paradigmatic relations in discourse. What remains to be accounted for, which is not dealt with by S & C, is the occurrence of one member of a class rather than another at a specific place in the structure. In other words, we need to account for the actual patterning that is exhibited in the discourse. The concept to account for this is 'system'. According to Halliday, a 'system' is a limited ('closed') set of terms in choice relation (see Halliday 1963:5). And according to Hjelmslev (1947), a system is a representation of relations on the paradigmatic axis, a set of features contrastive in a given environment. Hence, at a given syntagmatic environment, there is a system of choices. In S & C's description, 'elicitation', 'directive', 'informative' and 'check' form a system of

subclasses operating as head of the Initiating Move; 'reply', 'react' and 'acknowledge' form another system of subclasses operating as head of the Responding Move and so on (see Berry 1981:33). Given a certain environment, the speaker makes a systemic choice. As Stubbs (1983) points out, the speaker makes a systemic choice of whether to support or reject the preceding utterance. To support would be to produce an utterance which fulfils the structural prediction set up by the preceding utterance and to reject would be to break the discourse expectation. If the choice is to support the preceding discourse, then another system of choices is set up: the choice of questioning or not questioning the presuppositions or felicity conditions of the preceding utterance. Stubbs calls the former 'canonical support' and the latter 'query' (see Stubbs 1983:100). He represents the systems as follows:



Hence, given an 'elicitation' like "Can you tell me where New Street Station is?", the speaker has the choice of attending to the utterance or ignoring it altogether. If the choice is the former, then he has the choice of producing a Responding utterance, that is, a 'reply' or another Initiating utterance. For example,



As we can see from the above discussion, the linguistic concepts of 'structure', 'class' and 'system' provide us with a basic framework for making a powerful description of discourse which accounts for the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic relations of utterances in the discourse and the actual patterning exhibited in the discourse. Therefore, the descriptive system which I shall present in the following chapter will rely heavily on these concepts and will be based mainly on the descriptive system proposed by S & C and the subsequent studies based on it.

Footnotes

[1]I say "part of a 'move'" because it is the head act of the move which consists of a pre-head act "I might, yeah." in line 10 which is a 'starter'.

[2]Notice that although the "business" is reopened again by Y's intrusion later, it is a possible completion point. As Schegloff & Sacks (1973) point out, there are possibilities of reopening the conversation even after a "final" goodbye.

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall present an overall account of my descriptive framework for characterizing the discourse function of utterances in naturally occurring conversation. I shall explain the theoretical principles used and give a general outline of the framework. Detailed discussion will be given in the ensuing chapters and the discussion will be exemplified by naturally occurring conversational data collected over a period of two and a half years. The data consist of approximately twenty hours of face to face conversations (labelled as Data C) and telephone conversations (labelled as Data B). Fieldnote data and data from the Birmingham Collection of English texts (labelled as BCET) will also be used[1]. All the interlocutors are native-speakers of English. A tape of extracts providing the context in which the examples take place and their transcripts are given in the Appendices.

Technical categories will be printed in italics, e.g. *Elicitations*. Categories which are commonly used in the speech act and linguistic literature will be given in single quotation marks, e.g. 'offer'.

2.2 Theoretical Principles

The characterization of utterances proposed here will be based mainly on the descriptive principles of S & C (1975). The basic theoretical assumption is that conversation is describable in terms of a rank scale, consisting of the following units: acts, moves, exchanges, sequences and transactions, with act as the unit at the lowest rank. An exchange is perceived as consisting of potentially three elements of structure: an *Initiating Move*, a *Responding Move* and a *Follow-up Move*. Taking into account the fact that after the occurrence of each element of structure, there is a change of speaker, the turn-taking system (Sacks et al 1973) in conversation is built into the exchange structure. Hence, the exchange structure IRF is revised to IαRαF in which the symbol α stands for a change of speaker. (This will be discussed in detail later). A move is perceived as consisting of an obligatory head act, carrying the illocutionary force of the entire move, and optional pre-head and post-head acts.

A description will be made of the unit at the lowest rank, focussing on the head acts of a move.

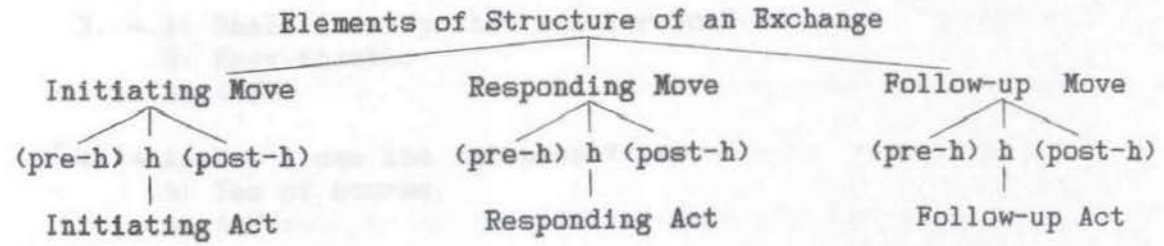
Following S & C, the head acts will be characterized according to two criteria: their place in structure and their predictive assessment of what follows. In other words, we look at the location of the move in which the head act occurs in the structure of an exchange and how it

is related to the head acts of other moves of the exchange.

Primary classes of acts will be identified according to their restrictions in operation at the elements of structure of an exchange. For each primary class, subclasses will be identified according to the different act(s) they prospect. The choices of head acts that are available at each element of structure will be presented in the form of a system.

2.3 Primary Classes and Subclasses of Acts

Applying the above prinicples, we can identify three primary classes of head acts operating at the three obligatory elements of structure of an exchange. The class operating at the *Initiating Move* is labelled *Initiating Acts*; that operating at the *Responding Move* is labelled *Responding Acts* and that operating at the *Follow-up Move* is labelled *Follow-up Acts*. Let us represent them as follows:



The subclasses of each of these three primary classes are identified according to the response they prospect. Let us start with *Initiating Acts*.

2.3.1. Subclasses of *Initiating Act*

According to the criterion of prospected response, the first distinction we can make within the class of *Initiating Act* is acts which expect an obligatory non-verbal response accompanied by an optional verbal response and those which expect an obligatory verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate. It should be noted that it is essential to distinguish between a non-verbal response and a non-verbal surrogate of a verbal response. The former refers to an action to be performed whereas the latter refers to a non-verbal way of expressing a verbal response. The former includes S & C's 'directive' and the latter includes their 'elicitation' and 'informative'. However, 'directive' is not the only subclass of *Initiating Act* which expects an obligatory non-verbal response. Consider the following,

1. → A: Can you reach the salt?
   B: Here you are. (+NV)

2. → A: Would you like to come for dinner tonight?
   B: I'd love to. Thank you. (+NV)

3. → A: Shall I carry that bag for you?
   B: Many thanks.
   A: (+NV)

4. → A: May I use the telephone?
   B: Yes of course.
   A: (+NV)

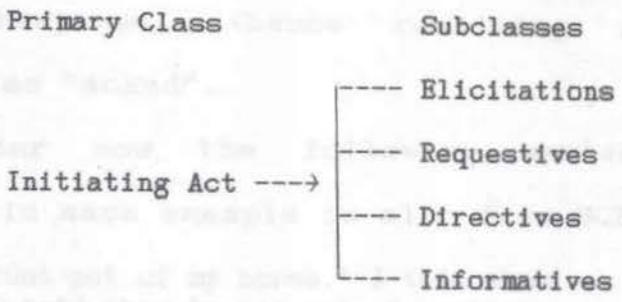
In all of the above utterances, a positive response from the addressee entails a non-verbal action from either the speaker or the addressee. But they are different from utterances like the following:

5. [S & C 1975:91]
→ Teacher: You go and show me one David a piece of metal.
Pupil : NV
Teacher: Yes that's a piece of metal well done a team point you can have one.

The teacher's first utterance differs from the arrowed utterances in 1 to 4 in that in the former, the teacher is not giving the pupil an option of responding negatively. A "No, I won't." response challenges the presuppositions of the utterance. In the latter, however, in each instance, A is giving B the option of responding positively or negatively. In other words, the former prospects compliance from the addressee whereas the latter prospects either compliance (or acceptance) or non-compliance (or refusal), although the former is more strongly prospected than the latter. Let us label the former *Directives* and the latter *Requestives*.

As for 'elicitation' and 'informative', there is a need to give a clearer characterization than that given by S & C. According to S & C, an 'elicitation' requests a linguistic response. This characterization is not sufficient to differentiate it from an 'informative' because the latter also expects a linguistic response of acknowledgement or its non-verbal surrogate. An 'informative' which is not responded to is likely to lead to protest from the speaker. The difference between the two lies in the kind of verbal response expected. For an elicitation, the verbal response is, in very general and grossly simplified terms, the supplying of the missing

information indicated in the utterance (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion.) For an 'informative', the verbal response expected is, again in very general terms, an acknowledgement that the informative has been heard and understood (see Chapter 6 for detailed discussion). Hence, at secondary delicacy, there are four subclasses of *Initiating Acts*: *Directives, Requestives, Informatives* and *Elicitations*. Let us represent them as follows:



That utterances realizing the *Initiating Move* can be characterized by these four subclasses is supported by the following linguistic evidence: all utterances can be reported by the general speech act verb "say" which describes or reports the locution of the utterance. They can also be reported by two general speech act verbs "ask" and "tell" which report or describe the general illocutionary force of the utterance. Consider the following sentences. (The first sentence in each example is from BCET).

6a. "Would you please remove your glasses?" he asked.
b. He **asked me to** remove my glasses.

7a. "Would you like to come round for a drink tonight?" she asked.
b. She **asked me to** come round for a drink tonight.

8a. "How many languages do you speak?" she asked.
b. She **asked** me how many languages I speak.

9a. "What do you think of the town so far?" she asked.
b. She **asked** me what I think of the town so far.

The utterances in 6a and 7a, which solicit a non-verbal action from the addressee and gives the addressee the option of either responding positively or negatively, (hence realizing *Requestives*) are reported as "asked to" and the utterances in 8a and 9a, which solicit only a verbal response, (hence realizing *Elicitations*) are reported as "asked".

Consider now the following sentences. (The first sentence in each example is also from BCET).

10a. "Get out of my house." I told them.
b. I **told** them **to** get out of my house.

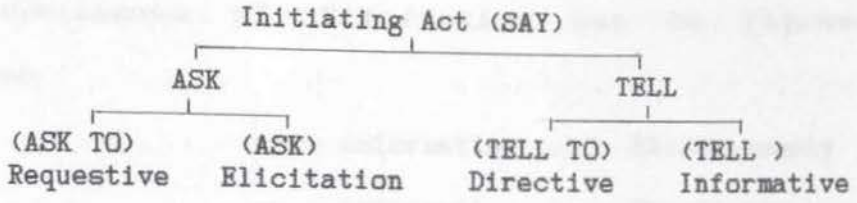
11a. "Stay away from this man, he's dangerous" I told him.
b. I **told** him **to** stay away from this man because he was dangerous.

12a. "I'm a farmer," he told me.
b. He **told** me that he was a farmer.

13a. "Very good," he told me.
b. He **told** me that it was very good.

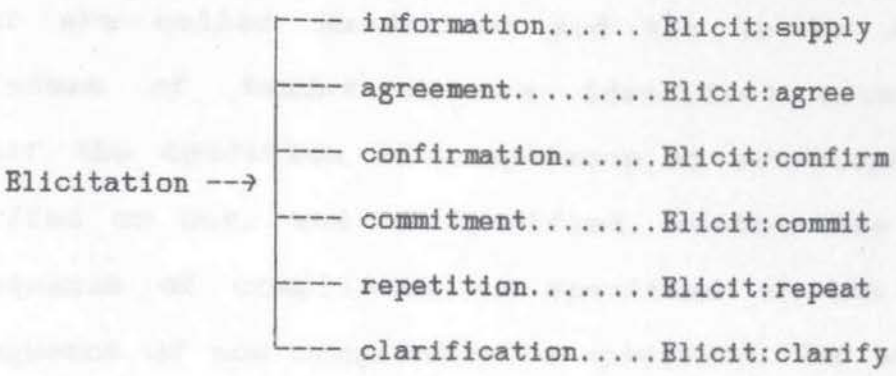
The utterances in 10a and 11a, which solicit a non-verbal action or a non-verbal sequel from the addressee, (hence realizing *Directives*) are reported as "told to". The utterances in 12a and 13a, which expect only a verbal response of acknowledgement of some kind, (hence realizing *Informatives*) are reported as "told".

The above linguistic evidence supports my proposal that there are four subclasses of *Initiating Act*. Let us represent them as follows:

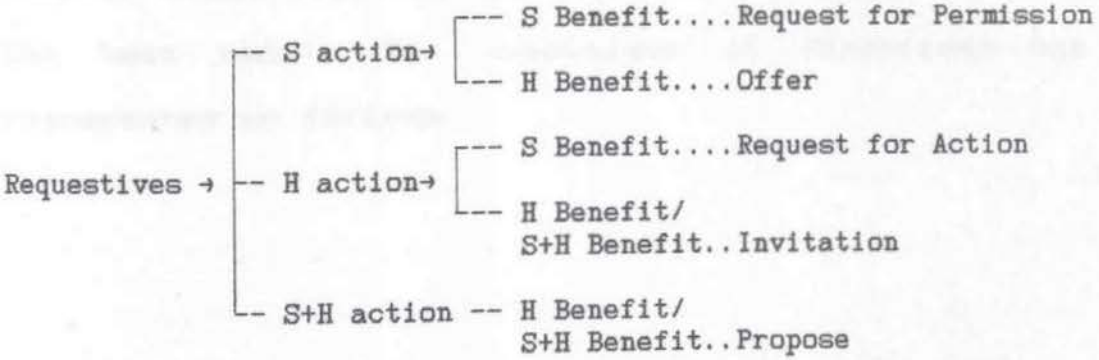


These four subclasses of *Initiating Acts* can be further classified into more delicate subclasses. Within the subclass *Elicitation*, we can identify six subclasses according to the response they prospect: *Elict:supply*, *Elicit:agree*, *Elicit:confirm*, *Elicit:commit*, *Elicit:repeat* and *Elicit:clarify*. *Elicit:supply* prospects a supplying of the missing information; *Elicit:agree* prospects agreement; *Elicit:confirm* propspects confirmation of the speaker's assumption; *Elicit:commit* prospects a commitment to a future action, verbal or non-verbal to be performed by the speaker or by both the speaker and the addressee; *Elicit:repeat* and *Elicit:clarify* are meta-discoursal. The former prospects a repetition of the preceding utterance and the latter prospects clarification of the preceding utterance. It should be noted that the labels given to the various subclasses such as *Elicit:supply*, *Elciti:agree* etc. are labels for what has been defined rather than definitions in their own right (see also Willis 1983:144).

The subclasses of *Elicitation* can be represented as follows:

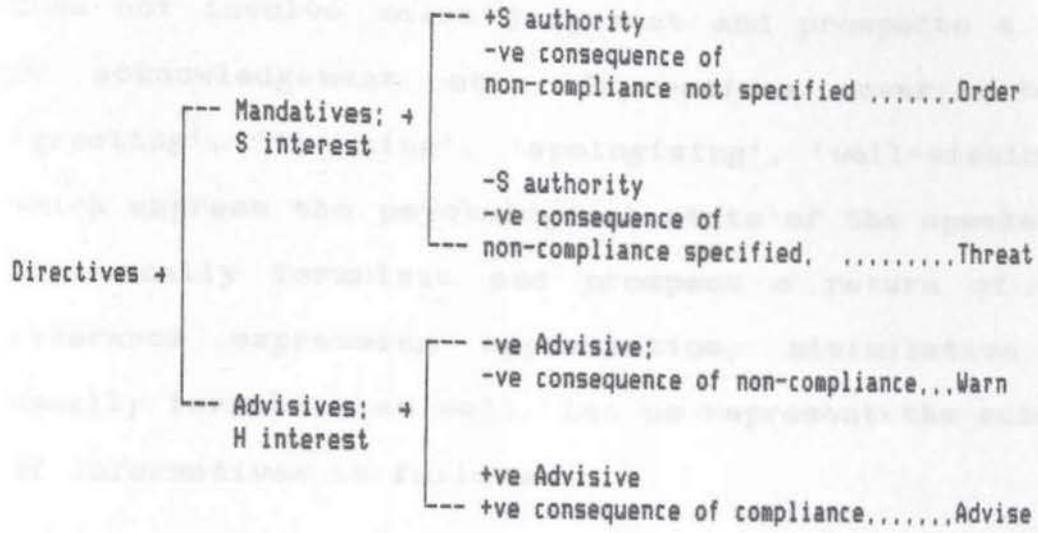


Within the subclass *Requestives*, we can further identify five subclasses according to the nature of the response they solicit: whether they solicit a non-verbal action from the speaker, a non-verbal action from the addressee, or from both; and whether the action is for the benefit of the speaker or the addressee, or both, as indicated in the response. The five subclasses of *Requestives* can be represented as follows:



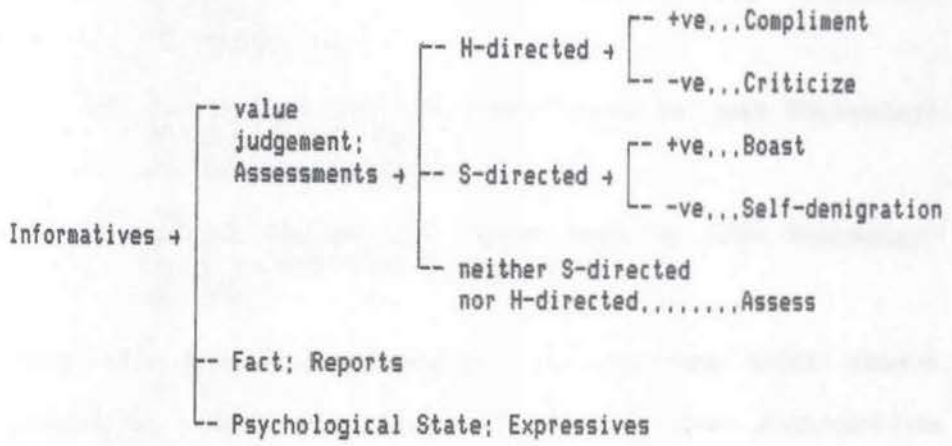
Within the subclass *Directives*, we can further identify two subclasses according to the nature of the response prospected: those in which the non-verbal action

prospected is in the interest of the speaker and those in which the action is in the interest of the addressee. The former are called *Mandatives* and the latter *Advisives*. Subclasses of *Mandatives* are identified according to whether the condition of compliance or non-compliance is specified or not, and if specified, whether the positive consequence of compliance is specified or the negative consequence of non-compliance is specified. Two subclasses of *Mandatives* are identified: *Order* and *Threat*. Subclasses of *Advisives* are identified according to whether the positive consequence of compliance or the negative consequence of non-compliance is specified or implied. Two subclasses of *Advisives* are identified: *Warn* and *Advise*. The classification of *Directives* into these subclasses is supported by linguistic evidence: the responses that they prospect have different realizations (see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion; see also Willis 1983 in which a similar classification of 'directives' and 'elicitations' has been made). The subclasses of *Directives* can be represented as follows:



Finally, within the subclass *Informatives*, we can further identify three major subclasses: *Assessments*, *Reports* and *Expressives*. An *Assessment* involves value judgement and prospects another assessment from the addressee expressing agreement or disagreement with the speaker's value judgement. *Assessments* can be further classified along the dimensions of whether they are directed at the speaker, at the addressee or neither, and whether the assessment is negative or positive. Different subclasses of *Assessment* prospect different responses. For example, a positive *Assessment* directed at the addressee, commonly referred to as a 'compliment', typically prospects thanking accompanied by agreement, minimization or a return of a positive assessment of the speaker. On the other hand, a negative *Assessment* directed at the speaker himself, commonly referred to as 'self-denigration' or 'self-deprecation', typically prospects a disagreement or minimization but not a thanking. A *Report*

does not involve value judgement and prospects a comment or acknowledgement etc. *Expressives* cover acts like 'greeting', 'thanking', 'apologizing', 'well-wishing' etc. which express the psychological state of the speaker. They are usually formulaic and prospect a return of another utterance expressing appreciation, minimization etc , usually formulaic as well. Let us represent the subclasses of *Informatives* as follows:



2.3.2 Subclasses of *Responding* and *Follow-up Acts*

In the characterization of *Initiating Acts*, I have been looking at the responses prospected by the *Initiating* utterance. In the class of *Responding Acts*, I look at not only the prospected responses but also the possible responses. The difference between prospected and possible responses can be easily explained by the following example.

14. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: (a) Yes.
       (b) I'm afraid not.

(c) I'll see how my work goes.

B's responses are all possible responses but only (a) and (b) are prospected.

In identifying the subclasses of *Responding Acts*, I again use the criterion of continuous or prospective classification. *Responding Acts* are classified according to the kind of *Follow-up Act* that they prospect. Consider the following exchanges:

15. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: Yes.
    A: Thank you.

16. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: I'm afraid not.
    A: Well, nevermind.

17. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: I'll see how my work goes.
    A: Okay.

From the above exchanges, we can see that there are three possible ways of responding to the *Requestive* and that each prospects a different *Follow-up Act*. In 15, B responds positively. B's positive response is followed by A's 'thanking' B. A's follow-up utterance is a kind of approbation of the positive outcome of the interaction and B is henceforth under the obligation to carry out the action. In 16, B responds negatively and his response is followed by a 'minimization' from A. A's follow-up utterance differs from that in 15 in that it is a concession on the part of A to accept the negative outcome. B is now under no obligation to carry out the action. If A does not accept the negative outcome, he is

likely to produce another *Initiating Move* in which he makes the 'request' again. This *Initiating Move*, however, is not prospected. In other words, the two different subclasses of *Responding Acts* have different discourse consequences. I shall characterize these two subclasses by calling the former a *Positive Responding Act* and the latter a *Negative Responding Act*. I shall also characterize the two subclasses of *Follow-up Acts* as *Approbation* and *Concession*. That there are two subclasses of *Responding Acts* can be seen from the fact that a *Positive Responding Act* does not prospect a *Concession* and a *Negative Responding Act* does not prospect an *Approbation*. Consider the oddity of the following exchanges.

18. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: Yes.
  * A: Well, nevermind.

19. A: Can you get the report done by next Wednesday?
    B: I'm afraid I can't.
  * A: Thank you.

Let us now look at 17. In 17, B's response is neither positive nor negative. B is refusing to commit himself either way. It is followed by A's accepting B's refusal to commit himself either way. I shall identify this subclass of *Responding Acts* as a *Temporization* and the *Follow-up Act* prospected a *Consent*. Hence there are three subclasses of *Responding Acts* and three subclasses of *Follow-up Acts*.

Besides the above three subclasses of *Follow-up Acts*, we can further identify another subclass which is the

head act of a second or subsequent *Follow-up Move*. It differs from the above three subclasses in that the move in which it occurs is an optional element of structure of an exchange. Therefore it is not prospected by a *Responding Act*. It is a subclass which functions as a 'turn-passing' signal. For example,

20. [Coulthard et al 1981:19]
I D: but its only the last three months that its been making you feel ill
R P: ill with it yes
F_1 D: YES YES
→ F_2 P: yes doctor

According to the turn-taking rule of conversation, the patient P has the floor after the doctor D has produced a follow-up utterance and he is entitled to carry on with the current topic, or introduce a new topic, or terminate the conversation. But P is doing none of the above. By producing the above arrowed utterance, he is indicating that he has no more to say and wishes to relinquish the floor. Similar to the head act of the first *Follow-up Move*, it prospects an *Initating Move* although it can be followed by another *Follow-up Move* in which the other party also indicates that he wishes to relinquish the floor. However, it can be differentiated from the former in two ways: firstly it is not prospected, as I have already pointed out above, and secondly it is not preceded by a *Responding Move* but rather a *Follow-up Move*. I shall identify this subclass as a *Turn-passing Act*.

2.4 A Taxonomy of Discourse Acts

We can now present a taxonomy of the subclasses of discourse acts and their syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations as follows:

Elements of Structure:	I Move	R Move	F Move (1)	F Move (2)
Class of Act:	Initiating	Responding	Follow-up(1)	Follow-up(2)
Subclasses:	Elicitation	Positive	Approbation	Turn-passing
	Requestive	Negative	Concession	
	Directive	Temporization	Consent	
	Informative			

2.5 Systems

Having characterized the various subclasses of acts, I shall now account for the occurrence of one subclass rather than another in the discourse.

2.5.1. System of Exchange Types

I have identified four subclasses of *Initiating Act* operating as head of the *Initiating Move*: *Elicitations*, *Requestives*, *Directives*, and *Informatives*. They form a system operating as the head of an *Initiating Move*. Each of these subclasses is classified into more delicate subclasses which form another system operating at the *Initiating Move*, with one of the four subclasses as head. Let us say that they form a system at Ia with *Elicitation* as head, a system at Ib with *Requestive* as head, Ic with

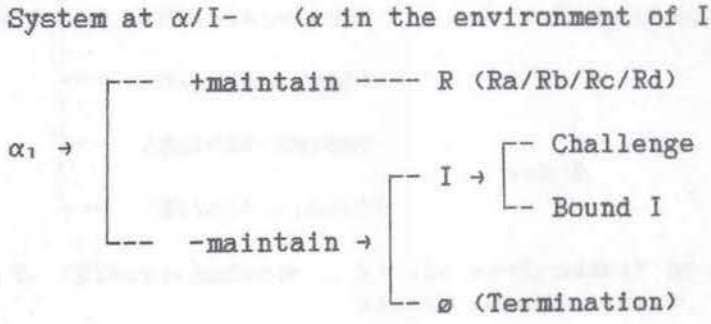
Directive as head and Id with *Informative* as head. The choice of a particular subclass of *Initiating Act* constrains the choices that are available at the *Responding Move*. For example, the choice of a *Requestive* opens up a system of choices at Ra: a *Positive Responding Act*, a *Negative Responding Act* and a *Temporization*. The choice of a *Directive*, however, opens up another system of choices at Rb: a *Positive Responding Act*, or the choice of a *Positive Responding Act* and a *Temporization*, depending on which subclass of *Directive* it is. The choice of a particular *Responding Act* again constrains the choices that are available at the *Follow-up Move*. Since there are four subclasses of *Initiating Acts*, consequently, we can say that there are four types of exchange. Let us establish a system of the exchange called *Exchange Type*. This system has four terms, and building in the turn-taking element of an exchange, we have the following realizations of the four types of exchange:

System of Exchange Types

Exchange Types →
- Eliciting : $Ia\alpha(Ra\alpha(F_1 a\alpha(F_2)))$
- Requesting : $Ib\alpha(Rb\alpha(F_1 b\alpha(F_2)))$
- Directing : $Ic\alpha(Rc\alpha(F_1 c\alpha(F_2)))$
- Informing : $Id\alpha(Rd\alpha(F_1 d\alpha(F_2)))$

After the occurrence of each subclass of *Initiating Act*, the next speaker has the choice of either maintaining the exchange by producing a *Responding Move*, or not

maintaining the exchange. If the choice is the latter, he has a further choice of either producing another *Initiating Move*, which could be a *Bound Initiation* or a *Challenge* or terminating the exchange (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7). In other words, there is a system of *Exchange Maintenance* at "α". There are two terms in the system: +maintain and -maintain. In the environment of an *Initiating Move*, +maintain is realized by a *Responding Move* and -maintain is realized by an *Initiating Move* or a termination. I shall call this system "α_1".

