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Approaches to Discourse

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1 Introduction

Two philosophers, John Austin and John Searle, developed speech act theory from the basic belief that language is used to perform actions: thus, its fundamental insights focus on how meaning and action are related to language. Although speech act theory was not first developed as a means of analyzing discourse, some of its basic insights have been used by many scholars (e.g. Labov and Fanshel 1977; see also chapter 8) to help solve problems basic to discourse analysis.[1] In addition, particular issues in speech act theory lead to discourse analysis, e.g. how an utterance can perform more than one speech act at a time, and the relationship between context and illocutionary force.

I begin in section 2 with an overview of the critical concepts and ideas introduced by both Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). I then use a sample discourse to discuss two different (but related) stages in the application of speech act theory to discourse analysis: how to identify utterances as speech acts (section 3.1); how to analyze sequences of speech acts (section 3.2). After exploring some of the issues raised by this analysis (section 3.3), I summarize the speech act approach to discourse (section 4).

2 Defining speech act theory

Speech act theory begins with the work of John Austin (section 2.1), whose ideas are expanded and incorporated into linguistic theory by John Searle (section 2.2). Searle's work also raises important questions concerning the inventory (and classification) of acts about which people know (section 2.3) and the way that a single utterance can be associated with more than one act

(section 2.4). Although it is not initially proposed as a framework in which to analyze discourse, the issues with which speech act theory is concerned (meaning, use, actions) can lead to such an analysis (section 2.5).

2.1 *Austin: from performative to illocutionary act*

A series of lectures by John Austin in 1955, compiled in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), is widely acknowledged as the first presentation of what has come to be called speech act theory. Austin's presentation seems intentionally argumentative and provocative: distinctions are proposed in the first few chapters that are then systematically dismantled in later chapters, such that the presentation of the theory by the end of the book is dramatically different from its presentation in the beginning of the book.

Austin begins by noticing that some utterances that seem like statements lack what is thought to be a necessary property of statements – a truth value. Not only do such statements not " 'describe' or 'report' " anything (p. 5), but "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just', saying something" (p. 5; emphasis in original). Austin calls these *performatives* and distinguishes them from *constatives*, i.e. declarative statements whose truth or falsity can be judged. The following are examples of sentences (or utterances – the terms are initially interchangeable) that are performatives.

> I do (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife) – as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.
>
> I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth* – as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stern.
>
> I give and bequeath my watch to my brother – as occurring in a will.
>
> I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.

The examples given all share several qualities. They all include a particular type of verb – a performative verb – that realizes a particular action (the action that the verb "names") when uttered in a specific context. Such a context can include setting (a marriage ceremony, writing a will), physical objects (a ship, legal documents), and institutional identities; it may also require a particular response (a bet requires what Austin calls "uptake"). Performatives require not only "the appropriate circumstances" (p. 13), but also the appropriate language: the performative verb in the above examples is in the present tense, each sentence has a first person subject, and the adverb *hereby* may modify any of the verbs (e.g. one can say "I hereby give . . ."). Thus, performatives meet certain contextual and textual conditions.

Austin goes on to classify the circumstances (the conditions) that allow utterances to act as performatives. He does so according to the circumstances

themselves, and according to the consequence for a performative if the circumstance does not hold. As noted above, the circumstances allowing an act are varied: they include the existence of "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect" (p. 26), the presence of "particular persons and circumstances" (p. 34), "the correct and complete execution of a procedure" (p. 36), and (when appropriate to the act) "certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions" (p. 39). An act can either misfire (not go through at all) or go through but, due to an abuse of the procedure, in a way that is not totally satisfactory. Appointing someone to office (i.e. saying "I appoint you") misfires if that person has already been appointed or if the speaker is not in the position to appoint anyone (p. 34). Likewise, saying "I bet you the race won't be run today" if more than one race was arranged (p. 36) causes the act of betting to misfire. So, too, saying "I bet you sixpence" will misfire and not be a "bet" unless you say "I take you on" or provide other words to that effect (p. 37). As noted above, other violations allow an act to go through, but in an "unhappy" or "infelicitous" (p. 14) way. Saying "I advise you to [do X]" without the requisite thought (i.e. if I do not think X is the course most expedient for you; p. 40), for example, does not void the performative of advice-giving: the act is still "advising" but it is infelicitous because one of the procedures has been abused. Thus, there is variation in both the circumstances allowing a felicitous performative and the way a performative can go wrong.