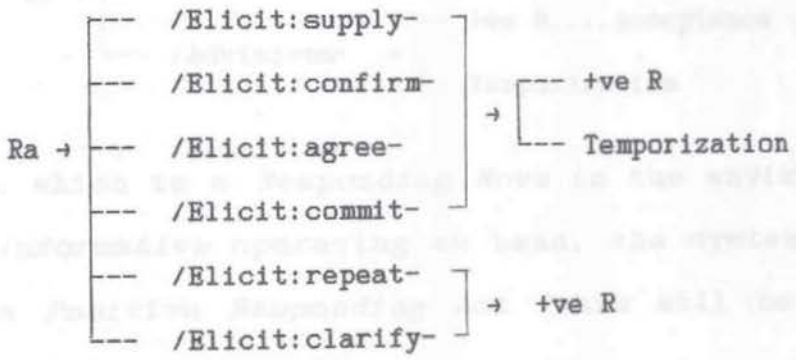


If the next speaker makes the choice of maintaining the exchange, then the choices that are available to him will be constrained by the preceding act in the *Initiating Move*, as I have already pointed out above. In other words, there are different systems operating as head of a *Responding Move* in the environment of a different subclass of *Initiating Act*.

2.5.2 Systems at the *Responding Move*

The system of choices available at Ra, which is a *Responding Move* in the environment of Ia with *Elicitation* operating as head, the system consists of a *Positive Responding Act* and a *Temporization* for the first four subclasses and a *Positive Responding Act* for the last two subclasses (the realizations will be spelled out in detail in Chapter 7). The system can be presented as follows:

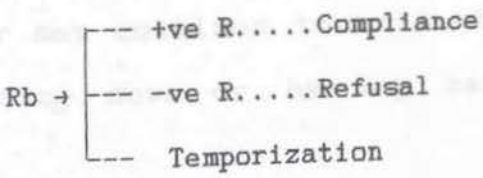
System at Ra



N.B. /Elicit:inform- : in the environment of an Elicit:supply before

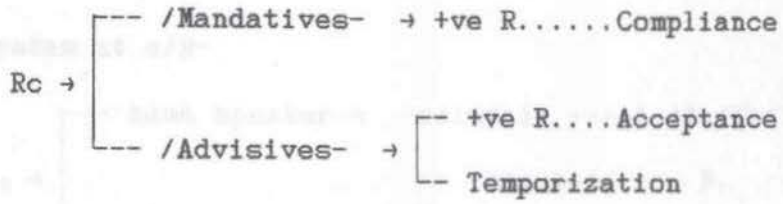
The system of choices availabe at Rb, which is a *Responding Move* in the environment of Ib with *Requestive* operating as head, consists of a *Positive Responding Act*, realized by a *Compliance*, a *Negative Responding Act*, realized by a *Refusal* and a *Temporization*.

System at Rb



At Rc, which is a *Responding Move* in the environment of Ic with *Directive* operating as head, there are two systems, one consisting of only a *Positive Responding Act* and the other consisting of a *Positive Responding Act* and a *Temporization*.

Systems at Rc



At Rd, which is a *Responding Move* in the environment of Id with *Informative* operating as head, the system consists of only a *Positive Responding Act* (this will be spelled out in detail in Chapter 7).

Systems at Rd

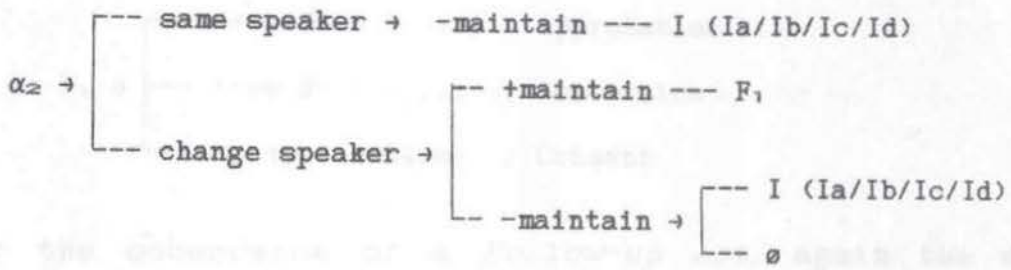
Rd → +ve R

The choices that are available in all of the above systems all realize *Responding Acts*. An utterance which is not among any of the choices challenges the presuppositions of the preceding act and opens up a new exchange.

After the occurrence of each Responding Act, the same speaker may continue to hold the floor and produce another *Initiating Move* or he may hand the floor over. If the

former happens, the only choice available to the speaker is to produce an *Initiating Move*. If the latter happens, the next speaker has the choice of either maintaining or not maintaining the exchange. If he makes the former choice, he produces a *Follow-up Move* and if he makes the latter choice, then he can either produce an *Initiating Move* or terminate the exchange. I shall call this system "α_2".

System at α/R-



2.5.3. Systems at the *Follow-up Move*

As mentioned above, the occurrence of a particular subclass of *Responding Act* constrains the choices that are available at the *Follow-up Move*. In this case, there is a one-to-one correspondence between a subclass of *Responding Act* and a subclass of *Follow-up Act*. In the environment of a *Positive Responding Act*, the choice of *Follow-up Act* available is an *Approbation*; in the environment of a *Negative Responding Act*, the choice of *Follow-up Act* available is a *Concession* and in the environment of a *Temporization*, the choice of *Follow-up Act* that is available is a *Consent*. Since not all of the systems

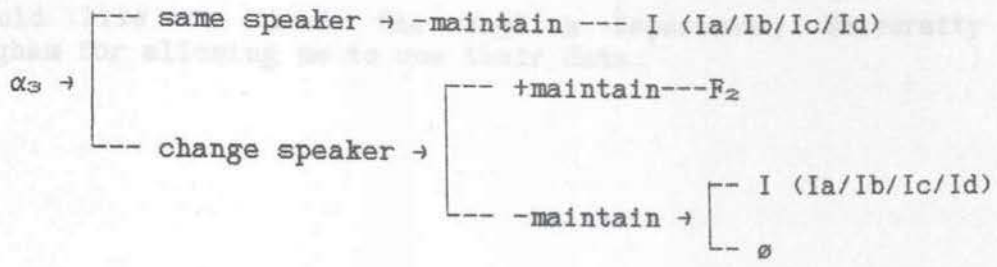
operating at Ra, Rb, Rc, Rd consist of all three subclasses of *Responding Acts*, it means that the subclasses of *Follow-up Acts* are available at Fa, Fb, Fc and Fd will differ. I shall not spell it out in detail here since the relation between the subclasses of *Responding Act* and subclasses of *Follow-up Act* is a one to one correspondence. The systems at F can be briefly represented as follows:

Systems at F1

$F_1 \rightarrow$ /+ve R-.....Approbation
/-ve R-.....Concession
/Temporization-....Consent

After the occurrence of a *Follow-up Act*, again the same speaker may continue to hold the floor or he can hand the floor over. When the former happens, the speaker can only produce an *Initiating Move* but not a second *Follow-up Move*. When the latter happens, the next speaker again has the choice of maintaining or not maintaining the exchange. If the first choice is made, he produces a second *Follow-up Move*, usually with a *Turn-passing Act* as head. If the second choice is made, he can either produce an *Initiating Move* or terminate the exchange. I shall call this system of choices "α_3".

System at α/F-



Theoretically, there can be an infinite number of *Follow-up Moves* after the first *Follow-up Move*. But as Coulthard & Brazil (1981) point out, exchanges with more than three Follow-up Moves seldom occur. In any case, the system operating at α in environment of any subsequent *Follow-up Move* would be the same as α_3.

2.6 Summary

The above is a brief outline of the descriptive framework in which utterances occurring in natural conversation are characterized. Detailed discussion will be made of each of the subclasses in the ensuing chapters. Chapters 3 to 6 discuss the four subclasses of *Initiating Act*, Chapter 7 discusses *Responding Acts* and Chapter 8 discusses *Follow-up Acts*. In Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, I shall demonstrate how the descriptive framework can be applied to a piece of conversation. The merits of this descriptive framework will be highlighted and a discussion will be made of its limitations.

Footnotes

[1]I would like to thank the English Department, University of Birmingham for allowing me to use their data.

CHAPTER 3 INITIATING ACT: ELICITATIONS

3.1 Introduction

The first subclass of *Initiating Act* is *Elicitations* whose function is to elicit a verbal response. Utterances in this subclass have often been referred to as 'questions' in the linguistic and speech act literature. The term 'question' has been used as though it is generally accepted what a 'question' is. An examination of the studies on 'questions' will show that this is not the case: the term 'question' has never been clearly defined. It has been referred to as a semantic category or semantic class (see Quirk et al 1972, 1985), as an illocutionary act (see for example Lyons 1977, 1981, Huddleston 1984), and as a kind of 'request' or 'directive' (see for example Katz 1977, Katz & Postal 1964, Gordon & Lakoff 1975, Labov & Fanshel 1977, Burton 1981). Sometimes an utterance is identified as a 'question' because it is interrogative in form and sometimes because it expects an answer or a verbal performance from the addressee. In other words, the term 'question' is sometimes taken as a syntactic category and sometimes a discourse category; as a result, it remains vague and ill-defined.

In what follows, I shall examine some of the studies done on 'questions'. A detailed discussion will be made of

the work of Quirk et al (1972, 1985). It will be demonstrated that different and inconsistent criteria have been used in the identification and classification of 'questions'. It will be proposed that because 'question' is such an ill-defined category, there is need for another attempt to characterize and classify utterances which have come under the nomenclature of 'questions' in the linguistic literature and that the discourse category *Elicitation* is a more satisfactory description of the function of these utterances. A subclassification of *Elicitations* will then be made on the sole criterion of their discourse function.

3.2 Quirk et al's Study of 'Questions'

Let us start with the study of 'questions' by Quirk et al (1972,1985)[1] because it is the most thorough study and is the first time that different types of questions are classified according to the type of answer they expect, that is, according to their discourse function. Quirk et al (1972, 1985) define 'questions' as a semantic class which is primarily used to seek information on a specific point (see 1985:804). They propose three major classes of 'question' according to the answer they expect,

> *(1) Those that expect affirmation or negation, as in Have you finished the book?, are YES-NO questions.*
> *(2) Those that typically expect a reply from an open range of replies, as in What is your name? or How old are you? are WH-questions.*

(3) Those that expect as the reply one of two or more options presented in the question, as in Would you like to go for a WÁLK or stay at HÒME?, are ALTERNATIVE questions. (1985:806)

Let us examine their characterization of these three classes one by one.

3.2.1 Yes-no Questions

According to Quirk et al, yes-no questions are usually formed by placing the operator before the subject and using 'question intonation' which is rise or fall-rise. Another typical characteristic of yes-no questions is the use of non-assertive forms "any" "ever" etc. which denote neutral polarity that leaves open whether the answer is "yes" or "no". However, Quirk et al point out that a yes-no question can be biased towards a positive or a negative answer. For example, assertive forms such as 'someone' may be used, in which case the question has a 'positive orientation'. For example, "Did SOMEONE call last night?" "Has the boat left ALREADY?" These questions are biased towards a positive answer. They indicate that the speaker has reason to believe that the answer is "yes"; he is asking for confirmation of his assumption (1972:389). This means that the expected answer is "yes", and a "no" answer would be contrary to that expectation. As for questions like "Isn't your car working?", Quirk et al suggest that they have negative orientation. This negative orientation, however, is complicated by an element of surprise or

disbelief. The implication is that the speaker had originally hoped for a positive response, but new evidence suggests that the response will be negative. There is therefore a combination of old expectation (positive) and new expectation (negative) (1985:808). These questions are biased towards a negative answer. In other words, they indicate that the speaker has reasons to believe that his old expectation is wrong and is asking for confirmation of his new expectation. The expected answer is "no", and "yes" would be contrary to his expectation. Quirk et al further remark that because the old expectation tends to be identified with the speaker's hopes and wishes, negatively orientated questions often express disappointment or annoyance. The examples they give are "Can't you drive straight?" and "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

From Quirk et al's analysis of yes-no questions so far, we can detect three problems. Firstly, if the classification of 'questions' is made on the basis of the answer they expect, which is what they claim, then there should be three classes and not just one class of 'questions': one class has neutral polarity and expects either a "yes" or a "no" answer, one class expects a "yes" answer and the third expects a "no" answer. However, it should be noted that there are three classes of questions only in terms of the **form** of the answer, that is, only in so far as we want to distinguish a "yes" from a "no"

answer. In terms of the **communicative choice** realized by the answer, there are only two classes of 'questions' because a "yes" answer to a positively biased question realizes the same communicative choice of confirming the speaker's assumption or expectation as a "no" answer to a negatively biased question. This can be supported by the fact that sometimes negatively biased questions can get a "yes" or a "no" answer, both realizing a confirmation. For example, the question "You mean he didn't recognize you?", which is negatively biased, can be responded to by "yes" meaning "you are right, he didn't recognize me.", or "no" also meaning "you are right, he didn't recognize me." Both answers confirm the speaker's assumption. Hence, both negatively and positively biased questions belong to the same class of 'question' whose discourse function is to elicit confirmation.

Secondly, if we are looking at the function or the communicative choice realized by the expected answer and not its form, then a "yes" answer to the question "Have you been to Paris?" and a "yes" answer to the question "Has the boat left ALREADY?" have different functions. The first "yes" is an elliptical form of "Yes, I have been to Paris." which is a supplying of the information whereas the second "yes" is an elliptical form of "Yes, your assumption is correct." which is a confirmation of the speaker's assumption. In other words, the difference between these two questions is not so much that one has

neutral polarity and the other has biased polarity, but rather that one seeks **information** and the other seeks **confirmation**. The former is therefore similar to wh-questions which seek information, such as "What country have you been to?", except that the information it seeks is more specific (cf. Churchill 1978). It is only because English has a yes/no answering system that we are misled to believe that the function of questions like "Have you been to Paris?" is to elicit a "yes" answer (hence a confirmation) or a "no" answer (hence a disconfirmation) and therefore they have a different function from wh-questions.

That the so-called neutral polarity yes-no questions are in fact information-seeking questions can be further supported by the fact that they do not necessarily expect either a "yes" or "no" answer. The utterance "Are you still here?" spoken with high termination by the speaker to his colleague working in the office at seven o'clock in the evening does not expect either a "yes" or "no" answer[2]. It functions as an information question, tantamount to "Why are you still here?" A mere "yes" or "no" response from the addressee would be odd or interpreted as unwillingness on the addressee's part to interact with the speaker.

Thirdly, those 'questions' which express disappointment and annoyance seem to expect neither a "yes" nor a "no" answer. Either a "yes" or a "no" answer to "Can't you

drive straight?" would be considered either cheeky or a retort. Silent acquiescence is likely to be the expected response. Hence it is doubtful whether such utterances should be considered to belong to the category of 'questions' as defined by Quirk et al.

Similar problems can be found in their handling of tag questions. Tag questions are considered a further type of yes-no question which conveys negative or positive orientation. Quirk et al propose four types of tag question:

Type I	He likes his JÒB, DÓESn't he?	(Rising tone)
Type II	He doesn't like his JÒB, DÓES he?	(Rising tone)
Type III	He likes his JÒB, DÒESn't he?	(Falling tone)
Type IV	He doesn't like his JÒB, DÒES he?	(Falling tone)

Each of these four types asserts the speaker's assumption and invites the addressee's response. Each, they say, has different assumptions and expectations:

Type I Positive assumption + neutral expectation
Type II Negative assumption + neutral expectation
Type III Positive assumption + positive expectation
Type IV Negative assumption + negative expectation
(Quirk et al 1985:811)

Quirk et al's analysis of tag questions is problematic. Firstly, according to their analysis of the expected answers, there are three and not four different expected answers to tag questions. Both Type I and II expect either a "yes" or "no" answer. Hence there should be three and not four different types of tag questions. But again, it should be noted that there are only three different expected answers in terms of form; in terms of

communicative choice, there are only two types. The "yes" answer in Type III and the "no" answer in Type IV both realize the same communicative choice of agreeing with the speaker's assumption. Hence Type I and II in fact belong to one type and Type III and IV belong to a second type.

Secondly, one can question whether a tag question can have neutral expectation. The very construction of a tag question suggests that the speaker has certain assumptions and is biased towards a certain answer. As Hudson (1975) points out, tags are always conducive: they are either positively conducive or negatively conducive; they cannot be neutral (see p.24). And as Sinclair (1982) points out, tag questions invite the addressee to give the asserted proposition urgent support (see p.65). For a tag question with a rising tone, the discourse context or the context of environment has led the speaker to cast doubt on his assumption and he invites the addressee to confirm it. As Brazil points out,

> *The association of referring tone (i.e. rising tone) with the polarity-carrying word in the second element (i.e. tag) means that the truth of the proposition is ... offered as an assumption to be confirmed. (1984:43)*

In other words, a tag with a rising tone (i.e. Types I and II) is biased towards an expected answer rather than neutral. It invites the addressee to confirm his assumption. This can be supported by the fact that a confirmation will be spoken in mid key, indicating that the answer fulfils the expectation whereas a denial is

likely to be spoken in high key, indicating that the answer is contrary to the expectation (see also Brazil 1980). For example,

1. [Data C/Tape 4/p.14]
   THINK you did that
   S: //p i THIS year //r+ DIDn't you //
   G: //p oh YEAH //

G's response is spoken in mid key. It is likely that if the answer is "no", it will be spoken in high key. For example,

2. [BCET/Data A/p. 20]
   B: //p it's not TOO late to apPLY now // r+ IS it//
   YEAH
   C: //p //p i THINK so //r+ they're ALL full up //

C's response, "yeah", which disconfirms the speaker's assumption is spoken in high key, indicating that it is contrary to B's expectation.

As for a tag spoken with falling tone, the speaker has no doubt about his assumption and the addressee is invited to agree with him. For example,

3. [Data C/Tape 4/p.3]
   G: //p FOX is his FIRST name //p ISn't it //
   [
   S: //p RIGHT //

4. [ibid/p. 26]
   G: //p sounds like a soCIety of MOLEs //p DOESn't it//
   S: ((laughs))

In 4, S responds to G's tag question by laughing which is commonly used as a minimal indication of agreement. This kind of response would be unacceptable for a tag with a rising tone because it would require a more explicit response of a confirmation or disconfirmation.

Although both types of tag questions expect a "yes" (or "no") answer from the addressee, the function that they realize is different. While a "yes" (or "no") answer to a rising tag realizes a confirmation, a "yes" (or "no") answer to a falling tag realizes an agreement. The difference can be best seen by comparing the following tag questions:

5. [Data C/Tape 4/p.14]
THINK you did that
S: //p i THIS year //r+ DIDn't you //
G: //p oh YEAH//

6. On a sunny day.
A: //p it's a LOVEly day//p ISn't it//
B: //p YES//

While S's question in 5 seeks confirmation from G, A's question in 6 cannot possibly seek confirmation from B that it is a lovely day because the truth of the asserted proposition is self-evident. It functions to get B to agree with him that it evidently is a lovely day (see Brazil 1984:36).

Thus we can see that in terms of the function or communicative choice realized by the expected answers, there are two types of tag question, not four: one which expects agreement and one which expects confirmation from the addressee.

The third type of question which falls under yes-no questions, according to Quirk et al, is declarative questions which are items that are identical lexico-grammatically to declaratives but function as questions

because they are spoken with rising intonation. For example, "You've got the exPLOsives?" Declarative questions are said to invite the hearer's verification, that is, either a "yes" or a "no" answer (see 1985:814).

This analysis of declarative questions is questionable. Firstly, the very fact that the question should be presented in declarative form suggests that the speaker has certain assumptions and the utterance is biased towards an expected response. Brazil (1985) suggests that in the utterance //r+ you preFER THAT one//, the speaker is heard as "proferring a tentative assessment of common ground" and the response expected is a "confirmation of a proclaimed endorsement, yes." (ibid:155-6). A response which denies the tentative assessment of the speaker can of course occur, but it will be contrary to the expectation and is likely to be spoken with a contrastive high key. Secondly, Quirk et al have overlooked the fact that 'declarative questions' can also be realized by a declarative sentence spoken with a falling intonation. For example,

7. [Data B/Tape C/Side A/#1/p.2]
H: I I don't know, see, he has a son at, was in the school last year ah, does he have to re-apply?
X: Ah yes, I think so.
→ H: So we'll have to fill out one of those forms again.
X: Yes.

The arrowed utterance is spoken with proclaiming (falling) tone. As can be seen from the discourse context, H is not telling X that he has to fill out a form but asking for

confirmation. As Brazil (1985) points out, in saying "you prefer that one" with a proclaiming tone and mid-termination, the speaker is not likely to be telling the addressee about his preference but rather asking him to respond to the tentative assertion. Similarly, the utterance "John prefers that one." spoken with a falling tone in a context of situation where the addressee is privy to John's preference functions as a 'question'. Labov and Fanshel (1977) have made similar observations. They state that if the speaker makes a statement about a B-event with a falling intonation (which they call declarative intonation), then it is heard as a request for confirmation. This is supported by their findings in a series of interviews: negative responses to the declarative question "And you never called the police." were in the form of a simple "No" whereas positive responses required some indication of surprise as well, such as "Oh yes, I called them." (see p.101). The requirement of the indication of surprise for positive responses shows that they are contrary to the expectation of the declarative question.

Thirdly, declarative questions can also function as information questions in certain contexts and the answer expected is a supplying of information. Consider the following example given by Brazil,

8. [Brazil 1985:159]
Doctor: //p where do you GET this pain //
Patient: //p in my HEAD //

→ Doctor: //p you GET it in your HEAD //

As is evident from the discourse context, in the arrowed utterance, the doctor is not so much asking the patient to confirm but rather, as Brazil points out, "asking for greater precision - a recycling of the question so to speak by behaving as though the patient had not yet selected a response, and leading perhaps to 'Yes. Behind my eyes.' " (p.159).

3.2.2 Wh-questions

The second class of questions is wh-questions which are information seeking and seem to be the least problematic category. They are realized by wh-words and usually spoken with falling intonation and the answer expected is the missing piece of information denoted by the wh-word. They are considered to constitute a category distinctly different from questions seeking neutral polarity and questions seeking confirmation. However, things are not quite so simple; consider the following wh-questions:

9. What did you say?

10. What do you mean?

We can say that they expect the answer to be the supplying of information. But they are different from questions like "What did you do yesterday?" in that they invite the addressee to repeat and/or to clarify whatever was said previously. In other words, the questions take the discourse backwards. These questions are about the

discourse itself. Coulthard and Montgomery distinguish them from information seeking questions realized by wh-interrogatives by calling those which seek clarification of the preceding utterance 'Return' and those which seek repetition 'Loop' (see 1981:21ff).

Consider also the following questions:

11. What time shall we meet?

12. Where shall I meet you?

These questions do not in fact invite the addressee to supply the missing information signalled by "what time" and "where", but rather to commit himself to a specific time and place of meeting. Take the following piece of data for example.

13. [Data B/Tape B/Side A/#3/p.3]
A: What time?
B: Let's say about seven.
A: Seven o'clock huh, okay.

Once the "information" supplied by B is endorsed by A, both A and B have committed themselves to doing something at the specified time. That wh-questions like the above are not information-seeking questions can be seen firstly by comparing 14 with 15 and 16.

14. A: What's the time?
B: Seven.
A: Thanks.

15. A: What time shall we meet?
B: Five o'clock.
*A: Thanks.

16. A: Where shall we meet?
B: At the Peninsular Hotel.
*A: Thanks.

14 is a perfectly acceptable exchange whereas 15 and 16 are not. This is because in 15 and 16, A is not asking B to supply a missing piece of information, therefore A's thanking B for the "information" is out of place.

Secondly, by comparing 13 and 14. The "information" supplied in B's utterance in exchange 13, is negotiable whereas that in exchange 14 is not. In the former, A may not accept the time specified by B, in which case, further exchanges will be produced until a time acceptable to both is settled upon. The following piece of data illustrates this point.

17. [Data B/Tape B/Side B/#6/p.2]
    X: When are we going to get together?
    H: Anytime. How about tonight?
    X: Well, I I - I can't get together until um may be Sunday.
    H: Alright, Sunday.

The above discussion suggests that wh-questions realize various functions and that it is doubtful whether wh-questions constitute a single class of 'question'.

3.2.3 Alternative Questions

The third class of questions proposed by Quirk et al is alternative questions. According to them, there are two types of alternative question: the first type resembles a yes-no question and the second a wh-question. For example,

18. Would you like CHÓcolate, vaNÍLla or STRÀWberry?

19. Which ice cream would you LÌKE: CHÓcolate, vaNÍLla or STRÀWberry?

The first type is said to differ from a yes-no question **only** in intonation (my emphasis). Instead of the final rising tone, it contains a separate nucleus for each alternative, that is, there is a rise on each item except for the last one where a fall occurs, indicating that the list is complete (1985:823). The second type is a compound question: a wh-question followed by an elliptical alternative question. Its full form is something like the following:

20. Which ice cream would you LÌKE? Would you like CHÓcolate, vaNÍLla or STRÀWberry?

There are two questions that I wish to raise here: firstly, it is true that alternative questions have at least two different syntactic forms, but do they realize two different types of questions in terms of the expected answer? Secondly, is the establishing of alternative questions as a third type justifiable? In other words, do they constitute a class of question distinctly different from yes-no and wh-questions?

To answer the first question, let us look at the answer expected to questions 18 and 19. For both, the expected answer is one of the three stated choices. In other words, classified in terms of prospected answer, they belong to the same type of question although they have different syntactic structures. They both invite the addressee to inform the speaker of his choice. To answer the second question, let us compare alternative questions and wh-

questions. Look at the following exchanges initiated by an alternative question and a wh-question.

21. A: How are we going to get there?
    B: By BUS.

22. A: Shall we get there by BÚS or TRÀIN?
    B: By BÙS.

In both exchanges, A's utterance invites B to supply a piece of information. The only difference is that in exchange 22, the information that B supplies is one of the alternatives supplied by A whereas in exchange 21, the answer is not supplied. In other words, they are both information seeking questions.

Let us now compare alternative questions with yes-no questions.

Quirk et al differentiate them as follows:

23. Alternative: A: Shall we go by BÚS or TRÀIN?
                 B: By BÙS.

24. Yes-no : A: Shall we go by bus or TRÁIN?
             B: No, let's take the CÀR.

24 is considered to be a different type of question from 23 because 24 can be responded to by "yes" or "no" whereas 23 cannot. The answer to 23 must be lexicalized. However, what Quirk et al have overlooked is that the "yes" or "no" answer to 24 is only a preface to the stating of a choice which must also be lexicalised. This is supported by the fact that a response consisting of only a "yes" or "no" without the stated choice is self-evidently incomplete. Consider,

25. A: Shall we go by bus or TRÁIN?
*B: No.

Hence, similar to 23, the expected answer to 24 is the stating of a choice. The only difference between the two is that in the former, the choice is selected from a restricted set whereas in the latter, it is selected from a potentially unrestricted set. In this sense, alternative questions and yes-no questions are similar (see also Jespersen 1933). In fact, in languages, such as Portuguese and Chinese, which do not have a "yes/no" answering system, the answer to a yes-no question is always lexicalized as in alternative questions. For example,

26. [Portuguese]
A: Queres cafe? (Do you want coffee?)
B: Quero (I want)

27. [Chinese]
A: nà dièn yǐng hǎu kàn má? (Is that film good?)
B: (a) hǎu kàn (good)
(b) bù hǎu kàn (not good)

In Chinese, yes-no questions are often presented in alternative forms[3]. The question in 27, for example, is often presented as "nà dièn yǐng hǎu bù hǎu kàn?" (Is that film good or not good?) The expected answers to both forms are the same: "hǎu kàn" (good) or "bù hǎu kàn" (not good).

We may conclude by saying that in terms of the expected answer, alternative questions do not constitute a separate category but rather belong to the category of information seeking questions.

3.2.4 Exclamatory Questions

Finally, I wish to discuss briefly what Quirk et al call 'exclamatory questions', which are considered a minor type of question. Exclamatory questions are considered to function like exclamations although they have the form of a question. They can take the form of a negative polar question with a final falling instead of rising tone, such as "Hasn't she GRÒWN!" and "Wasn't it a marvellous CÒNcert!" or they can take the form of a positive polar question, also with a falling intonation, such as "Am I HÙNgry!", "Did he look anNÒYed!" Quirk et al point out that the first form invites the addressee's agreement. This suggests that the answer expected would be the same as questions which seek agreement with the speaker's assumption or belief, for example, "She has grown, HÀSn't she?" Hence the former belongs to the same category as the latter. As for the second form of exclamatory question, the expected answer is more often an acknowledgement than an agreement. This is true for exclamatory questions such as "Am I HÙNgry!" where the experience is entirely personal and therefore can only be acknowledged; but it is also true for questions like "Did he look anNÒYed!" which are often responded to by an acknowledgement such as "oh DÌD he." Here we can see that exclamatory questions which elicit agreement in fact belong to the same category as tag questions which elicit agreement and those which

elicit an acknowledgement belong to an entirely different category.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the characterization and classification of 'questions' proposed by Quirk et al is very unsatisfactory. Although they claim that their classification is made according to the response expected, the above discussion reveals that very often precedence is given to syntactic form. The three major classes of questions that they propose are in fact based on surface form, and even when they do look at the expected response, it is often the form of the response that is being attended to rather than the function or the communicative choice.

3.3 'Question' as Illocutionary Act

Let us now look at the characterization of 'questions' as illocutionary acts. Lyons (1977) characterizes 'question' as an utterance with a particular illocutionary force. He asserts that the difference between a question and a statement is that the former contains a feature of doubt and that one of its felicity conditions is that the speaker should not know the answer to his question. He asserts that although questions are normally associated with the expectation of an answer from the addressee, this association is conventional and is independent of the illocutionary force of the question. He argues that this analysis of questions enables us to subsume various kinds

of rhetorical questions instead of having to treat them as abnormal or parasitic upon information-seeking questions (see p.755). The inconsistency of this characterization of 'question' can be seen from two objections that I shall raise below.

Firstly, if the expectation of an answer is independent of the illocutionary force of a 'question', then there is no need to distinguish the following two questions.

28. Is the door open?

29. The door is open, isn't it?

In both questions, the speaker expresses doubt as to whether the door is open. Yet, Lyons distinguishes the two by pointing out that a question like 29

> *puts to the addressee the positive proposition p (which the speaker is inclined to believe is true and assumes the addressee will accept), but at the same time explicitly admits in the tag the possibility of its rejection. (p.765)*

and that the function of the checking tag is "expressly to solicit the addressee's acceptance or rejection of the proposition that is presented to him."(ibid). A sentence like 28, however, is

> *neutral with respect with the speaker's beliefs as to the truth value of p and when they are asked of an addressee, unless they are given a particular prosodic or paralinguistic modulation, they convey no information to the addressee that the speaker expects him to accept or reject p. (p. 765)*

This means that one of the crucial differences between 28 and 29 lies in the different answers expected of the addressee. By differentiating the two, Lyons is taking the expected answer into consideration.

Secondly, according to Lyons' characterization of 'questions', it is difficult to see how rhetorical questions can be coped with. Consider the following example,

30. [Stenström 1984:2]
B: and he was in quite a bad MOOD because he was VERY UNWILLING to GO when it came to the POINT
→ A: then WHY does he ACCEPT the assignment I MEAN this is the THING.

A's utterance is what is commonly referred to as a rhetorical question. But it does not express doubt, nor does it imply that A does not know the answer to the question. It expresses A's opinion, tantamount to "he shouldn't have accepted the assignment." Unless he is thinking in terms of the syntactic form of the utterance, there is no reason for considering A's utterance as a kind of 'question'.

What Lyons, as well as Quirk et al, seems to be doing is trying to offer a description which takes into account both syntactic form and discourse function. Therefore, different and inconsistent criteria are used in the identification and classification of 'questions'. The result is that the category of 'question' becomes a half-way house between a syntactic category and a discourse category. As Anthony points out

> *A definition which attempts to cover utterances as syntactically and functionally disparate as those which we intuitively label questions necessarily reduces itself to near-vacuity. (1974:6, quoted in Stenström 1984:32).*

3.4 'Question' as 'Request'

Let us now turn to a characterization of 'questions' which moves completely away from syntactic form to function - the characterization of 'questions' as 'requests' and 'directives'. 'Questions' have been characterized by some as 'requests' which have the purpose of eliciting information (see for example Katz 1972, 1977, Katz & Postal 1964, Gordon and Lakoff 1975, Labov & Fanshel 1977). It has been suggested by Postal, G. Lakoff, Ross and others that the logical form of 'questions' should be REQUEST (a, b, TELL(b,a,S)), and not ASK (a,b,S); a being the speaker and b the addressee. In other words, it should be "I request that you tell me" instead of "I ask you". 'Questions' have also been characterized by others as a kind of 'directive' on the ground that a 'directive' is an instruction to perform something and 'questions' are instructions to make a verbal performance. For example, according to Burton (1980) "Tell me your name" is a 'directive' to make a verbal performance, and according to Willis (1980), 'questions' in which a student is instructed to say something is characterized as 'Direct:verbal'. While this kind of characterization is superior to that of Lyons and Quirk et al in that it does not confuse form and function, it is not without problems.

Sadock points out that it is wrong to say that all 'questions' are to be represented as 'requests', specifically 'requests' for information. Some of the

linguistic evidence he gives is: requests can take sentence adverbial "please" but there are many types of questions that can be used as indirect requests with which "please" cannot occur, for example, *"Don't you think you should please take out the garbage?"; true questions allow the pre-tag "tell me" but requests do not, for example, *"Tell me, take out the garbage, will you?"; and so on (see p.90). Lyons (1977) points out that questions are not a kind of request because "No" in response to a yes-no question such as "Is the door open?" is an answer to the question whereas "No" to "Open the door please" is refusing to do what is requested.

While both Sadock and Lyons' arguments are valid, they have not pinpointed the crucial difference between the two, which is that utterances referred to as 'questions' elicit or prospect a very different response from requests. The former elicits an obligatory verbal response and the interaction between the speaker and the addressee is completed entirely at the verbal level. Even when the response is non-verbal, it is merely a surrogate of the verbal response. The latter, however, elicits an obligatory non-verbal response with perhaps an accompanying verbal response and the interaction is completed at the non-verbal level (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of 'requests'). In other words, 'questions' have a different discourse function or consequence from 'requests' and therefore it should not be

subsumed under the latter (see also Stubbs 1983:75, Harris 1980:174).

Since the category 'question' is vague and ill-defined and cannot be subsumed under either 'requests' or 'directives', I propose to set up a discourse category for utterances which elicit solely a verbal response. I shall call it *Elicitations*.

3.5 *Elicitations*

The term *Elicitation* is first introduced by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) to describe utterances in the classroom which elicit a verbal response. They write,

> *An elicitation is an act the function of which is to request a linguistic response - linguistic, although the response may be a non-verbal surrogate such as a nod or raised hand. (p. 28)*

The term *Elicitation* is used here as a discourse category to describe any utterance, both inside and outside the classroom, which functions to elicit an obligatory verbal response or its non-verbal surrogate. For example,

31.[Data B/Tape B/Side A/#3/p.4]
→ B: Do you, do you have wheels?
A: Yes, I drive, it's Donald's car.

B's utterance prospects a verbal response from A, or a non-verbal surrogate such as nodding or shaking his head. This response is obligatory, the absence of which would be noticeable and is likely to lead to a protest from B.

According to this characterization, any utterance which prospects an obligatory verbal response will be classified as an *Elicitation* irrespective of its syntactic form. This

is a more satisfactory characterization because it avoids the inconsistency of using syntactic criteria for some utterances and discourse criteria for others; it avoids confusing labels such as 'exclamatory questions' and 'declarative questions' where in former, the term 'question' refers to the interrogative form whereas in the latter, the term 'question' refers to the discourse function; it also avoids the lumping together of utterances which have different discourse consequences, such as the characterization of 'questions' as 'requests'.

In the following, I shall present a classification of *Elicitations* into more delicate subclasses according to the different responses prospected.

3.6 Subclasses of *Elicitation*

3.6.1 *Elicit:supply*

This category elicits information and is usually realized by wh-interrogatives or disjunctive interrogatives. However, as I have pointed out above, it can also be realized by positive polar interrogatives and declaratives.

The following arrowed utterances all realize *Elicit:supply*: they all invite the addressee to supply a piece of information.

32. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#2/p.1]
→ H: What time will you be finished?
X: Lecture finishes at about quarter past twelve.

33. [Data B/Tape E/Side A/#4/p.3]
→ X: Are you a literature section or a language=
[
H: No, no, I'm I'm not=
X: =studies.
[
H: =I'm language side, but I would like to see the two sides bridged myself.

34. [Data B/Tape B/Side A/#3]
→ B: Do you do you have wheels?
A: Yes, I drive, it's Donald's car.

35. [Schegloff 1972:107]
→ A: I don't know just where the - uh - this address// is
B: Well, where do- which part of the town do you live.
A: I live at four ten east Lowden.
B: Well, you don't live very far from me.

36. [Data B/Tape C/Side B/#1/p.9]
E: D'you have an O.U.P. here, or you haven't got it?
F: No, I um I asked them, they didn't have it, so I got it from New York.
→ E: You have to get it from New York huh?
F: Yeah, just write, just write them a letter, they'll probably send it by air mail too, for free.

For 32, it will be generally agreed that H's utterance is an *Elicit:supply*. X's utterance in 33 is similar to H's utterance in 32 in that it also invites the addressee to supply a piece of information, except that the answer prospected here is one of the alternatives supplied. B's utterance in 34 is what Quirk et al refer to as a 'neutral polarity yes-no question' in which the speaker does not have any assumptions as to whether the answer is "yes" or "no". As mentioned before, although the prospected answers to this kind of utterance are usually in the form of "yes" or "no", they do not and cannot possibly realize a

confirmation or disconfirmation because there is no speaker assumption to confirm or disconfirm. They are in fact the missing information that the speaker seeks. 34 is therefore an *Elicit:supply*. A's utterance in 35 is declarative in form. However, we can see that A is not giving B a piece of information but rather seeking information. It is equivalent to "Where is this address?" and is therefore an *Elicit:supply*. Finally, E's utterance in 36 is a declarative plus a questioning particle. This kind of surface form commonly realizes a confirmation-seeking *Elicitation*. But in this particular context, its function is obviously not to seek confirmation since what it appears to seek confirmation of has already been given in the preceding utterance and there does not appear to be any hitch in communication between E and F. E's utterance is therefore seeking further information from F about obtaining the book from New York.

There is a kind of *Elicit:supply* which needs some discussion here: that in which the addressee is invited to supply information which the speaker already possesses so that the information supplied can be evaluated by the latter. It is the kind of *Elicitation* performed in the classroom where the teacher checks to see if the pupils know the answer. The function of this type of *Elicit:supply* is very different from that in social discourse. A comparison of the following three exchanges will highlight the difference:

37. Teacher: What is the time?
Pupil : It's ten o'clock?
Teacher: Well done.

38 A: What's the time?
B: Ten o'clock.
?A: That's right.

39. [Coulthard & Brazil 1981:90]
A: What time did you come in last night?
B: About midnight.
A: No, you didn't.

Exchange 37 is a typical classroom exchange: the evaluative third part indicates to the pupil whether his answer is right or wrong. Its absence would be considered odd or a clue that the answer is wrong (see Coulthard & Brazil 1981). Exchange 38 is odd **because of** the presence of the evaluative third part since it is part of the pragmatic presuppositions that the speaker does not know the answer (see also Searle's felicity conditions for 'questions' in Searle 1979).

As for exchange 39, A's evaluative utterance is often heard as aggressive. This is because part of the pragmatic presuppositions of B's response is that the information provided by B is true and/or is believed by B to be true. By saying "No, you didn't" A is challenging this presupposition. When the context of situation makes it clear that A is not only challenging the presupposition that the information provided is true, but also the presupposition that B believes it to be true, then A is in fact challenging B's sincerity. A's evaluative utterance is therefore very face-threatening and aggressive.

Despite the difference between these two types of *Elicit:supply*, I do not want to set up a separate subclass to account for the classroom type for two reasons. Firstly, the response prospected by both types is the same. Secondly, as I have pointed out in the discussion of Searlean felicity conditons (see Chapter 1:1.3.1), sincerity condition and conditions pertaining to the speaker's intentions and preferences are not open for inspection. Whether the speaker wants to know the answer or to know if the addressee knows the answer to the question or not is not signalled in the *Elicitation* itself. Even in the classroom, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether an *Elicitation* is a genuine *Elicit:supply* or a knowledge checking *Elicit:supply*. Any experienced teacher will agree that very often the former is taken to be the latter by students. This kind of knowledge checking *Elicit:supply* is not identifiable by the analyst or even the addressee. Very often, it is not until the speaker produces the third part that the addressee or the analyst knows whether the speaker already has the answer to the *Elicitation*. In other words, it is only in retrospect that we are able to say which type of *Elicitation* has been performed. As we are dealing with the prospective classification of utterances, the difference discussed above does not justify the setting up of a separate subclass.

3.6.2 *Elicit:confirm*

This subclass invites the addressee to confirm the speaker's assumption. It can be realized by tag interrogatives (both reversed polarity tags and copy tags), declaratives, positive and negative polar interrogatives. The following arrowed utterances are all instances of *Elicit:confirm*.

40. [Data C/Tape 4/p.14]
THINK you did that
→ S: //p i THIS year //r+ DIDn't you //
G: Oh yeah.

41. [Data B/Tape B/Side A/#1/p.2]
→ F: //p JOHN would know //r+ WOULD he //
H: Yeah, John would know.

42. [Data B/Tape E/Side A/#4/p.3]
→ X: //p these ARE students in the ENGlish department //
H: That's right, they're all English English majors.

43. [Data B/Tape D/Side A/#1/p.2]
→ C: //p the WHITE building // r+ where they have the psyCHOlogy department and everything //
D: Psycho, law, you name it, oh they're all in there.

44. [Data B/Tape F/Side A/#1/p.3]
→ E: //p DIDn't ah //r YEVteSHANKo // r+ write a POem about that //
F: That's right, yeah.

45. [Data B/Tape B/Side A/ #2/p.1]
→ X: //p is that YOU HENry //
Y: Yes, that's right, yeah.

In all of the above arrowed utterances, the declarative or the declarative associated with the interrogative expresses what the speaker assumes to be true and the speaker is inviting the addressee to confirm that his assumption is true.

In 40 and 41, the rising tag invites the addressee to confirm the speaker's assumption. The arrowed utterances in 42 and 43 are declarative in form, with the former spoken with a falling tone (p) and the latter in rising tone (r+). In both cases, the addressee has better knowledge of the subject matter than the speaker. Hence they realize the function of seeking confirmation from the addressee. If it were vice versa, 42 would realize the function of giving information and 43 would realize the function of seeking confirmation that the addressee knows which building the speaker is referring to. The following is an example of the latter.

46. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#1]
H: //p HEY // p i i forGOT something //p i HAVE to go to LUNCH today // with // ((laughs)) =
Alice
[
X: ((laughs))
→ H: =//o to SEE the //p YOU know //o THE //p the ah VIDeotape // r+ of that SHOW // r+ we DID at the hoTEL //
X: Yup, yup.

In other words, the discourse function of an utterance depends not only on the intonation, but also the context of situation and who knows what (see Brazil 1985). However, it should be noted that the context of situation does not always help to disambiguate the discourse function. For example,

47. [Coulthard & Brazil 1981:84]
A: so the meeting's on Friday.
B: thanks.
A: no I'm asking you.

In cases like this, the discourse function of the utterance will only be disambiguated as the discourse unfolds.

E's utterance in 44 is a negative polar interrogative. According to Quirk et al, 'negative questions' have a negative orientation: they are biased towards a negative answer (see 3.2.1). However, E's utterance is not negatively conducive. Quite the contrary, it prospects a positive response confirming the speaker's assumption that Yevteshanko did write a poem. Whether a negative polar interrogative is positively or negatively conducive depends on the context. For example, if A, upon seeing B still in bed at eleven o'clock in the morning, says, "Don't you have lectures today?", then the expected answer to the utterance is obviously negative. A positive answer would be contrary to the expectation.

Finally, in 45, X assumes that the person on the other end of the line is Henry and he invites the addressee to confirm his assumption. X's utterance is what Quirk et al would describe as a positively biased 'yes-no question'. However, as we can see, there are no assertive forms like "someone" or "already" in the utterance[4]. The positive orientation is achieved by making "you" prominent. In other words, prosodic features like prominence are an important factor in determining what kind of *Elicitation* an utterance realizes.

In all of the above utterances, the prospected response is confirmation. The addressee can of course respond by a disconfirmation, but the response will be contrary to the expectation and is likely to be spoken with contrastive high key. It should be noted, however, that sometimes we do find a confirmation in response to an *Elicit:confirm* spoken with high key and a disconfirmation spoken with mid key which is normally used to indicate confirmation or agreement. For example,

48. B: //p you were in LONdon//r+ WEREn't you//
  → C: //p NO//p i was in BIRmingham//

49. [Data C/Tape 4/p.28]
  G: //p i MEAN they //r+ ISn't the LION rock TUNnel //
                MOUNtain
    r+ a tunnel through a //
      YEAH
  → S: //p // that's probably the closest
    survival tunnel for us.

In 48, "no" disconfirms the speaker's assumption that C was in London and yet it is spoken with mid key. This can be explained by social considerations. By choosing mid key, the speaker is presenting his response as though it is not contrastive to the speaker's expectation, hence making the response less face-threatening and socially more acceptable.

In 49, "yeah" confirms the speaker's assumption and yet it is spoken with high key. This is because although intonationally a mid key is used to indicate that the response accords with the first speaker's expectation, the addressee may choose to use a high key for emphatic

purpose or in a particular context to indicate surprise, delight or annoyance (see Coulthard & Brazil 1981). In this case, S's use of a high key conveys an additional meaning which is paraphrasable as "yes, that's right, I hadn't thought of that before."

3.6.3 *Elicit:agree*

This subclass invites the addressee to agree with the speaker's assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. It initiates what Brazil refers to as a 'world-matching' exchange (see 1984:36) or, in Labov & Fanshel's terms, an exchange about an 'AB-event' (see Labov & Fanshel 1977:80). It is most commonly realized by tag interrogatives and negative polar interrogatives, both spoken with a falling tone. The following arrowed utterances are instances of *Elicit:agree*.

50. [BCET/Data A/p. 34]
→ B: //r i supPOSE he's a bit SENile now//p ISn't he//
C: He looks it.

51. [Data C/Tape 4/p. 53]
G and S are talking about a kind of bread made by the Hopis.

S: It's just, oh, the taste is, it's the most delicious thing that I've ever had, light blue, translucent
[
→ G: // r+ doesn't that SOUND like a NICE name for bread // p HOpi BLUE bread //
S: ((laughs))
G: It's like something you get from a health foodstore. Hopi blue bread. ((laughs))

In the arrowed utterances, the speaker assumes that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. All he is

doing is invite the addressee to agree with him, hence establishing the existing common ground between himself and the addressee. The nature of this kind of *Elicitation* is best seen in exchanges like the following,

52. [On a sunny day]
A: Lovely day, isn't it?
B: Yes, beautiful.

As I have pointed out above, A's proposition is self-evidently true. Hence A is not asking B to confirm that his proposition is true, but rather to agree with him that it self-evidently is (see Brazil 1984:36). *Elicit: agrees* like the above are often used to start a conversation, particularly between strangers. Other examples are the use of *Elicit:agrees* like "Are you John Matthews?" or "You must be John Matthews" to start a conversation in an encounter in a party or at the beginning of an interview when names are already known. This is because since what the addressee is invited to agree with is self-evidently true, the speaker is bound to be successful in eliciting the expected response, hence establishing the common ground between the speaker and the addressee. The establishing of the common ground serves to "promote social mutuality" and paves the way for further interaction (see Brazil 1984:34).

3.6.4. *Elicit:commit*

There is yet another type of *Elicitation* which differs from the above three subclasses in that it elicits more

than just a verbal response from the addressee. It also elicits commitment of some kind. Let us identify them as *Elicit:commit*, for want of a better label.

Consider the following example,

53. → A: Can I just ask you a question?
B: Sure.
A: What do you think of the standard of the students here?

The purpose of A's *Elicitation* is not just to elicit a "yes" answer from B, but also to get B to answer the upcoming question. As Goffman (1981) points out, the intent of the question "Have you got a minute?" is to open up a channel of communication which stays open beyond the hoped for reply that satisfies the opening. In 52, once the addressee has produced an agreeing "sure", the speaker is committed to producing a further *Elicitation*. In other words, the interaction is not completed at the addressee's response, but rather at the production of at least a further exchange in which the speaker asks the question. The following exchange is therefore odd.

*54. A: Can I ask you a question?
B: Sure.
A: Ø

Hence this kind of *Elicitation* not only invites an obligatory response but also invites commitment on the part of the addressee to allowing the speaker to produce a further utterance. If the speaker fails to do so after the addressee has responded positively, he is likely to be challenged by the addressee.

Another kind of *Elicitation* which can be considered an *Elicit:commit* is that realized by the type of wh-interrogative discussed above (see 10 and 11) which invites the addressee to enter into a contract with the speaker. The following is another example.

55. [Data B/Tape C/Side A/#5/p.1-2]
→ X: Where shall I meet you?
H: Well, ah I'll be finished with my class at five. It's=
[
X: uhuh
H: = right in Tsimshatsui, so may be we'll meet you at the Peninsular, between say five-fifteen and five-thirty?
X: Okay, wonderful.

As I have already pointed out above, utterances like X's utterance above (arrowed) initiate an exchange in which the speaker endorses the "information" elicited in the third part. Once the endorsement is given, both the speaker and the addressee have committed themselves to a future action.

In the sense that this type of *Elicitation* commits the speaker and the addressee to a future action or a further exchange, it bears strong similarity to 'requests' which, if responded to positively, will commit either the speaker or the addressee to a non-verbal action. However, there is an important difference between them: a verbal response is obligatory in the former whereas it is not in the latter.

3.6.5 *Elicit:repeat* and *Elicit:clarify*

These are two subclasses of *Elicitation* which are meta-discoursal: they refer to the discourse itself. The labels are self-explanatory: *Elicit:repeat* prospects a repetition of the utterance preceding the *Elicitation* and *Elicit:clarify* prospects a clarfication of a preceding utterance or utterances. The former is realized by wh-interrogatives such as "Who/When/Where/What did you say?", "Say that again?" or lexical items such as "Sorry?", "Pardon?" or "Huh?". It should be noted, however, that the utterance "What did you say?" realizes an *Elicit:repeat* only when "what" is prominent and is usually spoken with a rising tone (r+). If "you" is prominent, then it realizes an *Elicit:supply*. The following is a possible contextualization of the latter.

56. A: He asked me if he could borrow my car.
→ B: and what did YOU say.

Here, B is not asking A for a repetition, but to report what he said. It is therefore an *Elicit:inform* and is usually spoken with a falling (p) tone.

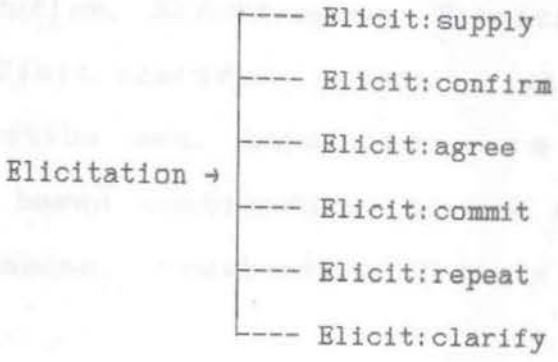
Elicit:clarify has a greater variety of realizations. It can be realized by wh-interrogatives such as "What do you mean?","Which room?" "Where?" or a high key repetition of a word or phrase in the preceding utterance. For example,

57. [BCET/Data A/p.1]
C: Do you get the bus?
B: Yeah.

→ C: The bus?
B: And the - tube.

C's utterance, spoken with high key, elicits clarification of B's preceding response.