I noted above that Austin proposes distinctions in the first few lectures/chapters that are systematically dismantled in later sections. The distinction between constatives and performatives is one such distinction. Recall that constatives are declaratives whose truth could be judged; performatives are declaratives that "do" an action. By the end of the book, Austin proposes instead that all utterances have qualities that were initially seen as characteristic of constatives and performatives. The focus of attention is no longer sentences, but "the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation" (p. 139). All utterances perform speech acts that are comprised of a *locutionary act* (the production of sounds and words with meanings), an *illocutionary act* (the issuing of an utterance with conventional communicative force achieved "in saying"), and a *perlocutionary act* (the actual effect achieved "by saying").

Before discussing these three aspects of a speech act, I want to briefly go over the way the constative–performative distinction is collapsed. Basically, what Austin shows is that the conditions defining one type of utterance apply equally well to the other, and that neither type can be differentiated by formal clues. Thus, the dismantling of the constative–performative distinction can help to reveal Austin's view of two aspects of the conditions underlying speech acts: context (what makes an utterance "true" and "appropriate") and text (how what is said conveys what is done).

Consider the distinction between truth/falsity (applicable to constatives) and felicitous/infelicitous (applicable to performatives). Austin argues that performatives (as well as constatives) involve judgements of truth and falsity. Recall

that certain conditions are necessary for a performative to be felicitous. These conditions are like statements that have to be true: saying that "certain things have to be so . . . commits us to saying that for a certain performative utterance to be happy, certain statements have *to be true*" (p. 45; emphasis in original). "I apologize," for example, implies the truth of certain conditions, e.g. it is true (and not false) that I am committed to doing something subsequently (p. 46). Similarly, implications thought to hold only for constatives hold for performatives as well. The entailment of one proposition (e.g. "The mat is under the cat") by another (e.g. "The cat is on the mat"), for example, is parallel to the way an underlying condition ("I ought") is entailed by a performative (e.g. "I promise"). Similarly, saying "I promise but I ought not" is as much of a contradiction as saying "it is and it is not" (p. 51). Thus, the conditions necessary for performatives to be felicitous have the same truth-based relationship with a performative utterance that constative statements have with other statements.

Just as performatives can be said to have truth conditions, so constatives may be said to meet felicity conditions. Take a statement that refers to something that does not exist: "The present King of France is bald." Austin argues that this is similar to someone purporting to bequeath an estate he does not own: both are void (i.e. they "misfire"), simply because both purport to refer to an entity (the King of France, an estate) that does not exist (pp. 20, 137). Constatives are also subject to the same specific kinds of infelicities that result in abuses of performatives. Recall that certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions may be part of the circumstances that allow a felicitous performative – such that an insincere "promise" would abuse the procedure of promising. Statements are also liable to sincerity abuses: saying "The cat is on the mat" if I do not believe that the cat is on the mat abuses a procedure in the same way as saying "I promise to be there," but not really intending to be there (p. 136).

We noted initially that performatives meet certain contextual and textual conditions. Now we have seen that the contextual conditions for performatives are not different in kind from those for constatives: both involve truth and falsity, both involve felicity and infelicity. It turns out that the textual conditions are not as different as initially suggested either. Although Austin initially grounded his analysis of performatives with a discussion of performative verbs (and he maintains this focus, to a certain degree, in his taxonomy; see section 2.3), he also raises the possibility that performatives can be realized without verbs (contrasting an explicit performative to a primary performative) and that not all types of performatives need verbs specialized to that task.

Let us briefly consider the distinction between explicit performatives (with the verb) and primary performatives (without the verb). Austin suggests that although performative verbs are neither necessary nor sufficient textual conditions for performative utterances, they do make explicit certain features of the speech situation (e.g. the actor, the action being undertaken). One outcome of this is that primary performatives may be ambiguous: saying "It is yours,"

for example, may be either an act of bequeathing ("I give it to you") or an acknowledgment that "it (already) belongs to you" (p. 62). A way to get around this problem is to suggest that primary performatives should be "reducible or expandible, or analysable . . . or reproducible" (pp. 61–2) to a performative formula (e.g. I hereby [verb] you that . . .).

Relying on the availability of a performative formula, however, does not solve all the problems of finding grammatical criteria (i.e. textual conditions) for performatives. The criteria themselves may be individually problematic: the use of the present tense, for example, need not always convey an action concurrent with the time of speaking (pp. 64–5). Nor can we be sure of the equivalence of primary and explicit performatives: "I am sorry" may not really be exactly like "I apologize" (p. 66). Finally, we may be able to do something through speech (e.g. insult), yet not have a performative verb by which to do it (pp. 65–6).

We have seen thus far that the constative–performative distinction cannot be maintained because both constatives and performatives involve truth and falsity; both are felicitous or infelicitous in relation to the conditions in which they occur; both are realized through a variety of forms that can be rewritten in terms of a performative formula. To put this more generally, we cannot find either contextual or textual conditions that support the constative–performative distinction. Thus, "to state is every bit as much to perform an illocutionary act as, say, to warn or pronounce" (p. 134). "Stating" is exactly on a par with "betting": "I state that he did not do it" is as much of an act as "I bet that he did not do it." Despite the collapse of the constative–performative distinction, performative verbs still play a key role in Austin's framework. Utterances whose act is not linguistically explicit (e.g. "He did not do it") may be made explicit through the use of a formula built upon a performative verb ("I state that . . .", "I argue that . . .", "I bet that . . ."). So pervasive is the resource for action provided by performative verbs that Austin suggests the existence of acts (and verbs) "of the order of the third power of 10" (p. 150) that can be discovered by "going through the dictionary" (p. 150). And so important is the speech situation (the context) in which these verbs are used (and acts are performed) that even the truth and falsity of statements is contextually bound: "in the case of stating truly or falsely, just as much as in the case of advising well or badly, the intents and purposes of the utterance and its context are important; what is judged true in a school book may not be so judged in a work of historical research" (p. 143).

I noted above that Austin segments the speech act itself into component acts – only one of which is the "act" typically spoken of in speech act theory. Three acts underlie the issuing of an utterance. A locutionary act involves the uttering of an expression with sense and reference, i.e. using sounds and words with meaning. This seems to capture the properties of the original constative group: the act "of saying something" (p. 100). An illocutionary act is the act performed "in saying" the locution (p. 99), such that what was said had the force (not the meaning) of that illocution. This level captures the acts initially

viewed as performative: these acts are conventional in that they could be made explicit by a performative formula (p. 103). A perlocutionary act is the "consequential effects" (p. 102) of an utterance on an interlocutor, i.e. what is achieved "by saying" something. Since these three aspects of an utterance are all actions, they are all subject to the same kinds of failures – to "the ills that all action is heir to" (p. 105). Together, these acts produce a total speech act that must be studied in the total speech situation (pp. 52, 148): "the words used are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange" (p. 100).

2.2 *Searle: from conditions to rules*

Searle's (1969) *Speech Acts* builds upon Austin's work to propose a systematic framework by which to incorporate speech acts into linguistic theory. Searle also introduces several ideas that provide important ideas for the application of speech act theory to discourse (section 2.3 and 2.4), although he resists the idea that conversation is governed by constitutive rules (Searle 1989).

Searle (1969: 21) proposes that "the speech act is the basic unit of communication." Far from divorcing speech acts from the study of language, however, this view places speech acts at the very crux of the study of language, meaning, and communication; in fact, speech act rules are argued to be part of linguistic competence (see below). What allows the integration of speech act theory into linguistic theory is Searle's *principle of expressibility* (pp. 18–21): what can be meant can be said. This principle establishes that it is possible (in theory) for a speaker to come to be able to say exactly what she means either by increasing her knowledge of the language or by enriching the language (p. 19). Furthermore, all languages "can be regarded as different conventional realizations of the same underlying rules" (p. 39), comparable to the way a chess game is played in different countries, but still considered a game of chess. The principle of expressibility has several different consequences. Taken broadly, this principle moves nonliteral meaning, vagueness, ambiguity, and incompleteness out of the theoretical essence of linguistic communication (p. 20; cf. Gricean pragmatics; also chapter 11). Taken more narrowly, this principle has the consequence noted above: it brings together the study of speech acts, meaning, language, and communication. In Searle's own words, the principle of expressibility enables us to

> equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, since for any possible speech act there is a possible linguistic element the meaning of which (given the context of the utterance) is sufficient to determine that its literal utterance is a performance of precisely that speech act. (pp. 20–1)

Thus, viewing speech acts as the basic unit of communication allows Searle to explicitly associate speech acts with the study of language (its production, its interpretation) and meaning (both speaker meaning and linguistic meaning): "there are a series of analytic connections between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are" (p. 21).

I noted above that speech act rules are part of linguistic competence: language can be used for speech acts because people share rules that create the acts that say what is meant. Before describing how rules are responsible for the creation of acts (and how they incorporate both textual and contextual conditions), it is important to comment on the importance of rules within Searle's framework and on the type of rules important for speech acts.

Searle observes that "speaking a language is engaging in a (highly complex) rule-governed form of behavior" (p. 12). A methodological consequence of this is that linguistic characterizations do not report "the behavior of a group." Rather, they describe aspects of speakers' mastery of a rule-governed skill (p. 12) that can be obtained by relying heavily on the intuitions (and linguistic characterizations) of native speakers (p. 15). What such intuitions can provide are "idealized models" (p. 56) of the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the utterance of a given sentence to be a successful, non-defective performance of a given act. The rules that are responsible for speech acts, however, are a special type of rule that Searle calls *constitutive*. In contrast to regulative rules (that regulate independently existing forms of behavior) constitutive rules "create or define new forms of behavior" (p. 33). The forms of the two types of rules reflect their different status: regulative rules are expressed as (or can be paraphrased as) imperatives, but constitutive rules are more definitional, e.g. "X counts as Y in context C" (p. 35).

Our discussion of Austin mentioned contextual conditions ("circumstances") and textual conditions (e.g. the availability of explicit performative formula) that allow an utterance to perform a certain illocutionary act. Like Austin, Searle's rules and conditions for speech acts draw upon both context and text: they also elevate intentions and other psychological states as conditions enabling a speech act, by assigning them their own type of rule (see below). Like Austin, Searle classifies conditions and rules according to their necessity for the act. But in contrast to Austin, Searle classifies different kinds of conditions (and rules) according to what aspect of text and context is focused upon in the condition or rule; the different conditions also overlap (partially) with the different components of a speech act.

Searle segments utterances into speech acts very similar to those proposed by Austin. The uttering of words (morphemes and sentences) is an *utterance act*. Referring and predicating are *propositional acts*. Acts like stating, questioning, commanding, and promising are *illocutionary acts*. Illocutionary acts are what is constituted by the rules noted above: in addition to being rule-governed, they are intentional, they have a name, and they are what the speaker (S) is doing,

in relation to the hearer (H), with words. The consequences of illocutionary acts (the effects on actions, thoughts, beliefs of hearers) are *perlocutionary acts.*

As just noted, it is the illocutionary act that is subject to the conditions and rules so central to Searle's framework. The textual and contextual circumstances that allow speech acts to have an illocutionary force are categorized as different kinds of conditions; rules are extracted from the conditions. Because our sample analysis presents conditions for questions and requests (section 3), I will not present all the conditions for any one particular speech act here (Searle 1969: 66–7, presents the rules for requests, assertions, questions, thanks, advising, warnings, greetings, and congratulating). Rather, I will discuss the conditions in general terms, and in relation to the rules extracted from the conditions.

Propositional content conditions or rules are the most textual: they concern reference and predication (the propositional act). A propositional content rule for promises, for example, is the predication of a future act (A) by the speaker. Preparatory conditions or rules are varied: they seem to involve background circumstances and knowledge about S and H that must hold prior to (and may then be altered by) the performance of the act. A preparatory condition for promises, for example, concerns H's preference about S's doing of an act (A). The sincerity condition or rule concerns S's psychological state as it is expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act (e.g. S's intention, belief, desire). Finally, the essential condition or rule is what the utterance "counts as," i.e. the "point" of the act (Searle p. 59; also Searle 1979: 2–3). As the terminology "counts as" suggests, the essential rule is most critical to the creation of an act (i.e. the central constitutive rule). Thus, each rule focuses upon a slightly different aspect of what is said: the propositional content rule focuses only upon the textual content, preparatory rules focus upon background circumstances, the sincerity rule upon S's psychological state, and the essential rule upon the illocutionary point of what is said.