Let us summarize the subclasses of *Elicitation* as follows:



3.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have identified the first subclass of acts which realizes the *Initiating Move* of an exchange - *Elicitations*. I have characterized *Elicitation* as a discourse category which prospects an obligatory verbal response. I have argued that this subclass is distinctly different from 'requests' because the latter prospects an obligatory non-verbal response. As the utterances characterized as *Elicitations* here are often referred to as 'questions' in both the speech act literature and the linguistic literature, I have reviewed some of the important studies done on 'questions'. I have demonstrated that their characterization and classification of 'questions' are unsatisfactory because they are not based

on a consistent criterion. As a result, the term 'question' remains vague and ill-defined. I have therefore proposed the discourse category of *Elicitation* to describe utterances which have been referred to as 'questions'. Based on the response prospected by various *Elicitations*, I have identified six subclasses: *Elicit:supply*, *Elicit:confirm*, *Elicit:agree*, *Elicit:commit*, *Elicit:repeat* and *Elicit:clarify*. This characterization and classification are, hopefully, more satisfactory because they are based consistently on the discourse function of the utterances, irrespective of their syntactic form.

Footnotes

[1]The analysis of questions in Quirk et al (1985) is basically the same as that in Quirk et al (1972).

[2]The term 'high termination' is used in Brazil's sense (see Brazil et al 1980).

[3]In fact, it is linguo-centric and even misleading to call these questions 'yes-no questions'.

[4]Even when assertive forms like "someone" is used, the utterance is not necessarily positively orientated. For example, the utterance "Did someone CALL last night?" with the prominence on "call" is not positively orientated. It is equivalent to "Did anyone CALL last night?". Both of them mean "Was there a caller?" Unless the stress is on "someone", the utterance is not positively orientated and "someone" is not contrastive to "anyone". I am grateful to David Brazil for pointing this out to me.

CHAPTER 4 INITIATING ACT: REQUESTIVES

4.1 Introduction

The second subclass of *Initiating Act* is *Requestives*. Let us start by looking at the act 'request' from which the label of this subclass is derived. 'Requests' have often been considered to belong to the same category as 'orders' or 'commands' subsumed under either 'Directives' or 'Requestives' (see Searle 1979, Quirk et al 1972, 1985, Vendler 1972, Fraser 1975, Katz 1977, Bach & Harnish 1978, Labov & Fanshel 1977, Ervin-Tripp 1976). Fraser considers 'request', 'ask', 'command', 'invite', 'order', 'instruct' 'beg' as belonging to the category of 'Requesting' which is characterized as "the speaker's desire for the hearer to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the proposition."(1975:192). Searle brings 'request', 'invite', 'permit' together with 'command' and 'order' under 'Directives', whose illocutionary point is to get the hearer to do something, the sincerity condition is want and the propositional content is always that the addressee does some future action. Labov & Fanshel subsume 'orders' like "Come home!", 'requests' like "Will you please come home?", and 'suggestions' like "Isn't it about time you came home?" and 'hints' like "It's getting late!" under the category of 'Request for Action'. They assert that the common characteristic of all of these speech

events is that the speaker is using a verbal means to accomplish the end of getting the addressee to come home. Let us therefore examine 'requests' and 'orders' and see whether they really belong to the same category.

4.2 'Requests' and 'Orders'

'Requests' and 'orders' do share an important characteristic which differentiates them from *Elicitations* and *Informatives*: they both elicit a potentially non-verbal action from the addressee. However, at a more delicate stage, there is an important difference between 'requests' and 'orders' which puts them into two different categories. Searle (1969) suggests that 'order' and 'command' differ from 'request' in that the former have the additional preparatory condition that the speaker must be in a position of authority over the addressee. Others suggest that the difference between an 'order' and a 'request' is one of politeness and deference. While it is true that 'orders' can only be appropriately performed by a speaker who has authority over the addressee but not vice versa, and it is true that 'requests' are generally conceived as polite ways of getting the addressee to do something, these are not the crucial differences distinguishing an 'order' and a 'request'. First of all, it is not uncommon for 'requests' to be performed when the speaker has authority over the addressee. Secondly, as Lyons (1977) points out, a 'request' can be impolite and

an impolite 'request' is not an 'order' (see pp.748-9). The crucial difference is that a 'request' gives the addressee the options of complying or not complying whereas an 'order' does not. In other words, in a 'request', the speaker acknowledges the addressee's right to withhold compliance (see Lyons 1977, Katz 1977, Leech 1983). An 'order' assumes that the addressee will co-operate whereas a 'request' does not. This is supported by Lawson's study of directives of a two-year-old child (quoted in Ervin-Tripp 1977) in which it is discovered that the child uses directives like "Mommy, I want milk." to her mother whereas to her father, she uses forms like "Daddy, I want some please? Please Daddy, huh?" As Ervin-Tripp points out, this is because the mother is the one who supplies food and therefore compliance is assumed, whereas the father does not usually supply food, therefore compliance is not assumed (see Ervin-Tripp 1977:183-4).

Hence, J's utterance in the following is a 'request' although he definitely has power over H, the secretary.

1. [Fieldnotes]
J is a professor and H is his secretary.

J: Hazel, could you knock up some coffee?
H: Okay.

This is because serving coffee is not part of the duty of a secretary and therefore compliance is not assumed. Although we seldom find a non-compliance in situations like this, the compliance is nevertheless a choice made in the two options of compliance and non-compliance. It is

only when the utterance prospects compliance by virtue of the speaker's right or power/authority over the addressee that it is an 'order'.

Therefore, it is not accidental that the unmarked form of a 'request' is the interrogative whereas the unmarked form of an 'order' is the imperative. When I say "unmarked form", I am invoking the linguistic concept of markedness as expounded in Comrie who writes,

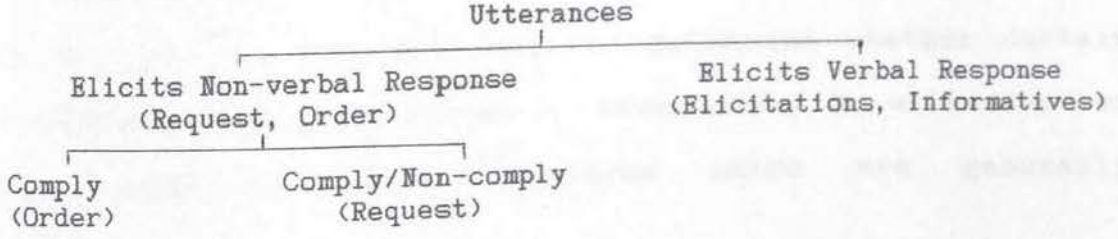
> *The intuition behind the notion of markedness in linguistics is that, where we have an opposition between two or more members..., it is often the case that one member is felt to be more usual, more normal, less specific than the other (in marked terminology it is unmarked, the others marked). (1976:111, quoted in Levinson 1983:333).*

A 'request' realized by the interrogative "Can you close the window?" indicates that the speaker does not assume that the addressee is able to carry out the requested action, hence giving the latter the option of complying or not complying. An 'order' realized by the imperative "Close the window." does not indicate the speaker's doubt or query as to the addressee's carrying out the action, hence leaving the latter no option but to comply. Churchill (1978) proposes two parts to all 'requests': the first addresses the addressee's right to agree or refuse to comply and the second states what act the speaker would like the addressee to perform (see p.66).

This crucial difference between a 'request' and an 'order' can be seen from the response prospected. For a 'request', both compliance and non-compliance are

prospected responses whereas for an 'order', only compliance is prospected. A non-compliance challenges the presuppositions of the latter (see Chapter 7:7.4.3.1). It should be noted, however, that although both compliance and non-compliance are prospected by a 'request', the former is more strongly prospected than the latter. Or, to put it in Pomerantz's terms, a compliance is a "preferred" response whereas a non-compliance is a "dispreferred" response (see Pomerantz 1984:63). This can be seen from the fact that a compliance to a 'request' is often realized by a simple "yes" or its equivalent, whereas a non-compliance is often realized by not just a simple "no", but also reasons for non-compliance and other features such as hesitation, the particle "well" etc (see also Churchill 1978:71, Levinson 1983:332ff).

Hence, according to our criterion of characterization, which is the response prospected, we can say that at a less delicate stage, 'requests' and 'orders' belong to the same subclass which elicits a non-verbal action response as opposed to the subclass which elicits a verbal response. But at a more delicate stage, they belong to two different subclasses. We can represent the classification as follows:



In the above discussion, the term 'request' is used in the commonly understood sense of request for action. However, the characteristics of eliciting a potentially obligatory non-verbal response and giving the addressee the option of compliance or non-compliance are not peculiar to 'request for action'. There are other illocutionary acts which bear the same characteristics. Consider:

2. Would you like a piece of apple cake?

3. May I invite you to dinner next Saturday?

4. Can I use the telephone?

The above utterances would be commonly referred to as an 'offer', an 'invitation' and a 'request for permission'. They all prospect a compliance or a non-compliance. A compliance will commit either the speaker or the addressee to perform a non-verbal action. Therefore I wish to propose that the acts realized by the above utterances together with 'request for action' belong to the same subclass of *Initiating Act*. Let us call them *Requestives*; and let us call the subclass to which an 'order' belongs *Directives* (see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of *Directives*).

Given this characterization of *Requestives* and *Directives*, we are now able to determine whether certain utterances are *Requestives* or *Directives*. We will discover that some of the utterances which are generally

characterized as 'requests' will be characterized as *Directives* here. For example, utterances of the form "I want you to do X" is widely quoted as an example of a 'request'. Gordon & Lakoff (1975) argue that because one of the felicity conditions of a 'request' is "S wants H to do A", then if the speaker S sincerely requests the addressee H to do A, then S wants H to do A. They call this speaker-based sincerity condition and propose that one can convey a 'request' by asserting this speaker-based sincerity condition. Hence, "I want you to take this garbage out." conveys a 'request' (see p.85-6). This kind of analysis overlooks the fact that when the speaker of the above utterance does not in fact give the addressee the option of non-compliance by virtue of his right or power/authority over the latter, it can hardly be characterized as a 'request'.

Ervin-Tripp (1976), in a study of 'directives' in American English, discovers that utterances of the form "I want you to do X", which she terms needs and wants statements, occur in transactional work settings where who is to do what is very clear and are used between people differing in rank and in families where solicitude on the part of the addressee could be assumed. For example,

5. [Ervin-Tripp 1976:29]
   [Doctor to nurse in hospital]
   I'll need a 19 gauge needle, IV tubing and a preptic swab.

6. [ibid]
   [Head of office to subordinate]
   I want you to check the requirements for stairs.

7. [ibid:30]
[Four-year-old to mother]
I need a spoon. Mommy, I need a spoon.

The above utterances occur in settings where compliance from the addressee is normally expected, and therefore needs and wants statements which prospect compliance are used. In other words, needs and wants statements are *Directives* rather than *Requestives*. It should be noted that if *Requestives* are used in these settings, then the speaker is behaving **as though** he is giving the addressee the option of compliance or non-compliance although he is sure of getting compliance from the latter.

Having characterized *Requestives*, I shall now attempt to identify the subclasses of *Requestives* according to the different responses they prospect.

4.3 Subclasses of *Requestives*

The classification of *Requestives* into more delicate subclasses is no easy task. Consider the following utterances:

8. Can I get you another drink?
9. Let me get a chair for you.
10. I'm giving a party this weekend; will you come?
11. Do come and spend a weekend with us.
12. Would you like to come round for dinner this evening?
13. Would you like to have a piece of apple cake?
14. Do sit down.

8 could be considered an 'offer', but it is labelled as a 'requested permission' by some (see for example van Dijk 1981). 9 is considered an 'offer' by Leech & Svartvik (1975), but it can also be 'asking permission' from the addressee for it is paraphrasable as "Allow me to get you a chair." As for 10 and 11, we may say that the speaker is extending an 'invitation', but we may also say that the speaker is 'requesting' the addressee to come to his party and to come to his place for the weekend respectively. Brown & Levinson (1978) would label utterances as such as either an 'offer' or a 'request'. The example they give is "I know you can't bear parties, but this one will really be good - do come." (p.130). Formal invitations are often formulated as requests for action. For example, "Mr. and Mrs. Waterson request the honour of your presence at their daughter's wedding on 9 March 1985, 10:00 at St. John's Cathedral." 12 would usually be identified as an 'invitation' whereas 13 would be identified as an 'offer'. Yet in what way is 12 different from 13, since they are both realized by "Would you like to X"? Finally, 14 is identified as an 'offer' by Leech and Svartvik (1975), but it could also be labelled as an 'invitation' to sit down.

How do we decide what act is being performed in each instance? Some linguists take the easy way out by suggesting that utterances have multiple functions, that is, they perform more than one act at a time and that their illocutionary force is indeterminate so that it is

not possible to pin down exactly what illocutionary act is being performed (see the discussion in Chapter 1:1.2 on Levinson 1983 and Leech 1983). I wish to suggest that the solution to the problem is to look at the response prospected, for it is the only reliable criterion in determining what act is being performed in the discourse.

Let us examine the responses to the following utterances.

15. Can I get you another drink?

16. Can I use the telephone?

17. Can you get this typed tomorrow?

18. Would you like to come round for dinner this evening?

For 15 and 16, a positive response from the addressee will commit the speaker to some non-verbal action. (Notice that for 16, it is only a subclass of a *Requestive* if the speaker means "Can I use the telephone **now**?" That is, the speaker intends to perform the action if he gets a positive response from the addressee. If he merely wants to know whether he is allowed to use the telephone, that is, if there is no non-verbal action following a positive response, then 16 is an *Elicitation*.) For 17 and 18, a positive response from the addressee will commit him to some non-verbal action. Hence, according to who is to perform the non-verbal action, we can identify two subclasses of *Requestives*: 15 and 16 prospect potentially a speaker action (S Action) whereas 17 and 18 propsect potentially an addressee action (H Action).

Let us now see whether we can subclassify them. Let us look at the responses prospected. The following are some commonly found realizations of prospected responses to utterances 15 to 18.

15a.	A: Can I get you another drink?	(S Action)
	B: a) That's very nice of you, thank you.	(Compliance)
	b) I'm fine, thank you.	(Non-compliance)
16a.	A: Can I use the telephone?	(S Action)
	B: a) Of course you can.	(Compliance)
	b) It's only for staff use, sorry.	(Non-compliance)
17a.	A: Can you get this typed tomorrow?	(H Action)
	B: a) Sure.	(Compliance)
	b) I don't think I can. I've got a lot to get through. Sorry.	(Non-compliance)
18a.	A: Would you like to come round for dinner tonight?	(H Action)
	B: a) That's very nice of you, thank you.	(Compliance)
	b) I'm going to a concert this evening, thanks anyway.	(Non-compliance)

From the above, we can see that the realizations of the prospected responses in 15a and 18a are very similar. In both cases, a compliance is realized by an **appreciation** and a **thanking**, and a non-compliance is realized by **giving a reason for non-compliance** and a **thanking**. The realizations of the prospected responses in 16a and 17a are also very similar. In both cases, a compliance is realized by a positive response "of course", "sure" **without a thanking**, and a non-compliance is realized by **giving a reason for non-compliance** and an **apology**. This suggests to us that there are common features shared by 15 and 18 and by 16 and 17. From the fact that a thanking

occurs in both a compliance and a non-compliance in 15 and 18, we can deduce that the S Action in 15 and the H Action in 18 are beneficial to the addressee and that is why the addressee thanks the speaker in each case. And from the fact that in 16 and 17, an apology occurs in a non-compliance and a thanking does not occur in a compliance, we can deduce that the S Action in 16 and the H Action in 17 are beneficial to the speaker.

This is further supported by the fact that it would in fact be odd if the responses to 16 and 17 did contain a thanking. Consider,

16b. A: Can I use the telephone?
B: *a) Of course you can, thank you.
*b) It's only for staff use, thank you.

17b. A: Can you get this typed tomorrow?
B: *a) Sure, thank you.
*b) I don't think I can, I've got a lot to get through, thank you.

It would also be odd or impolite if a compliance to 15 and 18 contained a simple positive response **without** an appreciation or thanking. Consider,

15b. A: Can I get you another drink?
? B: Sure.

18b. A: Would you like to come round for dinner tonight?
? B: Of course.

It would also be odd if a non-compliance to 15 contained an apology. Consider,

15c. A: Can I get you another drink?
*B: I'm fine, sorry.

A non-compliance to 18, however, can contain an apology. For example,

18c. A: Would you like to come round for dinner tonight?
B: I'm going to a concert tonight. Sorry about that.

This suggests that the H Action in 18 could be beneficial not only to the addressee but also the speaker. The former's turning up for dinner is often taken as a token of respect or solidarity.

From the regularities exhibited in the prospected responses of the two subclasses of *Requestives*, we can further classify them into four subclasses. In 15, the speaker's non-verbal action benefits the addressee (H Benefit) whereas in 16, the speaker's non-verbal action benefits the speaker himself (S Benefit). In 17, the addressee's non-verbal action benefits the speaker (S Benefit) whereas in 18 the addressee's non-verbal action benefits the addressee or both the speaker and the addressee (H Benefit/S+H Benefit). Let us identify 15 as realizing an *Offer*, 16 as realizing a *Request for Permission*, 17 as realizing a *Request for Action* and 18 as an *Invitation*.

A *Request for Action* is typically realized by an interrogative in which "**You do X**" or "You do X for me" is questioned or a declarative containing "You do X" with a "please" tag. An *Invitation* is typically realized by an interrogative in which the addressee's want or desire is questioned, usually of the form "Would **you like (to do) X**?" A *Request for Permission* is typically realized by an interrogative of the form "May/Can **I do X**?" An *Offer* is

typically realized by "May/Can **I do X for you**?" Notice how in these typical realizations, the performer of the future action is clearly indicated. For example "Can **you do X**?" in *Request for action* and "Can **I do X**?" in *Request for Permission*. Notice also that whether the action is for the benefit of the speaker or the addressee is often indicated. For example, "May I do X **for you**?" in 'Offer' and "Can you do X **for me**?" in *Request for Action*.

The subclass *Request for Action* subsumes not only acts which have been identified as 'requests' in the speech act literature, but also 'contingent offers'. Consider the following,

19. [Data B/Tape E/Side A/#4/p.4]
H has asked X, a visiting professor, to give a lecture and X said that he would think about it and give him a reply on Thursday.

→ H: Well, I'll take you to the airport as a as a ah ((laughs)) if you if you did it for me, I'll be I'll be very happy to take you to the airport.
X: Well, that's very nice, thank you very much ((laughs)) I'll I'll ( ) of you and I=
[
H: so treat for a treat, treat for a treat.
X: =think Dr. Lee would want to take, would be taking me to=
[
H: Oh yeah.
X: =the airport, but but if you did it instead, that might be very convenient for him. I'll see you on Thursday.
H: Okay.

Utterances such as that arrowed above have been referred to as 'contingent promises' or 'contingent offers' in which the speaker commits himself to a future action if the addressee complies. They are considered a kind of 'Commissive' (see Searle & Venderveken 1985). This

characterization misses the illocutionary point of these utterances. Their purpose is to get the addressee to perform an action, not to commit the speaker to an action although their acceptance will commit the speaker to an action as well. Notice here that even though part of H's utterance "I'll be very happy to take you to the airport." may look like a 'Commissive', the illocutionary point of the entire utterance is a *Requestive*. It is an attempt to get the addressee to do something for the benefit of the speaker and it gives the addressee the option of compliance or non-compliance. Therefore it is best characterized as a variant of a *Request for Action*.

If H's utterance in 19 is a *Request for Action*, why is it responded to by an appreciative remark "that's very nice" and a thanking? This can be explained by the "hybrid" nature of the utterance (see Hancher 1979). Because it contains the speaker's commitment to an action as part of the *Request for Action*, X has chosen to respond to the former instead of the latter, out of politeness. This is supported by the fact that the thanking and the appreciative remark do not in fact realize a compliance to the *Request for Action*. X has **not** committed himself to giving a lecture, as can be seen from what he said later "I'll see you on Thursday", meaning he will tell H his decision on Thursday, which is what they have agreed upon previously.

In a sense, *Request for Action* can also subsume acts which have been identified as 'suggestions' or 'proposals' which potentially commit both the speaker and the addressee to a future action. For example,

20. [Data B/Tape B/Side B/#6/p.2]
→ X: so why don't we arrange to get together maybe Sunday?
H: Okay, that'll be splendid, that'll be great.

What X is doing here is to try to get H to commit himself to a future action; and in this sense, X's utterance can be considered a *Request for Action*. It is also similar to a *Request for Action* in the sense that X **wants** the action to be carried out. This is supported by the fact if H were unable to comply, he is likely to give a reason for non-compliance, and perhaps an apology as well. The following example supports this point.

21. [Data B/Tape D/Side B/#2/p.2]
X: Or alternatively we could get together at five-fifteen when I'm finished.
→ H: No, I had to babysit, actually, can I - 'cos I think Alice's going to a Tai-chi class later.

However, there are three ways in which utterances which have been identified as 'suggestions' or 'proposals' differ from a *Request for Action*.

Firstly, while a *Request for Action* is typically realized by "Can/could **you do X**?", a 'suggestion' or a 'proposal' is typically realized by "Can/Could/Shall **we do X**?" Secondly. while a *Request for Action* which is complied with is often followed by the requester's thanking the requestee for complying, a 'suggestion' or a 'propose'

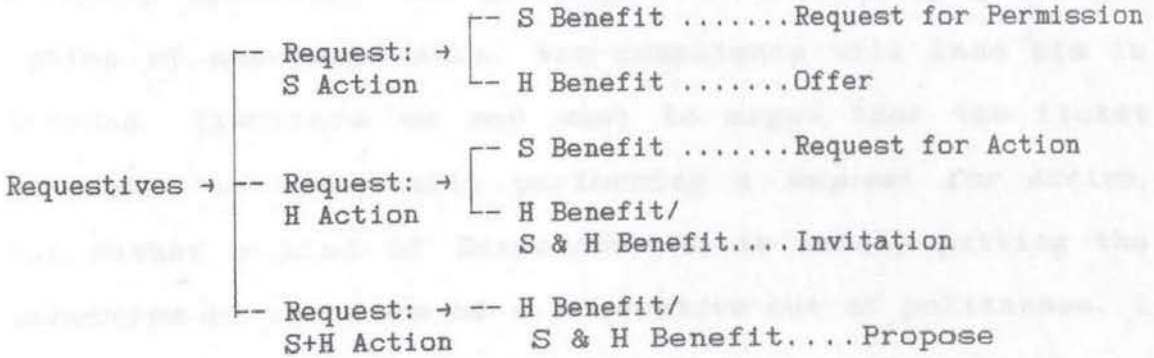
which is complied with is not likely to be followed by 'thanking'. Consider the oddity of the following,

22. J: Why don't we arrange to get together maybe Sunday?
H: Okay, that'll be splendid, that'll be great.
*J: Thank you.

Thirdly, from the fact that a compliance is often realized by an enthusiastic acceptance **without** 'thanking' and that the requester does not usually thank the requestee for complying, we can deduce that the action is often not only beneficial to the former but also the latter.

The above reasons warrant the setting up of another subclass to account for utterances such as the above. Let us call them *Propose*.

The features of these five subclasses of *Requestives* can be summarized as follows:



Given the above characterization of the five subclasses of *Requestives*, we are now able to determine what act is being performed in the following utterances:

23. [van Dijk 1981:228]
[Ticket inspector to passenger]
"May I see your ticket please?"

24. [Passenger to passenger]
"May I see your ticket please?"

25. [Professor to student]
"Please sit down."

26. [Chairman to panel members when meeting is about to begin]
"Please be seated."

Utterance 23 looks like a *Request for Permission* in its surface form. But a ticket inspector does not have to obtain permission from a passenger to see the latter's ticket; passengers are to show their tickets when required. Hence the ticket inspector is actually soliciting action from the passenger. The latter's action benefits the speaker in the sense that by so doing, he is helping the ticket inspector to fulfil his duty. Therefore I would identify the utterance as a *Request for Action*. Strictly speaking, the passenger is not really given the option of non-compliance. Non-compliance will land him in trouble. Therefore we may want to argue that the ticket inspector is not really performing a *Request for Action*, but rather a kind of *Directive*. He is merely putting the *Directive* in the form of a *Requestive* out of politeness. I shall return to this point later.

Utterance 24 is a *Request for Permission* because unless the addressee responds positively, the speaker will not be able to see his ticket. Unlike the ticket inspector, a passenger has no right to ask another passenger to show his ticket. The action is beneficial to the speaker as it satisfies his desire, whatever the reason may be.

Utterance 25 looks like a *Request for Action* and is often quoted as an instance of it. But in this particular context, the positive response that it intends to elicit is the student's sitting down and a thanking. The action benefits the student, or at least the speaker is behaving as though it benefits the student even though it might benefit him as well. Therefore I would identify it as an *Invitation* to sit down.

Finally, utterance 26 is a *Request for Action* because the requested action is beneficial to the chairman whose duty is to conduct the procedures of a meeting. It should be noted that the utterance could also function as a *Directive* if the panel members are to comply upon hearing the utterance, in which case we would say that similar to utterance 23, the chairman is putting the *Directive* in the form of a *Requestive* out of politeness.

4.4 *Requestives* and Politeness Strategies

If the features of the subclasses of *Requestive* are so well-defined, how then do we explain why there has been so much disagreement over which subclass of *Requestive* is being performed in certain utterances? I suggest that the disagreement arises from the fact that at times a given subclass is presented in a form which typically realizes another subclass. For example, in utterance 23, a *Request for Action* is presented in a form which typically realizes a *Request for Permission*. This is a linguistic phenomenon

frequently found in *Requestives*. The ticket inspector's *Request for Action* is a case in point. Other examples are:

27. [BCET]
"It is my pleasure and privilege now to invite her Royal Highness to announce his name and to present the award."

28. Mr. and Mrs. Waterson request the honour of your presence at their daughter's wedding on 19 March, 1985, 10.00 at St. John's Cathedral.

29. [Ervin-Tripp 1976:37]
[Brother to sister]
"May I have my record back?"

30. [ibid:37]
[Salesman to clerk]
"May I have change for a dollar?"

In 27, the *Request for Action* from her Royal Highness is presented in the typical form of an *Invitation*; in 28, the contrary happens: an *Invitation* is presented in the typical form of a *Request for Action*. (Here, we can see that when performative verbs are used, they do not necessarily perform the named action.) In 29, a *Request for Action* is presented in the typical form of a *Request for Permission* and the same happens in 30. Why? And why is this phenonmenon so prevalent among *Requestives*.