Just as Austin found some acts to be infelicitous (and to different degrees, i.e. misfires versus abuses), so Searle finds that different conditions or rules are more or less crucial to the non-defective performance of an act. As suggested above, the essential condition is critical. Whereas each condition or rule is individually necessary for the successful and non-defective performance of a given act, however, it is the set of conditions or rules that is collectively sufficient for such a performance (p. 54).

An earlier quote from Searle noted analytic connections between what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, and what the speaker intends. Although speaker meaning and intention are sometimes separated from sentence meaning (see discussion of Gricean pragmatics, chapter 6), Searle argues that an analysis of illocutionary acts must capture "both the intentional and the conventional aspects" of meaning, and crucially, "the relationship between them" (p. 45) – a relationship that is sensitive to the circumstances of an utterance. Certain linguistic elements are viewed as illocutionary force indicating devices that provide conventional

procedures (cf. Austin's mention of conventional procedures) by which to perform a given act. (Searle (p. 30) lists a variety of forms that function in this capacity: "word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb and the so-called performative verbs.") But both conventional meaning (cf. text) and speaker intention can contribute to the circumstances in which saying something realizes a certain kind of doing.

In sum, Searle places the speech act at the center of the study of language, meaning, and communication: he proposes that "the basic unit of human linguistic communication is the illocutionary act" (Searle 1979: 1). Speech acts are performed through the use of conventional procedures and linguistically realized through illocutionary force indicating devices. They are enabled (i.e. created) by constitutive rules, the knowledge of which is part of our linguistic competence. Speech act theory thus analyzes the way meanings and acts are linguistically communicated. To summarize in Searle's words: "the semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and . . . speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules" (p. 37).

2.3 *Taxonomies of acts*

Discovering the number, and categories, of illocutionary acts is an important part of speech act theory (Searle 1979: 1). The identity of an act is a product of the set of constitutive rules by which it is created. Since different acts may be similar to one another if they share particular rules, categorizing speech acts and speech act types can reveal relationships between rules, as well as relationships between acts. It is also important to know which acts can be created simply because speech acts are central to linguistic communication: knowing which speech act to perform (and the rules that govern it) is a crucial part of how speakers use language to communicate; likewise, knowledge of how to identify that act is critical to hearer understanding.

Although Austin (1962: chapter 12) proposes a classification of speech acts, Searle (1979) argues that Austin's taxonomy does not maintain a clear distinction between illocutionary verbs and acts; nor are the categories based on consistently applied principles. Searle relies upon taxonomic principles (that sometimes reflect the different types of conditions underlying speech acts) to build a two-tiered classification. He proposes five classes of speech acts: representatives (e.g. asserting), directives (e.g. requesting), commissives (e.g. promising), expressives (e.g. thanking), and declarations (e.g. appointing). Three main principles differentiate these classes. Other speech acts within these classes follow the same three principles, but are differentiated by less comprehensively applicable principles.

The most important principles are those that differentiate the five major categories of speech acts. The first taxonomic principle concerns the illocutionary

point of the act: this is derived from the essential condition of an act (the condition that defines what the act "counts as"). The illocutionary point of directives (e.g. requests, orders, challenges, and dares), for example, is that they are attempts by S to get H to do A. The illocutionary point of commissives (e.g. promises, vows) is that they commit the speaker to some future course of action. The second principle is the way that words are fit to the world. Both commissives and directives are built upon a world-to-words fit: in making a promise, S undertakes to create a world first presented in the words; in making a request, S attempts to get H to create a world first presented in the words. Representatives (whose point is to commit S to something being the case), however, are built upon a words-to-world fit: insist, state, boast, and conclude, for example, are all based upon the way words are fit to a world that is "pre-existing" (in the sense that it is not being created by those words). The third principle is the expressed psychological state: this is derived from the sincerity condition. The psychological state expressed by representatives, for example, is "belief" (e.g. S believes that X). In contrast, the psychological state of directives is "want"; the psychological state of commissives is "intention."