I would like to answer the second question first. *Requestives* are intrinsically face-threatening acts (see Brown & Levinson 1978). All the subclasses of *Requestives* either predicate a future action of the addressee and in so doing put some pressure on him to do or to refrain from doing an action, hence infringing his freedom of action; or they predicate a future action of the speaker and in so

doing put some pressure on the addressee to accept or reject it, hence incurring a debt or a responsiblity for the action done. There are various strategies to minimize the threat such as using hedges, apologizing for transgressing, using softening mechanisms that give the addressee a face-saving way out etc. (see Brown & Levinson 1978 for a detailed discussion), and one important way of minimizing the threat is to present one subclass of *Requestive* as another subclass.

How is this done?

Recall the diagrammatic summary of the features of the five subclasses of *Requestive*. We can represent their features in a matrix as follows:

	S Action	H Action	S+H Action
S Benefit	Request Permission	Request Action	Propose
H Benefit	Offer	Invitation	-
S & H Benefit	-	Invitation	Propose

This matrix enables us to see more clearly what common features one act shares with another. An *Invitation* shares the feature of soliciting H action with *Request for Action*, yet it also shares with *Offer* the feature of H Benefit. An *Offer* shares the common feature of S Action with *Request for Permission*, but it also shares with *Invitation* the common feature of H Benefit and so on. This enables linguistic manipulation to take place when

circumstance requires, mostly out of politeness. Let us now see how this is done.

4.4.1. *Request for Action* presented in the typical form of a *Request for Permission*.

Consider the following utterances which have been quoted above:

31. [Brother to sister]
"Can I have my record back?"

32. [Salesman to Clerk]
"May I have change for a dollar?"

33. [Ticket inspector to passenger]
"May I see your ticket please?"

By presenting a *Request for Action* in the typical form of a *Request for Permission*, the speaker emphasizes the common feature between the two acts, which is the action specified benefits the speaker. He also minimizes the fact that the actual illocutionary force of the utterance is "Can **you do X**?" by shifting the focus from "you" to "I". Hence it sounds less imposing, as if it requires less of the addressee and therefore more polite.

4.4.2 *Request for Action* presented in the typical form of an *Invitation*

Consider the following utterances:

34. [BCET]
"It is my pleasure and privilege now to invite her Royal Highness to announce his name and to present the prizes."

35. [Fieldnotes]
"We would very much like you to consider presenting a paper at the Seminar and therefore invite you to send in an abstract for our consideration, to reach

us not later than 30 Nov 85."

In a *Request for Action*, the addressee's future action is beneficial to the speaker whereas in an *Invitation*, it is benefical to the addressee himself or to both the speaker and the addressee. A rejection of a *Request for Action* and an *Invitation* are both face-threatening. However, because the action elicited in an *Invitation* is beneficial to the addressee, or to both the speaker and the addressee, a rejection of an *Invitation* is less face-threatening than a *Request for Action*. In other words, it is easier to decline an *Invitation* than to refuse a *Request for Action*. And because of this, the speaker is putting less pressure on the addressee in an *Invitation* than in a *Request for Action*. Therefore, by presenting the latter in a form that typically realizes the former, the speaker seems to be less imposing and hence more polite.

4.4.3 *Request for Action* presented in the typical form of a *Propose*

Consider the following examples.

36. [Ervin-Tripp 1976:49]
    [Doctor to technician]
    We have to do a few things over.

37. [ibid:48]
    [Nursery school teacher]
    Let's all take a nap now.

38. [Sinclair & Coulthard 1975:96]
    [Teacher to pupils]
    Let's just have a look at these things here.

The above examples are all *Requests for Action* in which the speaker is soliciting an action from the addressee. The action is beneficial to the speaker in the sense that he **wants** the action to be carried out. However, they are presented in the typical forms of a *Propose*. By doing so, the speaker is behaving as though the action is to be performed by and is beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee. This is a common strategy used especially by teachers in the classroom to avoid using commands all the time and to create a sense of togetherness (see 37 and 38); and hence to enhance the effectiveness of their *Request for Action* in terms of getting compliance. This kind of strategy, however, is usually used by a person of higher rank to one of a lower rank, as pointed out by Ervin-Tripp (see Ervin-Tripp 1976:48).

4.4.4 *Invitation* presented in the typical form of a *Request for Action*

Consider the following utterance quoted above.

39. Mr. and Mrs. Waterson request the honour of your presence at their daughter's wedding on 19 March 1984 10.00 at St. John's Cathedral.

40. [Davidson 1984:126]
A invites H to thanksgiving dinner.

A: W'l Helen? now I'd lo:ve tuh have you join us

Given the reasoning for presenting *Request for Action* in the typical form of an *Invitation*, it is not difficult to understand why an *Invitation* is often presented in the typical form of a *Request for Action*. As the latter is

more difficult to refuse than the former, the host and hostess show their sincerity in having the addressee accept the invitation. In addition, by presenting it as a *Request for Action*, they indicate that they take the addressee's coming to the party as solely beneficial to them rather than beneficial to the addresse as well. For the same reason, an *Invitation* can also be presented as a *Request for Permission*. For example,

41. "May I take you out for dinner tonight?"

4.4.5 *Invitation* presented in the typical form of an *Offer*

42. "Can I offer you lunch?"

This is not as commonly used as the preceding one and less formal. Here, by presenting an *Invitation* in the typical form of an *Offer*, the speaker shifts the focus from H Action to S Action and in so doing makes the acceptance of the *Invitation* more compelling. This again shows the speaker's sincerity in having the addressee accept the *Invitation*.

4.4.6 *Offer* presented in the typical form of a *Request for Permission*

Consider the following utterances quoted above.

43. "May I help you?"

44. "Let me get a chair for you."

Both a *Request for Permission* and an *Offer* commit the speaker to a future action. While the action in an *Offer*

benefits the addressee, that in a *Request for Permission* benefits the speaker. By presenting an *Offer* in a form that typically realizes a *Request for Permission*, the speaker is behaving as though the future action is beneficial to himself and hence takes away overt need for the addressee to be grateful.

Finally, a remark needs to be made about *Request for Permission*. It is usually not presented in a form which typically realizes another subclass. My surmise is that among the five subclasses, *Request for Permission* is the least face-threatening and yet is the most compelling. A *Request for Permission* involves the speaker himself performing the future action which is to his own benefit. Therefore it is very difficult to refuse a *Request for Permission* because the action is for the speaker's own benefit and it is least imposing because it is the speaker himself who is going to perform the action. Hence, there is no need to present it in the typical form of other subclasses as a politeness strategy. On the contrary, other illocutionary acts are often presented in the typical form of a *Request for Permission*, as can be seen from the examples quoted above.

In the above discussion, we have demonstrated how subclasses of *Requestive* are presented in surface forms which typically realize other subclasses as a politeness strategy. This does not just happen with *Requestives*, although it is very prevalent. It happens across

subclasses of *Initiating Act*. For example, a *Directive* can be presented as a *Requestive*.

45. [Levinson 1983:276]
May I remind you that jackets and ties are required if you wish to use the bar on the 107th floor, sir.

45 is presented in a form that typically realizes a *Request for Permission*, yet it is a *Directive* because it prospects compliance from the addressee. The ticket inspector example is another one. As has been mentioned above, the ticket inspector's utterance "May I see your ticket please?" can be characterized as a *Directive* because the passenger is not **actually** given the option of non-compliance although the ticket inspector is behaving **as though** the passenger is given the option (see also R. Lakoff 1977:90). The motivation is again politeness. A *Directive* which does not give the addressee any option but to comply, is even more face-threatening than a *Requestive*. In settings where the duties of each individual are well-defined and where co-operation from each individual is assumed, *Directives* are more permissible (see Ervin-Tripp 1976). What is interesting, however, is that even in settings like this, where the relationship and the duties are well-defined, forms which typically realize *Requestives* are often used instead of those which typically realize *Directives*. The following is another example.

46. [Professor to Secretary]
J: Hazel, could you dig up all the past files?
H: Okay.

By presenting a *Directive* in the typical form of a *Requestive*, the speaker is indicating his politeness towards his subordinate. In fact, the more power the speaker has over the addressee, the more assured he is of the co-operation from the latter, the more polite he can afford to be; the more he can present *Directives* in the form of *Requestives*.

Conversely, *Requestives* are sometimes presented in an imperative form which typically realizes *Directives*. As Leech & Svartvik (1975), and R. Lakoff (1977) point out, 'commands' or 'orders' are often used in making 'offers':

47. Do have some more sherry.

48. You must have some more cake.

49. Do sit down.

50. Don't stand on ceremony.

Directives compel the addressee to perform the solicited action. By presenting *Requestives* in the typical form of *Directives*, the speaker is putting pressure on the addressee to comply with the *Requestive*, hence indicating his sincerity in having the addressee accept the *Offer* or *Invitation* etc (see also Leech 1983).

4.5 'Indirect Requests'

Finally, I wish to address the issue of indirect speech acts by discussing in particular 'indirect requests' since *Requestives* are acts in which indirection is prevalent.

Most, in fact all, of the utterances given above would be commonly characterized as indirect speech acts. Various explanations have been put forward for characterizing them as indirect speech acts and various inference procedures have been proposed, the most influential of which is that proposed by Searle (1979).

According to Searle, in saying "Can you pass the salt?", the speaker is performing a primary illocutionary act of 'request' and the speaker does this by way of performing a secondary illocutionary act of 'asking a question'. An act which is performed by way of another illocutionary act is considered an indirect speech act. The speaker is therefore said to be performing an 'indirect request'.

As I have pointed out before (see Chapter 1:1.6.1), it is difficult to see how Searle can characterize some of the utterances according to his schema without contradiction. For example, the above utterance "Can you pass the salt?" is characterized as an indirect request performed by way of a secondary illocutionary act of 'asking a question'. Given that the utterance is made at a dinner table, it is difficult to see how it can have the illocutionary force of a 'question' because it fails to

meet just about all the felicity conditions of a 'question' (see Edmondson 1981, Levinson 1983). For example, one of the felicity conditions of a 'question' is that the speaker does not know the answer to the question (see Searle 1969:66). But as Searle himself asserts, in the given context, the speaker obviously knows the answer to the question of whether the addressee has the ability to pass the salt (see Searle 1979:46). In other words, the speaker is not performing a 'request' **by way of** performing a 'question'.

Moreover, according to this characterization, the majority of speech acts are indirect. For example, almost all 'requests' would be indirect because they are hardly ever realized by imperatives. But this is counter-intuitive. Utterances like "Can you pass the salt?" and "Would you mind passing the salt?" are directly recognizable as 'requests'. The addressee does not have to go through the literal interpretation of the utterance and a series of inference steps to arrive at this interpretation (see Ervin-Tripp 1976).

So far, the most satisfactory characterization of the utterances in question is that offered by conversational analysts. For them, questions about whether utterances have literal or indirect forces simply do not arise (see Levinson 1983:363). Utterances like "Do you have a stamp?" is characterized as a 'pre-request' which serves to ascertain that the preconditions for performing a

'request' for a stamp obtains before it is actually performed. The motivation for performing a 'pre-request' is to avoid getting a rejection because a potential request which the addressee is not likely to be able to comply with will not normally be extended. This is a face-saving conversational strategy that is so commonly employed that conventionalization occurs so that upon hearing an utterance like the above, the addressee immediately anticipates an upcoming request (see also Edmondson 1981). Very often, instead of going through the ritual of responding to the 'pre-request' and wait for the upcoming 'request', the addressee responds as though a 'request' has already been made. (For a detailed discussion of converational sequences, see Levinson 1983:345-64).

This kind of characterization is more satisfactory than that proposed by Searle because it gives a more convincing account of the interpretive procedure than the ten interpretive steps that Searle proposes (see Searle 1979:46-7). As Ervin-Tripp points out, "rapid, routinized interpretations are based on the predictability of a large part of human interaction."(p.52). It also avoids the endless proliferation of rules to account for the different surface forms that are interpretable as 'requests'.

There are, however, two aspects in this kind of characterization that need commenting on. Firstly, as I

have pointed out previously, the term 'pre-request' is a sequential label which denotes the sequential location of the utterance in relation to the rest of the discourse. It is not a discourse act label (see Chapter 1:1.2.1). In terms of discourse function, the utterance "Do you have a stamp?" is an *Elicitation* if it prospects a verbal response which informs the speaker as to whether the addressee has a stamp. Hence the following arrowed utterances, which would be characterized as 'pre-requests' by conversational analysts, are characterized as *Elicitations* here.

51. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#2]
→ H: Do you get the TESOL Quarterly?
S: Yeah.
→ H: Do you get this issue?
S: What - month is it?
H: um number two, June eighty-three.
S: Yeah, I think I probably did.
H: Can I just borrow this for day - for a day=
[
S: Yeah.
H: =or two?

As I have pointed out before, it is possible for S to respond to H's utterances by the non-verbal response of giving H the TESOL Quarterly if S knows exactly which issue H is referring to. When this happens, the discourse value of H's utterances will be as a *Request for Action* (see Chapter 1:1.3.3). In other words, H's utterance is an *Elicitation* which can be directly interpreted as a *Request for Action*.

Secondly, we need to distinguish between utterances which are *Requests for Action* and those which are

preliminary to to them but **can be interpreted as** *Requests for Action*. For example,

52. Can I borrow a stamp from you?

53. Do you have a stamp?

According to Levinson (1983), both utterances would be characterized as 'pre-requests' (see p.362). I would argue that while the first one is a *Request for Action*, the second one is an *Elicitation* which typically occurs before a *Request for Action* but can be directly interpreted as a *Request for Action*. The difference can be seen from the responses that are acceptable to them.

54. A: Can I borrow a stamp from you?
    B: a) Yes (+NV)
    *b) Yes (-NV)

55. X: Do you have a stamp?
    Y: a) Yes (+NV)
    b) Yes (-NV)

In 54, a mere verbal response without the non-verbal action of compliance is not acceptable. If A's utterance were preliminary to a *Request for Action*, B would be entitled to give only a verbal response and wait for the upcoming *Request for Action*. This indicates that A's utterance is not preliminary to a *Request for Action* but rather is a *Request for Action* itself. In 55, both a verbal response and a non-verbal response of compliance are acceptable. X, upon getting only a verbal response, cannot accuse Y of giving an inappropriate response.

The different discourse functions of these two kinds of utterance are supported by the regular pattern exhibited in Merritt's data. Utterances which are in the form of "Do you have X?" typically occur before utterances of the form "Can I have X?".

56. [Merritt 1977:340]
restaurant (S6-2)

→ C: Do you have hot chocolate?
S: Mm-hm
→ C: Can I have hot chocolate, with whipped cream?
S: Sure (leaves to get)

57. [ibid:340]
indoor market place

→ C: Do you have the blackberry jam?
S: Yes.
→ C: Can I have a half pint then?
S: O.K. (turns to prepare)

Finally, their different discourse functions can also be seen from the difference in meaning in their negative responses. Consider,

58. A: Can I borrow a stamp from you?
B: No.

59. A: Do you have a stamp?
B: No.

B's response in 58 is a refusal whereas that in 59 is not: it is a piece of information (see Merritt 1977:347). Hence while the former is face-threatening, the latter is not. This is why the latter typically occurs before the former.

So far I have been focussing the discussion on *Requests for Action*. Similar analysis can be applied to other subclasses of *Requestives*. Consider the following example.

60. [Davidson 1984:113]

```
  1 B: So I jus' wan' duh tell yih if you'd come we-
  2    we're inviting the kinnergarden teachers too becuz
  3    we think it's a good chance tuh get tuh know the
  4    mothers.
  5 A: Uh huh.=
→ 6 B: = hh So if yer free:, (.) It's et the youth ho:use.
  7    (0.2)
  8 A: We:ll? (.) ez far ez I kno:w, (0.8) I will be.
```

The utterance in line 6 would be referred to as an 'indirect invitation' by speech act theorists. Here, it would be characterized as an *Elicitation* which typically occurs before an *Invitation*. Its function is to check that the precondition for extending an *Invitation* obtains, namely that A is free. And as we can see from A's response, the precondition does obtain. This kind of *Elicitation* can be directly interpreted as an *Invitation*, as in the following.

61. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#4]

```
  1 M: So we- we're thinking about all going down to Chung Ying
  2    at about twelve. I booked a table. Well, simply because=
                                          [
  3 X:                                     mhm
  4 M: =he'd like to meet the teachers and find out what we're
  5    doing, like first year English - the electives and stuff,
→ 6    so if you're free.
→ 7 X: Okay.
```

As we can see, the *Elicitation* in line 6 is directly responded to by X **as though** an *Invitation* has already been extended. X's "Okay" realizes an acceptance of the upcoming *Invitation*.

Consider now the following utterance in line 1 which would be referred to as an 'indirect offer'.

62. [Data B/Tape E/Side A/#6/p.1]

```
→ 1 H: Would you wa- you want me to leave a message?
```

2 X: Yeah, it would be very kind if you can do that.
3 H: [Okay. Can you give me
4 the number?
.....
→ 10 H: Okay, I'll I'll tell him to give you a call when he comes
11 out of class.
[
12 X: Thanks so much.

H's utterance in line 1 is an *Elicitation* which typically occurs before an *Offer* and its function is to check that the precondition for making an *Offer* obtains, namely, that X would prefer H to leave a message. As we can see, after making sure that the precondition obtains, H went ahead to obtain details of the message. Again, this kind of *Elicitation* can be directly interpreted as an *Offer*, such as in the following.

63. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#4/p.3]
M: Alright, do you want me to get the paper?
→ X: Yeah, why don't you bring the paper.
M: Alright.

X responds to M's *Elicitation* **as though** an upcoming *Offer* has already been made.

From the above discussion, we can see that in the present descriptive framework, the question of whether a speech act is literally or indirectly conveyed does not arise. An utterance is characterized as performing a particular speech act according to the response it prospects. The fact that an utterance can be responded to not by its prospected response but by some other response is accounted for by conversational strategies which govern the sequencing of utterances. In other words, as I have

already pointed out before, there are two aspects to the characterization of an utterance. On the one hand, the discourse function of an utterance is determined by its prospected response(s) and on the other hand, the discourse value of an utterance is subjected to the interpretation of the addressee and the negotiation of this interpretation between the speaker and the addressee (see Chapter 1:1.3.3).

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have characterized the second subclass of *Initiating Act* - *Requestives*. I have argued for the setting up of *Requestives* as a subclass distinctly different from *Directives* on the ground that the responses that they prospect are different. *Requestives* prospect both compliance and non-compliance, although the former is more strongly prospected than the latter. *Directives*, however, prospect only compliance. According to the nature of the prospected responses and their realizations, I have identified five subclasses of *Requestive*: *Request for Action*, *Request for Permission*, *Offer* and *Invitation* and *Propose*. A compliance to a *Request for Action* commits the addressee to a non-verbal action and is usually realized by a simple positive response. A non-compliance to a *Request for Action*, however, is realized by a negative response, often accompanied by reasons or justifications for not commiting himself and/or an apology. This is

accounted for by the fact that the non-verbal action which a *Request for Action* potentially solicits is beneficial to the speaker. A compliance to a *Request for Permission* commits the addressee to a non-verbal action and is realized by a simple positive response. A non-compliance, however, is realized by a negative response often accompanied by reasons or justifications for not allowing the speaker to commit himself to a non-verbal action and/or an apology. This is accounted for by the fact that the non-verbal action that a *Request for Permission* potentially solicits is beneficial to the speaker. A compliance to an *Offer* commits the speaker to a non-verbal action and is realized by a positive response, often accompanied by a thanking. A non-compliance is realized by a negative response, also often accompanied by reasons or justifications for not complying and a thanking. This is accounted for by the fact that the non-verbal action that an *Offer* potentially solicits is beneficial to the addressee. Finally, a compliance to an *Invitation* commits the addressee to a non-verbal action and is realized by a positive response and a thanking. A non-compliance, however, is realized by a negative response, often accompanied by reasons or justifications for not complying and a thanking. This is accounted for by the fact that an *Invitation* is beneficial to the addressee or to both the addressee and the speaker. A compliance to a *Propose* commits both the speaker and the addressee to a future

action and is realized by a positive response, not accompanied by thanking and a non-compliance is often realized by giving a reason for non-compliance and perhaps accompanied by apologizing. This is accounted for by the fact that a *Propose* is often beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee; therefore thanking is not necessary. A *Propose* is an attempt to get the addressee to commit himself, although the action involves the speaker as well, hence a non-compliance fails to fulfil the want of the speaker and therefore a justification or explanation is needed. This characterization of the five subclasses of *Requestive* enables us to identify which subclass is performed by utterances which appear to be ambivalent or multi-functional.

I have also pointed out that *Requestives* are intrinsically face-threatening acts. In order to minimize the face-threatening effect, one subclass of *Requestive* is sometimes presented in a surface form which typically realizes another subclass. By examining the common features shared by one subclass with another, we are able to account for why and how one subclass is presented in the typical form of another subclass. This kind of linguistic manipulation is found not only among subclasses of *Requestive*, but also across the subclasses of *Initiating Act*. A *Directive*, for example, is sometimes presented in a surface form which typically realizes a *Requestive* as a politeness strategy.

Finally, I have discussed the issue of 'indirect speech act'. I have pointed out that the characterization of certain utterances as having a literal force from which an indirect force can be derived by a series of inference procedures is unsatisfactory. Utterances are best characterized according to their prospected responses and the interpretation of utterances can be satisfactorily accounted for by conversational strategies which govern the sequencing of utterances.

CHAPTER 5 INITIATING ACT: DIRECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

The third subclass of *Initiating Act* is *Directives*. 'Directives', or a similar category under a different label (eg. Austin 1962: Exercitives; Fraser 1975: Requesting; Schiffer 1972: Imperative), appear in all taxonomies of illocutionary acts'. It is generally agreed that the essential feature of 'directives' is that they advocate and/or attempt to get the addressee to perform a future action (see Austin 1962, Schiffer 1972, Fraser 1975, Bach & Harnish 1979, Searle & Venderveken 1985). However, there does not seem to be the same consensus with regard to what the subcategories of 'directives' are in each taxonomy. Searle & Venderveken (hereafter referred to as S & V) proposed at least twenty-four illocutionary verbs, each denoting a different illocutionary force while Bach & Harnish proposed six general subcategories under which further subdivisions can be made. In Fraser's taxonomy, the twenty-four illocutionary forces identified by S & V are subsumed under two general categories of Requesting and Suggesting. Some even argue that it is not necessary, nor even possible, to subcategorize 'directives' (see Markkanen 1985).

This difference of opinion is likely to arise from the different characterizations of 'directives'. Let us

therefore examine the various characterizations of 'directives' first, focussing on two most influential taxonomies, those of Austin and Searle.

5.2 Austin's & Searle's Characterizations of 'Directives'

Searle (1975) characterizes 'directives' as attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. The attempts may be modest as when the speaker suggests or invites the addressee to do it, or they may be very "fierce" attempts as when the speaker insists. This characterization is elaborated in S & V (1985). They specify the felicity conditions for 'directives' as follows:

> *directive illocutionary forces...have the general propositional content condition that their propositional content represents a future course of action... the common preparatory condition that the hearer is capable of doing what he is directed to do...the psychological state expressed in all directive illocutions is want or desire...All directive illocutionary forces have the general sincerity condition that the speaker wants or desires the hearer to do what he attempts to get him to do. (p. 56)*

The twenty-four subcategories that S & V propose are: direct, urge, demand, command, order, suggest, warn, advise, recommend, insist, request, require, beg, supplicate, entreat, beseech, implore, pray, ask, tell, forbid, prohibit, permit and enjoin.

S & V specify that their characterization is based on the semantic analysis of the illocutionary verbs which name the illocutionary forces. In other words, they are not looking at the discourse functions of the

illocutionary acts. Consequently, illocutionary acts which solicit a non-verbal response, such as an 'order' and those which solicit only a verbal response, such as 'ask' are both subsumed under 'directives'. Also, they do not distinguish between illocutionary acts which allow for the option of refusal, such as 'requesting' and those which do not, such as 'ordering'. They are considered to differ only in the mode of achievement of their illocutionary point: 'requesting' achieves the illocutionary point in a polite way whereas 'ordering' achieves the illocutionary point by invoking a position of power or authority. They do not distinguish between illocutionary acts which are solicited and those which are soliciting: 'permit', which is normally a response to a 'request for permission', is considered to belong to the same category as 'requesting' and 'ordering' which solicit a response.

Austin (1962), however, had characterized Exercitives as follows:

> *An exercitive is the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it. It is a decision that something is to be so; it is an award as opposed to an assessment; it is a sentence as opposed to a verdict...Its consequences may be that others are 'compelled' or 'allowed' or 'not allowed' to do certain acts. (p. 155)*

Austin listed some forty-two subcategories of 'Exercitives' and from his characterization of 'Exercitives' and the subcategories listed, it can be seen that, by contrast with Searle, Austin does make a distinction between illocutionary acts which involve

verbal interaction and those which involve non-verbal interaction. 'Exercitives' belong to the latter. This is supported by the fact that 'ask' and 'tell' are subsumed not under 'Exercitives' but 'Expositives' which are defined as acts which involve "the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and of references"(p.161). However, similar to Searle, Austin does not distinguish between illocutionary acts which prospect solely compliance and those which prospect either compliance or non-compliance. In addition, as Vendler (1972) points out, the subcategories fall into two distinctly different classes: those by which the speaker makes something the case, for example, 'appoint', 'excommunicate', 'demote', 'dismiss', and those by which the speaker gets the addressee to do something. Vendler refers to the former as 'Operatives' and the latter 'Exercitives'. The former have little to do with advocating a future course of action. They belong to a special category of acts which are institutional.

5.3 The Characterization of *Directives*

From the above discussion, it is clear that there are different definitions of what 'Directives' are. Following the conventions established in the preceding chapters, I propose to characterize *Directives* in terms of their discourse function and include only acts which solicit or advocate a non-verbal action from the addressee and

prospect solely compliance. According to this characterization, I exclude acts such as 'request' and its close kin: 'beg', 'entreat', 'implore', 'beseech', 'supplicate', 'pray' and 'urge', which will be subsumed under *Requestives*. I also exclude 'ask' which will be subsumed under *Elicitations* and 'tell' which will be subsumed under *Informatives* (but not 'ask to' and 'tell to'). Finally, for reasons to be spelled out in detail in Chapter 7, I also exclude acts which are responses such as 'permit'.

Having characterized what *Directives* are, let us now examine its subclasses.

5.4 Subclasses of *Directive*

5.4.1 Two Major Subclasses of *Directive*

Directives are typically realized by the imperative sentence and the illocutionary act that is typically associated with the imperative sentence is considered to be a 'command'. Linguists often refer to the command use and the non-command use of imperatives (see for example Bolinger 1967). Schreiber (1972) proposes a distinction between true imperatives and pseudo-imperatives. True imperatives are considered to be command imperatives and pseudo-imperatives are considered to be hortative imperatives. This distinction arises from a class of sentence with the imperative construction containing stative verbs. For example, "Be glad that we are leaving."

Schreiber calls such sentences horative imperatives because they have a different underlying structure from the true imperatives, such as "Close the door". Schreiber proposes that the underlying verb for hortative imperatives can be 'suggest', 'advise' or 'recommend'. He further proposes that an imperative "Go away." can be either a command imperative or a hortative imperative with the underlying structures "I command that you go away." or "I suggest that you go away." (see p.340-1). McCawley (1977) also proposes that there are two classes within 'Exercitives': Imperatives and Advisories on the ground that 'ask' can be used to report imperative acts but not advisory acts. We may disagree with Schreiber's and McCawley's distinction on syntactic grounds, but this distinction is certainly valid on pragmatic grounds. A hortative imperative is an imperative used for advisory purposes. The utterance "Go away." can be advisory if it is issued in the interest of the addressee or it can be mandative if it is issued in the interest of the speaker. In other words, we may say that a distinction can be made between *Directives* that are mandative and those that are advisory. Because the latter is issued in the interest of the the addressee, it is often less compelling than the former.

A similar distinction has been made by Sadock (1974) in his analysis of 'impositives' which are speech acts by which the speaker imposes his desire or will upon the

addressee (see also Green 1975). According to Sadock, impositives cover 'order', 'demand', 'request', 'plea', 'warning' and 'suggestion'. They can be realized by imperative sentences, eg. "Leave at once!." or whimperatives, eg. "Will you close the window?" or why-impositives, eg. "Why don't you take an aspirin?" Sadock points out that why-impositive sentences linguistically behave differently from imperatives and whimperatives. For example, why-impositives do not happily take "please" or "kindly":

*1. Why don't you please/kindly take out the garbage?

*2. Why not please/kindly take out the garbage?

But "please" and "kindly" happily occur in imperatives and whimperatives (see p.116):

3. Take out the garbage, please.

4. Will you kindly take out the garbage (please)?

Sadock further points out that there are other sentence types which bear strong similarity to why-impositives in terms of illocutionary force. They are sentences of the form "Shouldn't we do X?", "How about NP?" and "What do you say/What say". He proposes that they can all be treated as having an abstract predicate like, or identical with, the verb 'suggest' in the underlying performative clause[2].

Green (1975) also suggests that why-impositives are different from imperatives and whimperatives. She looks at the responses to these sentence types and notices that

why-impositives require somewhat different responses from imperatives and whimperatives. While all of them can be responded to positively by "Okay", "Sure", "All right" and so on, only imperatives and whimperatives can be negatively responded to by "No". A "No" response to a why-impositive is not acceptable:

5. A: Why not paint your house purple?
   *B: No.

Neither Sadock nor Green provide an explanation for the different linguistic behaviour of why-impositives. I wish to offer a pragmatic explanation here. Both imperatives and whimperatives typically realize 'requests' and 'orders' which are acts by which the speaker attempts to get the addressee to perform an action in his own interest. Because of this, they can happily take "please" and "kindly" since the latter express the speaker's indebtedness to the addressee. Different from imperatives and whimperatives, why-impositives typically realize 'suggestions' in which the course of action advocated by the speaker is in the interest of the addressee, at least partly, if not entirely. There is no indebtedness involved on the part of the speaker. Quite the contrary, it is the addressee, if anyone, who should be indebted. That is why they do not happily take "please" or "kindly". This also explains why "No" is an unacceptable response to why-impositives: because the 'suggestion' is given in the interest of the addressee, he is obliged to give reasons

for not accepting the suggestion. It should be noted that although a "No" response to a whimperative is often accompanied by a giving of reasons, the absence of the latter does not render the response deviant. The unacceptability of "No" as a response to a why-impositive can also partly be due to its surface form. While "No" is an acceptable answer to a polar interrogative, it is not to a why interrogative. A statement of reason is grammatically the acceptable answer.

The above pragmatic explanation is supported by the different realizations of the responses to the illocutionary acts realized by these sentence types. Why-impositives like "Why don't you try the children's department?" realizing a 'suggestion' is likely to be responded to by "Okay. Thank you very much." but imperatives like "Get out at once!" realizing an 'order' or whimperatives like "Will you close the door?" realizing a 'request' is not likely to be responded to by "Thank you".

The above linguistic evidence and the pragmatic motivation strongly suggest that *Directives* can be classified into two major subclasses, those which direct the addressee to perform an action in the interest of the speaker and those which advocate a course of action to be performed by the addressee in the interest of himself. I use the word "advocate" for the second subclass instead of "direct" because it captures better the less compulsory

nature of this subclass: the carrying out of the action is entirely up to the addressee (see also Green 1975). Let us call the former *Mandatives* and the latter *Advisives*.

5.4.2 *Advisives*

Consider the following arrowed utterances:

6. [Data C/Tape 2/Side A/#6/p.2]
   S: Anyway um I heard well I know because I went to Taiwan
   → this summer. Don't try to exchange your money at a bank or at the airport but get your friend to take you to ah - like a jewellry store and they'll exchange it a lot=
   X: [Ah
   S: =cheaper there.
   X: They have better rate.
   S: mhm
   X: Good tip, thanks.

7. [Data B/Tape G/Side A/#1/p.3]
   → X: Well, you'll have to practise with him once or I mean really you can't just throw him in there and monkey=
   H: [No, no I -
   X: =around or he'll screw the subject and ruin the data.
   H: [No I won't.

8. [Fieldnotes]
   A and B are flatmates. B is about to pick up the kettle.
   → A: Don't pick it up, it's burning hot.
   B: Right.

9. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#4/p.6]
   S is the course co-ordinator and X is a new colleague who has been telling S that she could not cope with the marking.
   → S: I think there are some things you can do, like, I I often write yes in the margin if I agree or I even put just an=
   X: [Okay.
   S: =exclamation point
   X: Or a question mark or
   S: Interesting or y'know so that on every page there's =
   X: [there's

S: =evidence that I read it ((laughs))
[
X: that you've read it, yeah. Okay, alright, alright, I'll ah that'll help 'cos it just seems ah y'know
S: TOO much work.

10. [Data B/Tape C/Side B/#1/p.8]
E: I'd like to get a copy from Singapore in fact. I've got to give a course on second language acquisition and I thought this would be a nice textbook but I can't get hold of the copy.
[
F: It's it's a good one.=
→ =Why don't you call, write ah write to New York and ask for an inspection copy.

In all of the above arrowed utterances, the course of action advocated is in the interest of the addressee. All of them prospect a positive response of compliance or minimally an acknowledgement that the *Advisive* is heard and understood, with an optional "Thank you." In all of the above excerpts, the addressee complies or acknowledges the *Advisive* except in 10 where the discourse was diverted. In 6, the addressee thanks the speaker and in 9 the addressee makes an appreciative remark "that'll help."

A negative response to any of the above utterances challenges their presuppositions. The similarity in the responses prospected is strong evidence that they belong to the same subclass.

Let us now see if we can make a more delicate classification of *Advisives*. Consider 6 and 7. The difference between them is that in 6, the desirable consequence of compliance is spelled out: X would be able to exchange her money at a better rate; in 7, however, the undesirable consequence of non-compliance is spelled out:

H's friend would ruin the data. Consider also 8, 9 and 10. In 8, the speaker advocates a negative action "Don't do X" and the undesirable consequence of acting to the contrary is implied. In 9 and 10, the speaker advocates a positive action "Do X" and the desirable consequence of acting accordingly is implied. Hence we can identify two kinds of *Advisives*: one in which the consequence of compliance, explicitly stated or implied, is desirable and the other in which the consequence of non-compliance, explicitly stated or implied, is undesirable.

Katz (1977) makes a similar distinction between 'Advisive' verbs. He asserts that 'Advisive' verbs like "warn" and "caution" differ from "advise" in that the former specifies that the indicated choice is preferable to other choices because it poses least danger to the addressee whereas the latter specifies that the indicated choice is preferable because it offers more benefit to the addressee. For example,

11. [Katz 1977:202]
    I warn you not to stick your nose into other people's business.

12. [ibid:201]
    I advise you to take off your hat here.

He calls the former 'Negative Advisives' and the latter 'Positive Advisives'. Although Katz's characterization fails to account for instances in which no choice of action is indicated in the utterance, the distinction he makes is a valid one. For example, in the following piece

of data, no choice of action is indicated. The addressee is left to decide what is the best course of action to take.

13. [Fieldnotes]
B is about to take the kettle from the cooker.
A: The handle is hot.
B: Oh (+NV)

However, the implied course of action is to avoid the imminent danger.

This distinction has also been noted by S & V who assert that while both 'warn' and 'advise' are attempts to get the addressee to take the appropriate action, in 'warning', the state of affairs that the speaker warns the addressee about is not in the addresee's interest whereas in 'advising', the action that the speaker advises the addressee to do is presupposed to be in the latter's interest.

Following Katz (1977), I shall call the two kinds of *Advisives* identified above *Positive Advisives* and *Negative Advisives*. The latter cover acts which have been identified in the speech act literature as 'warning' and the former cover those which have been identified as 'advise', 'suggest', 'recommend' and 'instruct'.

Let us now see if *Positive Advisives* can be further classified into these four acts: 'advise', 'suggest', 'recommend' and 'instruct'.

S & V distinguish 'advise' and 'suggest' on the ground that the former has the additional condition that "the

state of affairs that P is good" for the addressee (see p.203). I wish to argue that, quite the contrary, this additional condition is precisely the common characteristic shared by 'advise' and 'suggest': they both advocate actions which are in the interest of the addressee rather than the speaker (see also Green 1975 on 'suggestions'). It is this common characteristic that sets 'suggest' and 'advise' apart from 'Directives' like 'order' in which the action to be performed is in the interest of the speaker. This is supported by the fact that the addressee often thanks the speaker for his 'suggestion' or 'advice', but never for his 'order'[3].

It has also been suggested that the verb 'suggest' implies a tentative illocution (Leech 1983:208). While the verb 'suggest' may have the semantic feature of tentativeness which the verb 'advise' lacks, it is doubtful whether 'advise' and 'suggest' are two distinctly identifiable acts because it is often not easy to decide whether a given utterance is to be interpreted as an 'advise' or a 'suggest'. Take the following piece of data for example.

14. [Data B/Tape B/Side B/#3/p.2-3]
X is the librarian and H is a staff member. H called to seek advice on gaining access to some recently ordered books.

→ 1 X: ...so ah, if, I suggest probably you better
→ 2 drop in the book orders department and see if
→ 3 they're - they are on the way. If not, if they've
4 gone on into the cataloguing, then they're going
5 to be on to the shelves before you see them.
6 H: Yeah, the only thing is, I don't even know the
7 names of the books that were ordered. I just

```
      8     heard they were on linguistics, which is my
      9     field, that's why I just want to know
                                              [
     10 X:                                     I'm very hard put to
           s- direct you.
                    [
     11 H:           Yeah, so you know...
           ..........
   → 36 X: Oh, if that's the case, you better go to the
   → 37    person who ordered them and get some
   → 38    bibliographic information, that's something to=
                                    [
     39 H:                           Alright
   → 40 X: =deal with.
     41 H: Okay, alright, so I'll check that out. Thank you very
     42    much.
```

It is difficult to decide whether the arrowed utterances in lines 1-3 and 36-40 should be characterized as 'suggest' or 'advise'. Both can be reported as X advised or suggested that H do something. The difficulty arises from the fact that firstly tentativeness is not a hard-and-fast dimension which one can easily measure against. Secondly, an 'advise' is often labelled as a 'suggest' by the speaker himself for politeness reasons: it is less imposing and puts the speaker in a less authoritative position with the hearer. The following is an example.

15. [Data B/Tape B/Side B/#4/p.3-4]
X and H are colleagues. X is a sociolinguist. H called X to discuss research in this area.

```
X: I think that ah a person like Jack's going to be
   very interested in actual speech samples, but he=
                                                [
H:                                               Yeah.
X: =is not going to be very keen and impressed with
 → that other sort of research. So my suggestion to
   you is to ah to get into that. I've had a couple
   of thoughts in that respect about papers that
   would be good for you to do...
```

In the arrowed utterance, X could have intended it to be a 'suggest' or he could have intended it as an 'advise' but labelled it as a 'suggest' out of modesty or politeness.

Most important of all, both an 'advise' and a 'suggest' have the same discourse consequences: they both prospect an acknowledgement or compliance with an optional "thank you" (see for example 14, lines 41-2) or an appreciative remark (see 9 above). Therefore, 'advise' and 'suggest' are essentially the same act.

If it is difficult to decide whether an utterance is a 'suggest' or an 'advise', it is practically impossible to decide whether an utterance is a 'recommend' or an 'advise'. The additional preparatory condition that S & V propose for 'recommend': that the state of affairs represented is good in general, hardly distinguishes it from an 'advise'. We can 'recommend' a course of action which is good for the addressee and good in general just as we can 'advise' a course of action which is good for the addressee and good in general. Take the following utterances for example,

16. [Quirk et al 1985:831]
    Take an aspirin for your headache.
17. [ibid]
    Lock the door before you go to bed.

How do we decide whether a 'recommendation' or an 'advice' is given in each instance? 16 can be reported as "I recommend that you take an aspirin for your headache." or "I advise you to take an aspirin for your headache."

Quirk et al use them as examples for both 'advise' and 'recommend'.

Finally, is 'instruct' a separately identifiable act? Sadock (1974) suggests that there are certain imperative sentences, such as those found in recipes, manuals and labels whose communicative function stands in sharp contrast to the function of 'requests'. For example, "Remove the lid carefully.", "Separate the white of three eggs." They are issued for the addressee's benefit and are often given in a series. He identifies them as 'instructions'. However, as Willes (1983) points out, the fact that 'instructions' are often given in a series merely suggests that they differ from 'advise' in the style of performance and that they are best considered a variant of 'advise'. Indeed, there is not enough justification for considering them as a distinctly different act from 'advise', 'suggest' or 'recommend' since they are all issued in the addressee's interest. Those 'instructions' which are issued in the interest of the speaker himself are best considered as a variant of *Mandatives* (see also Willes 1983).

To conclude, in terms of discourse consequences, it does not seem possible to identify more delicate subclasses of *Positive Advisives*. Let us call the act realizing a *Positive Advisive Advise* and that realizing a *Negative Advisive Warn*. To recapitulate, an *Advise* is an *Advisive* in which the consequence, explicitly stated or

implied, of compliance is desirable and a *Warn* is one in which the consequence, explicitly stated or implied, of non-compliance is undesirable.

It should be noted, however, that sometimes when the consequence is not explicitly stated in an utterance, the act performed can be ambiguous as to whether it is an *Advise* or a *Warn*. For example,

18. [Doctor to Patient]
Remember to take the pills regularly.

19. [Broker to Client]
Don't sell the American dollar yet.

In both utterances, we can say that an *Advise* or a *Warning* is being performed, depending on whether we look at the desirable consequence of compliance or the undesirable consequence of non-compliance. For example, 18 could be elaborated as "Remember to take the pills regularly and you'll be alright." or as "Remember to take the pills regularly or you'll start bleeding again."

Attention should also be drawn to the fact that *Warn* and *Advise* as discourse acts are to be strictly distinguished from 'warn' and 'advise' as verbs. While the verbs 'warn' and 'advise' can have an assertive or a directive use, the acts *Warn* and *Advise* are solely *Directives* (cf. S & V 1985). Consider the following examples.

20. [Fieldnotes]
I write to advise you that this item has been credited to the above mentioned account today.

21. I (would) advise you to take a short break.

22. [BCET]
The catalogue warned that this lot was "creased, trimmed or marked with adhesive tape".

23. I warn you to stay away from this man.

In 20, the verb 'advise' is used assertively whereas in 21, it is used directively, as can be seen from the syntactic structure "advise...that" and "advise...to". However, only in 20 would we say that an act of *Advising* is going on. In 21, although the performative verb 'advise' is used, the act performed is an *Informative* because no non-verbal action is prospected (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of *Informatives*). In 22, the verb 'warn' is used assertively whereas in 23, it is used directively. However, despite the fact that 'warn' is used assertively in 22, the act performed is similar to that in 23; it is a Warning. This is because different from 21, a future action is prospected. In 22, the aim of informing the addressee that the goods were "creased, trimmed or marked with adhesive tape" is to get the addressee to take a certain course of action to avoid undesirable consequences. A lot of *Warnings* are presented as a piece of information and the addressee is left to decide what is the best course of action to take. For example,

24. [Fieldnotes]
This plastic bag is not a toy.

25. [Fieldnotes]
Cigarette smoking is hazaradous to health.

The aim of 24 is to stop children from playing with the plastic bag as a toy and the aim of 25 is to get people to

stop smoking, reduce the amount of smoking or not to start smoking etc.

The importance of not confusing the verb and the act it is used to perform is best seen in the following example.

26. [Fieldnotes]
Inside a Chinese supermarket in Birmingham

Warning: Customers are advised that videoscan closed circuit television is in operation with video-recording.

Here, both "warning" and "advised" are used. But what act is being performed? The verb "advised" is used assertively as a paraphrase of the verb "inform". However, the aim of informing the customers is to deter them from shoplifting. Therefore, the act performed is a *Warning*, and not an *Advise* or an *Informative*.

5.4.3 *Mandatives*

Mandatives are *Directives* by which the speaker attempts to get the addressee to perform an action in the interest of himself. Let us see if we can identify more delicate subclasses of *Mandatives*. Consider the following utterances:

27. [Mother to Child]
Pick your coat up.

28. [Mother to Child]
Pick your coat up or I'll spank you.

28 differs from 27 in that it not only attempts to get the child to pick up the coat, but also states the speaker's bringing about the undesirable consequence should the child refuses to do so. Compare 28 with the following:

29. Pick your coat up or it will get dirty.

Although in 29, the undesirable consequence of non-compliance is also explicitly stated, the consequence is not brought about by the speaker and, most important of all, it is performed in the interest of the addressee. Therefore, 29 is an *Advisive* whereas 28 is a *Mandative*. Let us characterize 27 and 28 as two subclasses of *Mandatives*: *Order* and *Threat*. *Orders* are *Directives* in which no consequence of compliance or non-compliance is explicitly stated. *Threats* are *Directives* in which the undesirable consequence of non-compliance, often brought about by the speaker, is explicitly stated. This difference between these two acts can be accounted for by the fact that an *Order* is given by a person who has the right to get the addressee to do something and therefore there is no need to state the undesirable consequence of non-compliance as a means of getting the latter to comply. By contrast, the right is not inherent in the speaker who performs a *Threat* and therefore he has to rely on the addressee's fear of the undesirable consequence that he will bring about, or at least is responsible for bringing about, to get the addressee to comply (see also Katz 1977:190; cf. Harris 1980). This is why the compliances that they prospect have different realizations. While a compliance to an *Order* is often realized by "Okay.", "Sure", "Yes" which is an implicit acknowledgement of the speaker's right , a compliance to a *Threat* is never

realized by the above linguistic items but usually by silent acquiescence.

The right that the issuer of an *Order* has in getting the addressee to do something is usually due to the power he has over the latter, such as a boss over the secretary. But it can also be due to the work setting in which who is to do what is clearly defined and hence compliance is normally expected, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter (see Chapter 4:4.2). *Directives* issued in these settings are *Orders* even though the speaker does not have power over the addressee. An example that Ervin-Tripp (1976) gives is the use of imperatives (which will be characterized as *Orders* here) by blue-collar workers when moving heavy objects. The use of *Orders* in situations which warrant the speaker's right in getting compliance as compared to the use of some other acts in those which do not is nicely brought out in Ervin-Tripp's example (provided by Harvey Sacks) in which a husband and wife are engaged in persuading a stepfather to eat herring:

30. [Ervin-Tripp 1976:31]
    (a) [Wife to husband, who has herring]
        Bring some out, so that Max c'd have some too.

    (b) [Wife to husband, as she tastes herring later]
        Geschmacht. Mmm. Oh it's delicious Ben c'd you hand me a napkin please.

As Ervin-Tripp points out, in (a) because serving the stepfather was a central goal to both, compliance is expected. Therefore an imperative is used. By contrast, in (b), because the wife does not have the right to expect

compliance from the husband in handing a napkin, an "imbedded imperative" and "please" is used. The imperative in (a) realizes an *Order* whereas the "imbedded imperative" in (b) realizes a *Request for Action*.

The most common realization of an *Order* is "Do X". But it can also be realized by wants and needs statements, such as "I need a specimen" spoken by a physician to a technician (see Chapter 4:4.2). It can also be presented as a piece of information when the necessary action is obvious. For example,

31. [Ervin-Tripp 1976:30]
[Customer to Waitress]
Coffee, black.

32. [Chef to Assistant]
Salt and pepper.

Given the above characterization of an *Order*, we would be able to characterize what act the referee is performing in the following.

33. [Fieldnotes]
During a snooker match, a snooker player missed the ball and the audience is making a lot of noise.

Referee: Thank you.
Audience: (stop making noise)

The referee's "thank you" is an attempt to get the audience to stop making noises. Compliance from the audience is expected by virtue of his right as a referee to keep order during the match. His utterance is therefore not an act of 'thanking' but rather an *Order*.

Orders cover acts which have been identified as 'command' in the speech act literature. S & V (1985)

suggest that an 'order' differs from a 'command' in that the former requires the speaker to be in a position of power, one form of which may be institutional power whereas a 'command' requires that the speaker be in a position of authority and not simply one of power. While there may be semantic differences between the two as verbs, it is doubtful whether they can be or should be identified as two discourse acts. Firstly, power and institutional authority so often go together that it is difficult to decide when a speaker is invoking power and when he is invoking institutional authority when issuing a *Directive*. Secondly, a 'command' and an 'order' solicit the same response. It is therefore difficult, when dealing with actual discourse, to distinguish one from the other.

Orders also cover utterances in which the speaker attempts to get the addressee **not** to perform an action. Therefore illocutionary acts like 'forbid', 'prohibit' and 'enjoin' will be characterized as *Orders* here. Similarly, *Threats* can also be attempts to get the addressee **not** to perform an action. For example,

34. [Fieldnotes]
Vote for the Tories and I'll kill you.

S & V consider the act of 'threatening' a 'Commissive', not a 'Directive'. They characterize 'threaten' as an undertaking on the part of the speaker to perform a future action to the detriment of the addressee. The undertaking, however, involves no obligation (see p.193). They assert

that 'threaten' differs from the primitive illocutionary force 'commit' only by the fact that in the act of 'threatening', the state of affairs represented in the proposition is bad for the addressee.

Fraser (1975) argues against considering 'threat' a kind of 'Commissive', or a type of "negative promise", as he puts it, on the ground that although it is true that a 'promise' involves a future action which is advantageous to the hearer whereas a 'threat' involves one which is disadvantageous to the hearer, there is an important difference between the two: a 'promise' involves an obligation to carry out the action whereas a 'threat' does not: we cannot challenge a person who has 'threatened' for not carrying out the action.

I agree with Fraser's not characterizing 'threaten' as a kind of 'Commissive'. However, I do not think that he has pinpointed the crucial difference between a 'threat' and a 'Commissive'. The illocutionary point, or the purpose, of 'threatening' is not to commit the speaker to a future action, but to get the addressee to perform an action (see also Harris 1980:175). This can be best seen in 'threats' given by mothers in which the aim is clearly to get children to do something rather than to commit themselves to carrying out an action. Indeed, children know that most of the time, mothers will not carry out the "committed" action even when they fail to get compliance[4]. If illocutionary point is the best basis for a taxonomy,

as Searle (1979) asserts, then 'threaten' is definitely a 'Directive', not a 'Commissive'.

The fact that 'threaten' has the feature of an undesirable consequence if not complied with has led some linguists to consider it indistinguishable from 'warning'. Sadock (1974) argues that 'threaten' and 'warn' are not separate illocutionary acts. 'Warnings' for which we assume the warner has control over the consequences of not heeding the warning are described as 'threats'. The example he gives is "Hit me in the knee with that little hammer and I'll kick you in the chin."(see p.143) He asserts that if the speaker is talking about his strong reflex action, the sentence is a 'warning'. But if he is talking about something malicious that he intends to do, then it is a 'threat'. However, the very fact that the utterance is considered ambiguous by Sadock destroys his point about 'warning' and 'threaten' being not separate illocutionary acts. By pointing out that the utterance is a 'warning' at one reading and 'threaten' at another, he is in fact demonstrating that they **are** separate illocutionary acts[5].

Fraser (1975) proposes an analysis similar to that of Sadock. He suggests that a 'threat' is a special type of 'warning' in which the speaker takes on the responsibility for bringing about the disadvantageous action (see p.173) He argues that if S says to H "If you do not get there before 8:00 pm, we will start the party anyway", and if H

feels strongly about being present at party-beginnings, then S has 'threatened' as well as 'warned' H.

It is true that in both 'warn' and 'threaten', the consequence of not acting accordingly is undesirable. It is also true that 'threaten' often contains a second part of the form "I'll/We'll do X", indicating the speaker's personal involvement in the impending action. For example,

35. Hurry up or you'll miss the train. (Warning)

36. Hurry up or I'll go without you. (Threatening)

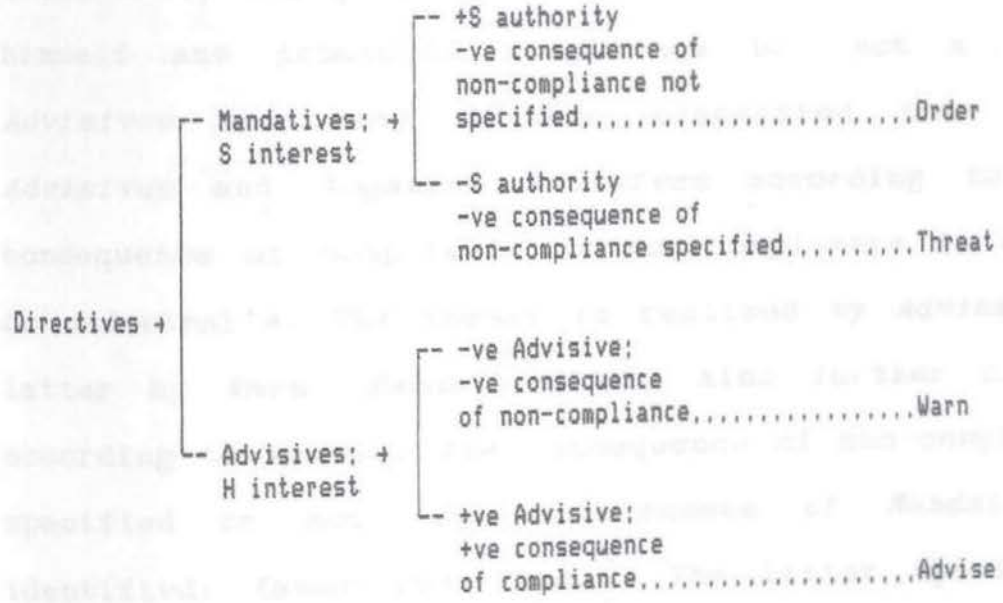
However, it is not true that 'warning' and 'threatening' are therefore not separable or that one is a subclass of the other. There is a very important difference that is overlooked by Sadock and Fraser. A 'warning' is performed in the interest of the addressee whereas a 'threat' is performed in the interest of the speaker himself[e]. This difference is reflected in the response they prospect. A 'warning' prospects compliance or minimally an acknowledgement with an optional "thank you". A 'threat' prospects compliance, usually in the form of silent acquiescence, but it will not prospect a "thank you". What usually follows a 'threat' is a challenge like "Don't you dare.", "You can't do that." or "You will not."

Given the distinction between a *Threat* and a *Warning*, I will identify the following utterance as a *Threat* even though it contains the performative verb "warn" (see also Wunderlich 1977).

33. [Sadock 1974:145]
I warn you that if you don't marry my daughter I'll shoot.

But why is the performative verb "warn" used here? I can think of two reasons: firstly, the verb "threaten" cannot be used performatively, the explanation of which does not concern us here (see Katz 1977, Vendler 1970, Fraser 1975). Secondly, since the verb "threaten" cannot be used performatively, the closest verb for conveying the inevitability of an undesirable consequence of non-compliance is "warn".

Hence, there are altogether four subclasses of *Directive* and we can summarize them as follows:



5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have looked at the third subclass of *Initiating Act*: *Directives*. I have characterized *Directives* as a subclass which solicits or advocates a

non-verbal action from the addressee and prospects solely compliance. I have also looked at the various illocutionary acts which have been subsumed under 'Directives' in the speech act and linguistic literature. I have demonstrated that there is a lot of heterogeneity in the subcategories of 'Directives' proposed. I have therefore proposed another classification of *Directives*. Based on their discourse function or the response they prospect, I have identified two major subclasses of *Directives*: *Advisives* and *Mandatives*. *Advisives* are performed in the interest of the addressee and prospect compliance and an optional thanking. *Mandatives*, on the other hand, are performed in the interest of the speaker himself and prospects compliance but not a thanking. *Advisives* are then further classified into *Positive Advisives* and *Negative Advisives* according to whether consequence of compliance or non-compliance is desirable or undesirable. The former is realized by *Advise* and the latter by *Warn*. *Mandatives* are also further classified according to whether the consequence of non-compliance is specified or not. Two subclassees of *Mandatives* are identified: *Order* and *Threat*. The latter specifies the consequence of non-compliance whereas the former does not.

Footnotes

[1]For convenience, I shall use the label 'Directives' to refer to similar categories.

[2]Sadock is over-generalizing here. A why-impositive like "Why don't you take out the garbage?" in a context where the speaker is trying to get the addressee to take out the garbage so that he himself does not have to do it is a 'request', not a 'suggestion'. The same is true for other sentence types. "How about tea?" spoken by a husband to his wife in a context where the former is trying to get the latter to give him a cup of tea is a 'request', not a 'suggestion'

[3]An exception would be a butler thanking his master for the latter's 'order'. The following exchange is possible,

A: Whisky and soda, James.

J: Thank you sir.

In this case, the butler is taking the *Order* as an *Advise* which helps him to carry out his duty.

[4]It should be noted that *Threats* in magistrate courts **do** commit the speaker to carrying out the action should the addressee fail to comply (see Harris 1980).

[5]In fact, the example that Sadock gives does not have a reading of 'warning', even when the speaker is talking about his reflex action. It is a kind of 'condition' imperative which shows an if-then sequence (see Bolinger 1967).

[6]It should be noted that "in the interest of the speaker" also means that it is the speaker's desire and want that the action be complied with. Hence, when a mother says to her child, "Finish your meal or I'll switch off the television.", the solicited action is for the good of the child in the long run, but as far as the utterance is concerned, it is in the interest of the speaker, or the speaker's want or desire, that the child finishes his meal.

CHAPTER 6 INITIATING ACT: INFORMATIVES

6.1 Introduction

The fourth subclass of *Initiating Act* is *Informatives*. The term 'Informative' is first introduced by S & C as a discourse category whose sole function is to provide information and the response elicited is an acknowledgement of attention and understanding (see p.41). In this revised description, *Informatives* are defined as acts in which the speaker represents or expresses beliefs, value judgements, feelings and thoughts. The response prospected by this subclass is an acknowledgement of whatever beliefs, judgements, feelings and thoughts that have been conveyed. The acknowledgement may be in the form of an appreciation or an acceptance of whatever has been expressed, or an indication that the message has been received or understood. Let us label this kind of response an *Acknowledgement*.

Informatives differ from both *Requestives* and *Directives* in that they prospect a verbal response, or a non-verbal surrogate of the verbal response, such as a laugh, nod, eye-brow raising etc. which indicates that the message conveyed is accepted, appreciated or understood (see 2 below for example). No future action is involved. They also differ from *Elicitations* in that the verbal response prospected is not a missing piece of information

nor a confirmation of the previous speaker's assumption, but rather, as I have mentioned above, an *Acknowledgement*.

Informatives include many of the acts which have been identified as 'Verdictives' and 'Expositives' by Austin, or 'Assertives' by Searle, such as 'state', 'inform', 'predict', 'report', 'criticize', 'praise' etc, as well as those which have been identified as 'Behabitives' (Austin) or 'Expressives' (Searle), such as 'thank', 'apologize', 'congratulate' etc. The following are some examples of *Informatives*.

1. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.5]
→ K: I think he's a y'know serious scholar, he's got his own little thing.
X: Yeah, he's he IS very scholarly.

2. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#1]
H: I'll give you ten dollars.
S: Oh.
→ H: My finance my financial situation is improving.
S: ((laughs)) Are you
[
→ H: My wife gave me a hundred dollars. She says this to me, she controls all the money, alright, I'll give you a hundred dollars, this is the LAST one you're getting this month - till pay day.
S: Oh no. ((laughs))

3. [Data B/Tape C/Side A/#3/p.2]
→ A: I I still feel very embarrassed about the fact that you weren't introdu- introduced to him.
B: Mm - well, well, no worry, that's that's the way, yeah.
[
A: ( )
A: Alright.

The above utterances have one characteristic in common: they are all assertions which express what the speaker **claims to be true** (see Wunderlich 1977). (Here truth and falsity are used in a wide sense which includes

falsifiable truth and falsity, sincerity and insincerity, correct and incorrect representation.) Hence, in 1, K claims that the value judgement asserted is a correct and hence a true representation of the referent; in 2, H claims that the event reported is true; in 3, A claims that the emotion asserted is sincere, hence a true representation of his psychological state (however, cf. Searle 1979). They are all *Informatives*.

Because *Informatives* express what the speaker claims to be true, they typically prospect an *Acknowledgement* by the addressee that accepts whatever has been expressed or at least indicates that whatever has been expressed is received or understood. This is supported by Keenan (1974) who video-recorded conversations between her two twin-sons and discovered that 'comments' (characterized as *Informatives* here) were almost always followed by some utterance that addressed itself to that 'comment'. When a 'comment' received no acknowledgement, it was repeated again and again until it did. For example,

4. [Keenan 1974:174]
→ Child 1 - [i:] moth/
Child 2 - goosey goosey ganda/ where shall I wander/
→ Child 1 - [i:] moth/
Child 2 - up downstairs lady's chamber/
→ Child 1 - [i:] moth/
→ Child 2 - [i:] [le:] moth/

Keenan writes,

> *A speaker uttering a comment expects the hearer to acknowledge that comment. That is, once a comment has been produced by a speaker, the co-present interlocutor is normally obligated to respond to that comment. (p. 166)*

The following piece of data illustrates this point.

5. [BCET/Data A/p.26]
B is a banker and C is unemployed.

1 B: Mind you it's not bad really, banking business, I suppose - it's a clean job.
2 C: Yeah, it's that that kind of image.
3 I don't really go for that y'know.
→ 4 ((2 sec))
5 C: Do you know what I mean though, I mean it suits you.

Line 3 is an *Informative* in which C expresses his dislike for a banking job. The lack of a response from B is "noticed" and is interpreted by C as a possibility that B has taken offence at his utterance. Therefore he produces another utterance in line 5 to clarify his intended meaning.

6.2 Subclasses of *Informative*

I shall now attempt a more delicate classification of *Informatives* according to the different responses they prospect.

Consider the following utterances and some of their prospected responses.

6. H: My financial situation is improving.
X: (a) Oh.
(b) That's nice.
(c) I'm glad to hear that.

7. A: He's a serious scholar.
B: (a) I agree.
(b) Yeah, he's very scholarly.

8. X: Sorry I'm late.
Y: (a) That's alright.
(b) You're just in time.
(c) Okay.

The responses in all the above exchanges are *Acknowledgements*. In 6a. the addressee responds by giving

a message received signal; in 6b by making a positive remark on the reported state of affairs and in 6c by expressing his empathy with the speaker: that he is happy that the state of affairs reported is desirable. In 7a, the addressee responds to the speaker's evaluation of the referent by agreeing with the speaker's evaluation, and in 7b, by making a similar evaluation. In 8a, the addressee responds by minimizing the debt incurred by the speaker; in 8b by negating the proposition "I'm late" which is also a means of minimization; and in 8c by accepting the apology.

When each *Informative* utterance in the above examples is responded to by some of the prospected responses of the other two *Informative* utterances, the exchange becomes either odd or unacceptable. Consider:

9. H: My financial situation is improving.
   X: *(a) I agree.
   *(b) That's alright.
   *(c) Okay.

10. A: He's a serious scholar.
   B: *(a) That's alright.
   *(b) Okay.
   ?(c) I'm glad to hear that.

11. A: Sorry I'm late.
   B: *(a) I agree.
   *(b) That's nice/bad.
   *(c) I'm glad to hear that.
   *(d) Oh.

In 9, the oddity or unacceptability of response (a) lies in the fact that H's utterance is a report of a state of affairs, in this case pertaining to the speaker himself, which the addressee is in no position to agree with. Even

if the state of affairs is known to the addressee, he can only indicate that he knows already but he cannot respond by agreeing, hence the unacceptability of (a). (see the discussion on *Reports* in 6.3). The speaker is stating what he believes to be a fact and there is no emotion or judgement expressed in the proposition nor is there a debt incurred by the speaker, hence the minimisation in (b) and the acceptance in (c) are unacceptable. In 10, A's utterance is an evaluation of the referent and hence for the same reason, the minimisation in (a) and the acceptance in (b) are unacceptable. As the evaluation has nothing to do with the speaker, the empathy in (c) is irrelevant. In 11, the speaker expresses his own feeling towards a state of affairs which has led to or is likely to lead to undesirable consequences for the addressee and for which he is responsible. The addressee is therefore in no position to comment on or to agree with the speaker's feeling. Hence the unacceptability of (a) and (b). (c) is also unacceptable because the speaker is expressing his indebtedness to the addressee, hence an empathising is irrelevant. For the same reason, a mere message received signal in (d) is unacceptable: the addressee is expected to give a more enthusiastic response.

The claimed differences between the above *Informative* utterances are confirmed in the way they can be challenged.

12. H: My financial situation is improving.
X: (a) I don't believe it.
(b) That's not true./No, it isn't.

13. A: He's a serious scholar.
B: (a) I don't agree.
(b) No, he isn't.

14. C: Sorry I'm late.
D: (a) You don't mean it.
(b) I'm delighted actually - we weren't ready.

In 12, X's utterances challenge the presupposition that the speaker's assertion is true. His challenge in (b) is possible when H's actual financial situation is known to him as well. In 13, B's utterances challenge A's evaluation. In 14, D's utterance in (a) challenges the presupposition that the psychological state expressed by C is a sincere one and his utterance in (b) challenges the presupposition that a debt has been incurred by his being late.

Based on the different prospected responses of these *Informative* utterances and the way they can be challenged, I wish to suggest that *Informatives* can be classified into first, those in which what is asserted is an account of a certain event or a certain state of affairs and what is presupposed is that the assertion is believed to be true by the speaker. Let us call them *Reports*. 12 is an example of a *Report*. *Reports* subsume acts which have been identified in the speech act literature as 'state', 'inform', 'report'. Second, those in which what is asserted is a judgement of some sort, including a value judgement or an evaluation of the speaker, and what is

presupposed is that the speaker considers his evaluation or judgement to be a correct one and hence a true representation of the evaluated referent. Let us call them *Assessments*. 13 is an example of an *Assessment*. *Assessments* subsume acts which have been identified in the speech act literature as 'praise', 'compliment', 'assess', 'characterize', 'criticize', 'complain', 'blame', 'accuse'. Third, those in which what is asserted is the speaker's emotions and feelings towards a certain state of affairs and what is presupposed is that the speaker is sincere and hence is giving a true representation of his asserted psychological state. Let us call them *Expressives*. 14 is an example of an *Expressive*. *Expressives* subsume acts which have been identified in the speech act literature as 'thank', 'apologize', 'congratulate', 'condole', 'welcome', 'greet', 'wish'.

This subclassification may appear to be the same as Austin's classification into 'Expositives', 'Verdictives' and 'Behabitives'. However, there are three ways in which it is different. Firstly, *Reports*, *Assessments* and *Expressives* are subclasses of *Informatives*. They are secondary rather than primary classes. Secondly, they are characterized according to their discourse functions, as can be seen from the discussion above. Thirdly, because the way they are characterized is different, the acts that will be subsumed under these three subclasses will be different. For example, Austin classifies 'criticize' as a

kind of 'Behabitive', but under the present characterization, 'criticize' will be considered a subclass of *Assessment* rather than a kind of *Expressive*.

I shall now discuss each of the three subclasses in more detail.

6.3 *Reports*

The first subclass is *Reports*. A *Report* gives a factual account of certain events or states of affairs. It differs from an *Assessment* in that the value judgement is not explicitly stated. As Drew points out, the upshot of the report is left to the interpretation of the addressee (see Drew 1984:137). In a *Report*, the speaker claims that the expressed proposition is true. The proposition can be about past or present events or states of affairs. It can also be about a future event. For example, "My students are going to take me out to dinner." is a *Report* because in saying so, the speaker is claiming that the future event expressed is true, that it will take place (cf. S & V 1985). The following is an example of a *Report* and its prospected response.

15. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#3/p.9]
B: My spoken English students are going to take me to dinner.
S: That's nice.
B: Yes.

B's utterance is a *Report* of a future event and it is responded to by a remark on the reported event. Let us call responses like this *Comment*. *Comments* are often

polite and supportive: a reported event which is presupposed to be good or desirable is often responded to by a positive remark and one which is presupposed to be bad or undesirable is responded to by a negative remark or by sympathy, condolence etc. (see Leech 1983: Maxim of Sympathy). For example, S's response in 15 is supportive in that she makes a positive remark on the reported event which is desirable. The following are some more examples of *Comments* which are supportive.

16. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#4/p.4]
X has been complaining to S that the size of her class is far too big.

X: Well, Jane cancelled that one yesterday because it had=
[
S: Yeah.
X: =only three people in it and she gave me one of her=
[
S: I know.
X: =students ((laughs))
→ S: Oh. ((laughs)) Oh I'm sorry.

17. [Data B/Tape D/Side A/#1/p.7]
D has been telling C that his throat is all swollen because he got an elbow from his colleague right at the Adam's apple.

D: And he's been - I thought he was going to go off the deep end, y'know, he's he's walking around like he thinks he's y'know ruined my career
→ C: Ah I tell you ((laughs)) Isn't that just what you need.

In 16, S's *Comment* is supportive in that it expresses her empathy with X upon hearing that one more student is added to her class which is already too big. In 17, C's *Comment* is supportive in that it shows that he fully understands the unfortunate situation D is in.

Other than *Comment*, a *Report* can also be responded to by a message received signal. For example,

18. [Data C/Tape 4/p.1]
S: John Fraser is a personal friend of ours - Michael went to school with him in Canada.
G: Oh really.

Other forms of a message received signal are "uhuh", "oh", "mhm", "I see" etc. It can also be responded to by "that's right", "yes" if the reported event is also known to the addressee. For example,

19. [Data B/Tape D/Side B/#5]
K: Henry, you mentioned in passing the other day that Joe Johnson is interested in what we were doing.
→ H: [That's right.
H: That's right.

20. [BCET/Data A/P.35]
C: David Owen was on the box the other night, last night on Question Time.
→ B: Yes, I saw the last minute of it.

Responses like the above indicate that the message is not only received but also that the reported event is known. Let us call responses like a message received signal and those given above *Acknowledge*. (Notice that *Acknowledge* is a subclass of *Acknowledgement*.)

That certain *Reports* can be responded to by responses like those in 19 and 20 appears to suggest that there are two subclasses of *Reports*: those in which the reported event is not known to the addressee and those in which it is. Labov & Fanshel (1977) classify representation of events which are known to both the speaker and the addressee (i.e. an AB-event) as 'refer' and those which are known only to the speaker (i.e. A-event) as 'give information'. However, it is doubtful whether we can

actually identify two subclasses in actual discourse because we can never be sure of what is known or not known to the addressee. ("We" refers to both the analyst and the interlocutors.) It is perfectly possible that a *Report* about the speaker's own private experience is known to the addressee. For example,

21. [BCET/Data D/p.1]
    C: Lorna bought me that for Christmas.
    D: Yes, you were saying that.

It is also possible that a *Report* of a public event is not known to the addressee. Sometimes, it is not clear whether the reported event is a so-called A-event or an AB-event even from the addressee's response. For example,

22. [BCET/Data A/p.42]
    B: Arthur Scargill just bought a new fifteen thousand five hundred pound Jaguar.
    C: Bloody hell, communist.

23. [ibid/p. 42]
    B: Randy Andy, his income is five thousand from the navy and twenty thousand from the Royal purse.
    C: Twenty thousand, twenty-five thousand for Randy Andy Windsor - I think it's disgusting.

From the responses in 22 and 23, it is by no means clear whether B's *Report* is an A-event or an AB-event. As I am dealing with prospective classification and subclasses of acts are set up only if they are identifiable in the discourse, I am therefore reluctant to make further classifications of *Reports*.

Let us summarize the prospected responses to *Reports* as follows:

Subclass	Prospected Response
Report →	comment
	acknowledge

6.4 *Assessments*

6.4.1 *Assessments* as a Marked Subclass

I have pointed out above that a *Report* differs from an *Assessment* in that it gives a factual account of events or states of affairs and that the evaluation or judgement is not explicitly stated whereas in an *Assessment* it is. However, it must be pointed out that the difference between these two subclasses is sometimes not as clear-cut. While there are clear cases of *Reports* and *Assessments*, for example, "Paris is the capital of France." is a clear case of the former and "You are such a nice person." is a clear case of the latter, there are utterances which are ambiguous between the two. For example,

24. A: Paris is a big city.
    B: (a) uhuh.
       (b) I agree.

A's utterance is responded to as a *Report* in (a). B simply *Acknowledges* the factual account that Paris is a big city. However, in (b), A's utterance is taken as an *Assessment*: A is stating his judgement of Paris as a big city, and it is responded to by B's agreeing with A's judgement. In other words, A's utterance can be taken as a *Report* or as an *Assessment*.

It must also be pointed out that utterances which would be characterized as *Reports* here can be interpreted by the addressee as *Assessments*. In other words, the upshot of a *Report* can be taken to be a judgement or an evaluation of some sort. For example,

26. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/# 4/p. 1]
X and S are talking about the size of their classes. The normal size is sixteen to twenty students.

X: I had thirty, I told you that didn't I, I had thirty there at one stage.
[
→ S: I can't believe it, wow.

X's utterance would be characterized as a *Report* since it gives a factual account of the number of students she has. However, S interprets X's telling her that she had thirty students at one stage as implying that her class is incredibly big. S therefore responds by asserting a similar evaluation. In other words, X's *Report* is interpreted as an *Assessment*.

While a *Report* can be interpreted as an *Assessment*, it seems that an utterance in which a judgement or an evaluation is explicity stated cannot be interpreted as a *Report*. Consider the oddity of the following exchange.

27. A: I like your coat, it's such a lovely colour.
B: ?(a) uhuh.
?(b) That's nice.

A's utterance is an overt *Assessment*. The appropriate response will be a thanking or an appreciation of A's positive evaluation etc (this will be discussed in greater detail in 6.4.2). A message received signal "uhuh" and a

Comment which are appropriate responses to a *Report* are odd here. The oddity of B's responses suggests that A's utterance cannot possibly be interpreted as a *Report*. A comparison of the following two pieces of data will make this point more clearly.

28. [Data B/Tape C/Side B/#3/p.2]
X: I suspect from what he said last night he's gone shopping today to get things for his family.
[[
→ H: Good. Yeah.

29. [ibid/p.2]
X: every time he opened his mouth, new secrets will be revealed, quite an interesting guy.
→ H: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

H's response in 28, "Yeah" is identical to his response in 29 in terms of linguistic form. However, while in 28 "Yeah" realizes a message received signal, those in 29 express H's agreement with X's *Assessment*. This is because in 29, an evaluation is explicitly stated in X's utterance; it is a clear case of an *Assessment* which prospects either an agreement or a similar evaluation from H. Hence H's response would be interpreted as an agreement.

From the fact that a *Report* can be taken as an *Assessment* but not vice versa, we can say that, in a sense, *Assessments* are a marked subclass of *Informative* whereas *Reports* are an unmarked subclass.

6.4.2 Subclasses of *Assessment*

As characterized above, *Assessments* are a subclass of *Informatives* in which the speaker asserts his judgement of certain people, objects, states of affair etc. The example of *Assessment* in 13 given above is one in which a value judgement is asserted. There are also *Assessments* in which a judgement is asserted, but not necessarily a value judgement. For example, a speaker who says "It's probably going to rain tomorrow." is making a judgement of some sort. This kind of utterance, often referred to as a 'prediction', is characterized as an *Assessment* here because what is asserted is the speaker's estimation of the likelihood of rain rather than an account of events or state of affairs. That utterances like the above are best characterized as *Assessments* is further supported by the way they can be responded to and challenged. For example,

30. A: It's probably going to rain tomorrow.
    B: (a) I think so too.
    (b) I don't think so.

Similar to other *Assessments*, it can be responded to by an agreement or challenged by a disagreement with the speaker's judgement.

Assessments typically prospect a response in which a judgement or an evaluation of the same referent is made. In Pomerantz's terms, it typically prospects a "second assessment". I shall refer to the response as a **second evaluation** so as not to confuse a *Responding Act* with an

Initiating Act. Consider the following *Assessments* and their typically prospected responses.

31. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.4]
K: I think he's a, you know, serious scholar, he's got his own little thing.
X: Yeah, he's he IS very scholarly.

32. [Pomerantz 1978:94]
A: Oh it was beautiful.
B: Well, thank you uh I thought it was quite nice.

33. [BCET/Data D/p. 45]
C has been telling D that she has three library books out which are long overdue.

D: I'll tell you this, Cathy, if I ever buy a bookshop, or own a library, I'm not letting you take any books out.
C: Yeah, I know ((laughs)) I'm disastrous.

34. [Pomerantz 1984:85]
L: ... I'm so dumb I don't even know it. hhh! -- heh!
W: y-no, y-you're not du:mb,...

35. [Data B/Tape E/Side A/#1/p.1]
H: Eh listen I I typed up you paper, it's beautiful, it's=
[
X: Oh
H: =beautiful, it's going to be Nobel Nobel ah material.
X: Great stuff.

In each of the above exchanges, an *Assessment* is responded to by a second evaluation. Let us look at the relationship between the two.

In 31, the *Assessment* is an evaluation of a third party. It is responded to by a similar evaluation. An *Assessment* which is about a third party can be positive or negative and it can also be responded to by an evaluation which "upgrades" or "downgrades" the preceding evaluation'. For example,

36. [Data B/Tape C/Side B/#1/p.9]
E: They they definitely inflate their findings ( )=
[
F: Oh Yeah, a=

B: =( ) half a dozen (
[[
F: =lot of it is I think a lot of it is bullshit.

37. [Pomerantz 1984:68]
A: She's a fox!
L: Yeh, she's a pretty girl.

In 36, E's negative evaluation of "they" as inflating their findings, is upgraded to "a lot of it is bullshit". In 37, however, A's positive evaluation of "she" as a fox, is downgraded to "a pretty girl". In other words, this kind of *Assessment* can be responded to by a second evaluation which is similar to it, or which upgrades or downgrades it.

In 32, A's *Assessment* is a positive evaluation of B, the addressee. It is responded to by a second evaluation which downgrades it: "beautiful" is downgraded to "quite nice". Different from 31, it is not socially acceptable to upgrade the preceding *Assessment*. Consider the following.

38. A: Oh it was beautiful.
*B: Well thank you, I thought it was absolutely gorgeous.

B's response is unacceptable because it violates the social norm of modesty (see Leech 1983: Maxim of Modesty). Hence, while it is appropriate to downgrade this kind of *Assessment*, it is not acceptable to upgrade it, or even give a similar evaluation.

D's *Assessment* in 33 is the reverse of 32: it is a negative evaluation of the addressee. The second evaluation is the complete reverse of that in 32: it upgrades D's negative evaluation: D's criticism of C's not

returning library books on time is upgraded to "disastrous" by C. This kind of *Assessment* can also be responded to by the latter's making a similar evaluation of himself. Take the following piece of data for example.

39. [BCET/Data D/p.68]
C: Ow!
D: Watch it.
C: ((laughs))
D: Christ! Cathy, you would drive anybody half way round the goddamn fucking bend.
→ C: [I once dropped the telephone.
D: I can imagine you dropping the telephone.

By telling D that she even dropped the telephone once, C is implicitly making a similar evaluation of herself, namely that she is a very clumsy person. Contrary to 33, a second evaluation which downgrades, or contradicts, the preceding *Assessment* challenges the presuppositions of the latter. For example,

40. D: I'll tell you this Cathy, if I ever buy a bookshop or own a library, I'm not letting you take any books out.
→ C: Oh come on, I may be a bit forgetful, but I'm not that bad.

C's utterance implies disagreement with D's evaluation and is not a prospected response. The former is face-threatening and is usually avoided (see the discussion in 6.5.3). Hence, while a downgraded positive evaluation is the prospected response in 32, an upgraded negative evaluation is the prospected response in 33.

L's *Assessment* in 34 is a negative evaluation of the speaker himself. It is responded to by a second evaluation which is contrary. Different from 33, a disagreement with

the preceding *Assessment* does not challenge the presuppositions of the latter, but rather is typically prospected. A contrary second evaluation is, or implies, a positive evaluation of the speaker and hence saves the face of the latter (see Pomerantz 1978, 1984, Leech 1983). A second evaluation which is similar to or upgrades this kind of *Assessment* is not an acceptable response because to agree with the speaker's negative evaluation of himself implies a criticism of the speaker which is very face-threatening and is usually avoided unless the interlocutors know each other very well. Consider the following.

41. L: ...I'm so dumb I don't even know it. hhh! - heh!
→ ?W: Yes, you ARE dumb.

W's utterance is likely to be considered very aggressive and rude.

Finally, H's *Assessment* in 35 is the reverse of L's *Assessment* in 34. It is a positive evaluation of the speaker's own typing. It is responded to by a similar second evaluation. Different from 34, a contrary second evaluation would be socially unacceptable because it implies a negative evaluation of the speaker and is therefore face-threatening.

From the above discussion, we can see that although all the above sample *Assessments* prospect a second evaluation, the kinds of the second evaluation that they prospect are different. The differences in the discourse consequences

suggest to us that there are different kinds of *Assessment*. I wish to suggest that the sample utterances given above realize five subclasses of *Assessment* which can be differentiated according to firstly, whether the evaluation is directed at the speaker himself, at the addressee, or neither at the speaker nor at the addressee; secondly, whether the evaluation is positive or negative.

K's utterance in 31 is an evaluation which is directed at neither the speaker nor the addressee. Let us call the subclass that it realizes *Assess*. An *Assess* can be a positive or a negative evaluation. It typically prospects a second evaluation in which the addressee agrees with the speaker's evaluation. The agreement can be total, in which case the second evaluation is similar to the preceding *Assess*; it can be a strong one, in which case the second evaluation upgrades the the preceding *Assess*, or it can be a weak agreement, in which case the second evaluation downgrades the preceding *Assess* (see also Pomerantz 1984). An *Assess* also includes utterances in which a judgement of some sort is made. A's utterance in 30 is an example. Utterances which have been identified as 'predict' and 'conjecture' in the speech act literature are characterized as *Assess* here.

A's utterance in 32 is a positive evaluation which is directed at the addressee. Let us call the subclass it realizes *Compliment*. It should be noted, however, that a *Compliment* can be a positive evaluation of a third party

in which the credit given to the third party is also a credit to the addressee. For example,

42. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.5]
X was telling K that he saw his son the other day.

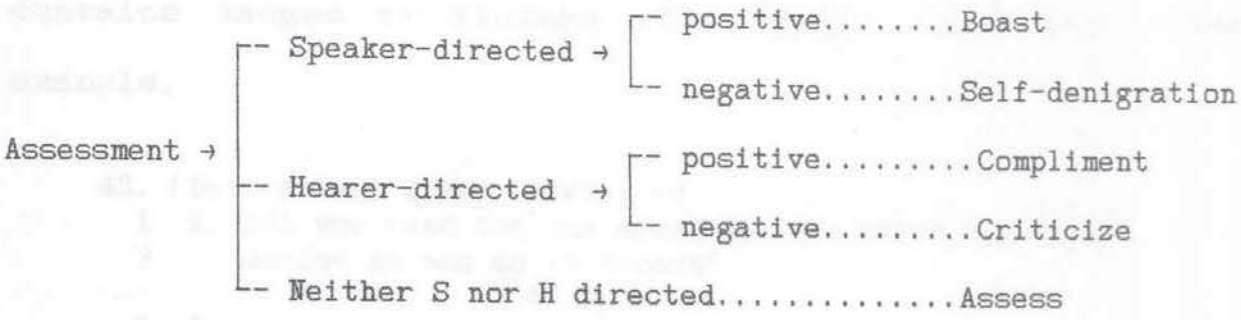
X: He's a cute looking little guy.
K: Yeah, yeah, he he is, he's a doll,

By telling K that his little boy is cute, X is giving credit to K as well. This is supported by the fact that K can respond by thanking X. Here, K responds by downgrading X's *Compliment*. A *Compliment* typically prospects a second evaluation which downgrades it.

D's utterance in 33 is a negative evaluation which is directed at the addressee. Let us call the subclass that it realizes *Criticize*. It typically prospects a second evaluation which is similar to it or upgrades it. W's utterance in 34 is a negative evaluation which is directed at the speaker himself. Let us call the subclass it realizes *Self-denigration*. It typically prospects a second evaluation which is contrary to it.

H's utterance in 35 is a positive evaluation of the speaker himself. Let us call the subclass that it realizes *Boast*[2]. It typically prospects a second evaluation which is similar to or upgrades it.

Let us represent the features of these five subclasses as follows:



6.5 Prospected Responses to Subclasses of *Assessments*

In the above discussion, I have looked at the responses which are **typically** prospected by the various subclasses of *Assessments*. In the following, I wish to discuss these responses as well as other prospected responses in greater detail as this will clear the ground for the discussion of the different subclasses of *Responding Act* in the subsequent chapter.

6.5.1 Prospected Responses to *Assess*

As mentioned above, the typical response prospected by an *Assess* is one in which the addressee agrees with the speaker's evaluation of the referent. Let us call this kind of response *Agreement*. In Pomerantz's terms, it is a "preferred" response. That *Agreement* is a prospected or "preferred" response can be seen from the fact that a second evaluation which is contrary to the prior evaluation often exhibits the features of a "dispreferred" response. It is often not immediately given but delayed and prefaced, with token agreement or acknowledgement, or

contains hedges or fillers like "well", "uh" etc. For example,

43. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.28]
1 K: Did you read the one about the one about the Geneva
2 doctor so and so in Geneva?
[
3 X: No I haven't.
4 K: That's a good one, it's in the library.
→ 5 X: Oh is it? I I I I kinda shy away from that. I read it, I=
[
6 K: No
7 X: =I think it's too bizarre.
8 K: No it was very good. He he he never disappoints ah Graham
9 Greene.
→ 10 X: Yeah, that's true, I must say. ((laughs))

X's contrary evaluation in line 5 is prefaced with a token acknowledgement, "Oh is it?" and contains a faltering "I I I I" and a hedge "kinda". This contrasts with his *Agreement* in line 10 which is not prefaced and does not contain any hedges.

That *Agreement* is a prospected response or a "preferred" response can also be seen from the way the utterances are sequenced in the following piece of data.

44. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.4]
1 K: and I I got this impression with your Professor Lee, he's
2 very easy-going, he's doing his own work with his
3 computer, I mean, he's I don't think he's into all the ah
4 pet- petty shit, y'know - which I think is wonderful, I=
[[
5 X: No No, no.
6 K: =think he's a y'know serious scholar, he's got his own
little thing.
→ 7 X: Yeah, he's he IS very scholarly.
8 K: Yeah, that, you know I I wish people were like that here.
→ 9 X: He's hard to flap actually, and ah - works both ways, you
10 know, sometimes you would ah like him to flap a bit
11 ((laughs)) over some things ((laughs)). On the other hand
12 ah everything has its blessings.

In lines 1 to 6, K's *Assess* is an evaluation of several aspects of Professor Lee which is responded to by an *Agreement* first in which X agrees with some of the aspects that K mentioned. The aspect which he disagrees with, Professor Lee's easy-going character, is delayed until line 9. Notice that the contrary second evaluation contains the features of a "dispreferred" response, such as hedges like "actually" and the qualification "On the other hand, everything has its blessings."

Because a contrary second evaluation is "dispreferred", interlocutors often try to avoid it or withhold it. This is why when an *Assess* is responded to by a silence, the latter is often interpreted as an unstated **contrary evaluation**. (See Pomerantz 1978, 1984 for a detailed discussion of "preferred" and "dispreferred" responses.)

An *Assess* can also be responded to by a second evaluation which evaluates the prior evaluation. Let us call this kind of response *Meta-assess*. A *Meta-assess* is usually given when the assessed person(s), object(s) or state of affair(s) is not known to the addressee, therefore the latter is in no position to give an *Agreement*. For example,

45. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.26-27]
K: But I'm I'm very proud of the way they kept going through the literature, they work very hard.
→ X: Well that's good.

46. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.7]
K: but I mean you have decisions, such high level decisions like for couple hundred dollars.
→ X: Well, that's pathetic frankly.

A *Meta-assess* is usually supportive. A positive evaluation prospects a positve *Meta-assess*, as in 45 and a negative evaluation prospects a negative *Meta-assess*, as in 46.

6.5.2 Prospected Responses to *Compliment*

As pointed out above, a *Compliment* is typically responded to by the addressee's downgrading the evaluation. However, there are also other ways of responding to a *Compliment*. Pomerantz (1978) has made a detailed study of the different responses to compliments. She observes that other than downgrading, the responses may be in the following forms:

47. [ibid:100]
A: Good shot.
→ B: Not very solid though.

48. [ibid:102]
R: You're a good rower, Honey.
→ J: These are very easy to row. Very light.

49. [ibid:105]
E: Yer looking good.
→ G: Great. So'r you.

According to Pomerantz, 47 is a disagreement which proposes that the creditings within the prior assessment are overdone, exaggerated and that lesser amounts of credit are justified; 48 is a reassignment of praise in which the recipient shifts the credit from himself to an other-than-self referent such as an object; 49 is a return compliment in which the recipient makes a similar compliment on the speaker.

I wish to suggest that the responses in 47 and 48, together with a downgraded second evaluation, realize the same function of minimising the positive evaluation given. Let us call these responses *Minimisations*. The response in 49, "great", accepts the *Compliment* overtly. Let us call the response it realizes *Accept*. An *Accept* can also be realized by simply thanking the speaker or simply returning the *Compliment* which is an implicit acceptance of the positive evaluation. In other words, a *Compliment* prospects an *Accept* and a *Minimisation*.

I have pointed out above that it is socially unacceptable to upgrade a *Compliment*. How then do we account for exchanges like the following?

50. A: I like your coat.
    B: Oh I love it, it's so light and warm.

A's utterance is a *Compliment* and it is responded to by an upgraded agreement. Yet B's response is perfectly acceptable and does not seem to violate the norm of modesty. What is happening here is that A's *Compliment* is reclassified as an *Assess* by B. B chooses to interpret A's utterance as a positive evaluation of the coat, not herself. Hence her upgraded second evaluation is a strong *Agreement* with an *Assess* rather than a *Compliment*.

6.5.3 Prospected Responses to *Criticize*

A *Criticize* is a face-threatening act which is usually avoided. It can, however, occur between interlocutors who

know each other well. As mentioned above, it prospects a second evaluation which is similar to or upgrades the negative evaluation of the addressee himself. It can also be responded to by an apology. For example,

51. [Fieldnotes]
R is working on a computer and the connection wire came off.

R: Oh shit, now I've lost all my data. It's a whole
→ afternoon's work. Oh - it's all your fault, Annie.
A: Sorry.

An apology implicitly agrees with the speaker's negative evaluation. Therefore I wish to suggest that both a similar or upgraded negative evaluation of the addressee himself and an apology realize a response which accepts the speaker's criticism. Let us call the kind of *Responding Act* that they realize *Admittance*.

If a *Criticize* prospects an *Admittance*, how do we account for the following response?

52. [Data B/Tape D/Side B/#1]
M has a bad cold and H couldn't recognize her voice.

H: You sound terrible, you sound like a man.
→ M: Thank you.

In the present context, H's utterance is clearly not a *Compliment* but a *Criticize*. By saying "thank you", which is an appropriate response only to a *Compliment*, M is drawing H's attention to the negative aspect of H's utterance. By so doing, she is trying to make H realize how rude his remark is.

That an *Admittance* is the prospected response to a *Criticize* can be seen from the fact that a second

evaluation which disagrees with or rejects the *Criticize* is often either avoided or, when it does occur, it is given in a weak form or contains features of a "dispreferred" response. The following are some examples.

53. [BCET/Data A/p.11]
C: Come down the Local then.
B: Ah it's a bit rough for me down there.
.....
B: Well, 'cos ah we usually go into the - is it the Gun Barrels?
C: Gun Barrels, yeah. Alright, go down there. Posh side presumably.
B: Oh yeah.
→ C: You snob.
→ B: Well, I don't know.

54. [BCET/Data D/p.15]
D: You remind me of one of those French whores of the late nineteenth century that you see running around with Louis the fourteenth. It's sort of the hair, sort of=
[
C: .hhh
D: =curls (like that) and goes straight into the air, you know, sort of
→ C: What was I saying? I was saying something.

In 53, B's utterance, which rejects C's *Criticize*, contains the filler "well" and is presented in a weak form of disagreement "I don't know." In 54, D's *Criticize* is not responded to at all. Instead, C changes the topic. Just as silence is a way of indicating disagreement with an *Assess*, a lack of response here indicates C's rejection of D's *Criticize*. In other words, an overt rejection of a *Criticize* is "dispreferred" and that is why it is withheld.

6.5.4 Prospected Responses to *Self-denigration*

Contrary to an *Assess*, a *Self-denigration* typically prospects a response in which the addressee makes an evaluation which is contrary to the speaker's negative evaluation of himself. This kind of response realizes a *Disagreement*. As mentioned above, agreeing with a *Self-denigration* implies a criticism of the speaker and is very face-threatening. It is a "dispreferred" response and seldom occurs except between interlocutors who know each other very well. For example,

55. [Fieldnotes]
    Husband: I've put on a lot since you left.
    → Wife: I know.

To say that one has put on weight is usually a negative evaluation and is usually responded to by a *Disagreement* like "You haven't." or "Not a bit." The above response is permissible only because the interlocutors are husband and wife.

That a *Disagreement* is a prospected response can be seen from the fact that while it is often given immediately, an agreement is often avoided or, if given at all, is delayed or given in a weak form. For example,

56. [Pomerantz 1984:91-2]
    W: ...Do you know what I was all that time?
    L: (no)
    W: Pavlov's dog.
    → (2.0)
    L: (I suppose),

L's response which is an agreement is delayed and is presented in a weak form. This is why, contrary to an

Assess, when a *Self-denigration* is responded to by silence, or when no overt *Disagreement* is given, the self-denigrating party is likely to interpret it as an agreement (see Pomerantz 1984:93).

Because a *Disagreement* is typically prospected by a *Self-denigration*, a person who often self-denigrates may be considered to be "fishing for compliment". The following piece of data fully illustrates this point.

57. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/ #3/p.6]
X has been telling K that his son is very cute.

1 X: You ah you know, mix mix marriages produce some of the
2 most beautiful kids, I think.
3 K: Yeah.
→ 4 X: Well, I had to go and marry a white skin caucasian.
→ 5 K: No, somebody was saying Mary looks very pretty. Alice
6 didn't recognize her. She's getting very tall, your kids
7 are very tall.
→ 8 X: Yeah, she's going to be a pretty one.

K is an American and his wife is Asian whereas X and his wife are both Americans. By saying he had to marry a white skin caucasian, X is implying that his kids are not pretty. X's negative evaluation of his kids, which is also a negative evaluation of himself, is immediately responded to by K's making a positive evaluation of X's daughter. The fact that K's positive evaluation is then agreed with by X in line 8 strongly suggests that the latter could well be the response that X intends to solicit by his *Self-denigration*.

Besides *Disagreement*, there are other ways of responding to a *Self-denigration*. Pomerantz (1984) in a study of the responses to negative evaluations that a

speaker makes of himself, observes that they can also be in the following forms.

58. [Pomerantz 1984:87]
R: .hh But I'm only getting a C on my report card in math.
→ C: Yeh but that's passing Ronald.

59. [ibid:87]
W: Yet I've got quite a distance tuh go yet.
→ L: Everybody has a distance.

60. [ibid:90]
B: Everybody else - not everybody else.
I have my desk full of trash.
→ S: Me too...

According to Pomerantz, 58 and 59 are forms of disagreement and 60 is a form of agreement. In 58, the addressee undermines the self-critical assessment of the speaker by favorably recategorizing or reformulating the grade "C" that R has got as a "pass" as opposed to a "fail". In 59, L, by proposing that W's condition is a condition that applies to "everybody", undermines the validity of W's self criticism. In 60, S's response is considered as implicitly agreeing with B's self-criticism.

I wish to suggest that the above responses all realize the same function of *Minimizing* the negative self-evaluation of the speaker. In 60, by making a similar self-evaluation, S is minimizing the negative attribute. As Pomerantz herself points out, by proposing that the deprecating attribute is shared, S is proposing that it is less negative than S has proposed (see ibid:90). A *Minimization* differs from a *Disagreement* in that the former does not reject entirely the prior evaluation that

the speaker makes of himself but tries to play down the negative aspect.

Hence, a *Self-denigration* prospects either a *Disagreement* or a *Minimization*.

6.5.5 Prospected Responses to *Boast*

As characterized above, a *Boast* is a positive evaluation of the speaker himself. It should be noted that because making a positive evaluation of oneself violates the social norm of modesty, it is often presented as a *Report* and the upshot, which is the positive evaluation of the speaker himself, is often left to the interpretation of the addressee. Take the following piece of data for example.

61. [Data B/Tape E/#1/p.2]
→ H: And and ah they asked me to review it too.
X: Oh they did?
H: Yeah. So I might because it's it's it's kind of in my=
[
X: Good.
H: =field.

In H's utterance, there is no explicit positive evaluation of himself. However, because being asked to review a book implies a positive evaluation of H, X responds by making a second positive evaluation. The following is another example.

62. [Data B/Tape A/Side A/#3/p.2]
→ K: So he he he asked me to call, he wanted me to call Professor Lee, which I at present declined to do.
[
X: Good for you.

Here, "he" is the head of the department in which K works. K's utterance is a *Report* of his turning down a request by the department head. It could be a covert *Boast* since, in the given context, he has done the right thing in not telephoning this professor and to refuse to carry out a request made by the department head requires courage on his part. K's *Report* is responded to by a positive evaluation.

However, as we are dealing with prospective classification, we can only identify H's utterances in 61 and 62 as *Reports*. It is only when the addressee produces a positive evaluation of the speaker that we can perhaps reclassify the *Report* as a *Boast*.

It is interesting to note that not only are *Boasts* often presented as *Reports*, but so are *Criticizes*. For example,

63. [BCET/Data D/p.15]
C: What was I saying?
D: I don't know.
→ C: You interrupted me.
D: I'm sorry, I wasn't listening.

By *Reporting* that D interrupted her, C is in fact *Criticizing* D for interrupting her talk. This is supported by the fact that D apologizes. The fact that both *Boast* and *Criticize* are sometimes presented as *Report* can be explained by the fact that they are both face-threatening acts and one way of avoiding the face-threatening effect is to present it as a *Report*.

Let us now look at the prospected responses to *Boasts*. As I have mentioned above, *Boasts* prospect a second evaluation which is similar to or upgrades the positive evaluation. The following is another example.

64. [Data C/Tape 1/Side A/#4/p.15]
X: Y'know, and and it's not that I'm boasting or anything= but I have done certain things in my life and they asked=
[
S: You're not.
X: =about it.

Ironically, by saying she is not boasting, X is making a positive evaluation of herself, which is immediately responded to by S's making a similar evaluation of X. In a sense, we can say that this kind of response is an *Agreement*. However, because it is a positive evaluation of the speaker, and not a third party, I wish to call it a *Support* to distinguish it from an *Agreement* which is the prospected response to an *Assess*.

Let us summarize the prospected responses to the five subclasses of *Assessment* as follows:

Subclass		Prospected Responses
Assess	→	Agree / Meta-assess
Compliment	→	Accept / Minimize
Criticize	----------→	Admit
Self-denigration	→	Disagree / Minimize
Boast	----------→	Support

6.6 *Expressives*

As mentioned above, *Expressives* is a subclass in which the speaker asserts his psychological state towards a certain state of affairs. The psychological state expressed can be pleasure, gratefulness, good will or sorrow, regret, embarrassment etc. *Expressives* are easily identifiable because they are often realized by formulaic expressions and the form of the response they prospect is highly predictable.

Expressives have often been considered a heterogeneous group. However, from the responses prospected, we can say that there are basically three types of *Expressives*. Firstly, there are those in which the speaker empathizes with the addressee and they typically prospect a response expressing appreciation, often in the form of "Thank you" or "That's very kind/nice of you." They include *Congratulate, Wish, Welcome* and *Condole*. The following are some examples.

65. [Data B/Tape B/Side B/#6/p.1]
    H: Welcome back to Hong Kong.
    X: Thank you.

66. X: Congratulations.
    Y: Thank you.

67. [Fieldnotes]
    M: Hey, good luck to your thesis.
    A: Thanks, I need it.

68. A: I'm sorry to hear that your father is not well.
    B: That's very kind of you.

Secondly, there are those in which the speaker expresses his psychological state towards a debt incurred. They typically prospect a minimization or an acceptance. They include *Thank* and *Apologize*. For example,

69. A: Sorry I'm late.
    B: (a) That's alright.
       (b) You're just in time.
       (c) Okay.

70. X: Thanks for your help.
    Y: (a) Not at all.
       (b) I haven't done anything.
       (c) Sure.

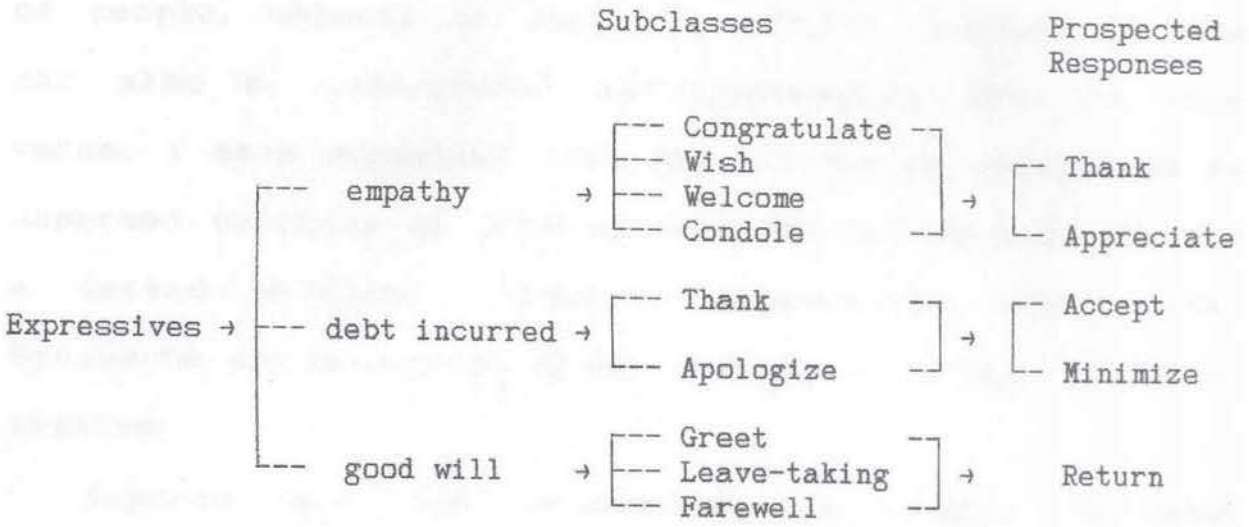
In both examples, the responses in (a) and (b) minimize the debt incurred and the response in (c) accepts what the speaker has expressed.

Thirdly, there are those which express good will and are typically responded to by returning the good will. They include *Greet* and *Leave-taking* and *Farewell*. For example.

71. A: Good morning
    B: Good morning.

72. [Data B/Tape B/Side A/#3/p.5]
    B: so, we look forward to seeing you at in ah
    A: [Yeah, look forward to Friday the fourth, Henry.

Let us represent *Expressives* and their prospected responses as follows.



6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have characterized the fourth subclass of *Initiating Act*: *Informatives*. I have identified *Informatives* as distinctly different from *Requestives* and *Directives* on the basis of the response prospected: while *Informatives* prospect a verbal response, *Requestives* and *Directives* prospect a response which involves a non-verbal action. I have also identified *Informatives* as distinctly different from *Elicitations* on the ground that the verbal responses that they prospect are different.

Based on the different responses prospected, I have identified three subclasses of *Informatives*: *Reports*, *Assessments and Expressives*. *Reports* give an account of event(s) or state of affair(s) and there is no evaluation or judgement asserted. *Assessments*, on the other hand, assert the speaker's judgement, including value judgement,

of people, objects or state of affairs. Because *Reports* can also be interpreted as *Assessments*, but not vice versa, I have suggested that *Reports* can be considered an unmarked subclass of *Informatives* whereas *Assessments* are a marked subclass. Finally, *Expressives* express the speaker's psychological state towards a certain state of affairs.

Reports are not classified into more delicate subclasses. The distinction that is often made between events which are known to only the speaker (referred to as A events) and those which are known to both the speaker and the addressee (referred to as AB events) is not applied to the characterization of *Reports* on the ground that such a distinction is often not identifiable in the discourse.

Assessments are further classified into five subclasses: those in which judgements or evaluations are not directed at the speaker or the addressee, labelled as *Assess*; those in which the a positive evaluation is made of the addressee, labelled as *Compliment*; those in which a negative evaluation is made of the addressee, labelled as *Criticize*; those in which a negative evaluation is made of the speaker himself, labelled as *Self-denigration*; and those in which a positive evaluation is made of the speaker himself, labelled as *Boast*. The classification of *Informatives* into these five subclasses is supported by the different discourse consequences exhibited: an *Assess*

typically prospects an *Agreement* whereas a *Self-denigration* typically prospects a *Disagreement*. A *Compliment* typically prospects an *Acceptance* whereas a *Criticize* typically prospects an *Admittance*. A *Boast* typically prospects a *Support*.

Finally, nine subclasses of *Expressives* are identified. According to the type of response they prospect, *Expressives* are grouped into three types. Those in which the speaker empathizes with the addressee and typically prospect an appreciation; they are *Congratulate, Wish, Welcome* and *Condole*. Those in which the speaker expresses his feelings towards a debt incurred and typically prospect a minimization or acceptance; they are *Apologize* and *Thank*. Finally those which express good will and typically prospect a reciprocal act; they are *Greet* and *Leave-taking* and *Farewell*.

Footnotes

[1]The terms "upgrade" and "downgrade" are borrowed from Pomerantz 1978, 1984.

[2]It should be noted that *Boast* is a technical term and does not carry the usual derogatory connotation.