The other principles discussed in Searle (1979) help to differentiate speech acts within the five broad categories noted above; they also reveal similarities (and differences) between specific speech acts that are not in the same general category. One principle concerns different strengths with which the illocutionary point is presented. For example, "insist" and "suggest" are both directives, just as "swear" and "guess" are both commissives: the former member of each pair is presented with more strength than the latter. Two additional principles are derived from the preparatory conditions of speech acts. The status of S and H bears differently on the illocutionary point: this principle would differentiate "proposal" from "command" even though both are directives. How the utterance relates to the interests of S and H is also derived from preparatory conditions: "boasts" (a type of representative) and "requests" (a type of directive) are similar because both have to do with S's interest; these would contrast with "congratulations" (a type of expressive) since that concerns H's interest. Another principle is based upon the propositional content condition: "differences in propositional content that are determined by illocutionary force indicating devices" (Searle 1979: 5). Thus, "prediction" differs from "report" because the former must be about the future, where as the latter can be about the past or present.

Although I will not discuss each principle underlying the taxonomy in detail, it is important to note that one principle concerns the availability of an illocutionary verb: for some acts, the corresponding illocutionary verb has a performative use; for others, it does not, e.g. "state" versus "boast." Illocutionary verbs can also mark aspects of an act other than their illocutionary point (e.g. "insist" marks the degree of intensity). These two points loosen the connection between verbs and acts so important to Austin. In so doing, they also extend the boundaries of what can count as an act: this makes

it more difficult to define a closed set of language functions that can be encoded by illocutionary force indicating devices and realized by constitutive rules.

In sum, speech acts can be classified into groups and subgroups by a principled set of criteria. Communication relies upon shared knowledge of the name and type of a speech act: speaker and hearer share knowledge of how to identify and classify an utterance as a particular "type" of act, as a unit of language that is produced and interpreted according to constitutive rules.

2.4 *Multiple functions and indirect acts*

At the end of his article on a classification of illocutionary acts, Searle (1979: 23) points out that there are a limited number of things that we do with language: "we tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feeling and attitudes and we bring about changes through our utterances." We have just seen that much of the 1979 paper is devoted to telling us how we make these functional discriminations among utterances. Taken up in other work is an observation made in the very last sentence of the article: "often, we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance."

How we do more than one thing at once with our words (i.e. the multiple functions of an utterance) is part of the important issue of indirect speech acts (Searle 1969). Searle's view of indirectness (like his taxonomy of speech acts) draws upon his analysis of the conditions underlying speech acts. An indirect speech act is defined as an utterance in which one illocutionary act (a "primary" act) is performed by way of the performance of another act (a "literal" act). Hearers are able to interpret indirect speech acts by relying upon their knowledge of speech acts, along with general principles of cooperative conversation (see Gricean pragmatics, chapter 6), mutually shared factual information, and a general ability to draw inferences.

Although I will not go through the inferencing of indirect speech acts in detail, I will take some brief examples to illustrate how Searle's view of indirectness arises from his speech act theory. Take, for example, the sentences "I hope you'll write a letter of recommendation for me" and "Would you be able to write a letter of recommendation for me?" Although both sentences are conventionally understood as directives (their "primary" act), they are also other acts: the former is a statement; the latter, a question. Both sentences, however, are understood as directives because the "literal" speech acts that they also perform (i.e. the statement, the question) focus upon a condition that allows directives to be performed (i.e. a rule that constitutes a directive). What the phrase "I hope you will do X" states is a speaker-based sincerity condition for requests, i.e. S wants H to do A. Likewise, what the phrase "Would you be able to do X?" questions is a hearer-based preparatory condition, i.e. H is able to perform A. It is by way of stating a sincerity condition, or questioning

a preparatory condition, of directives that these sentences perform directives (their primary act).

The question of how we identify particular utterances as specific acts is of course one that we addressed before. This problem was noted by Austin: whereas performative verbs make explicit certain features of the speech situation, primary performatives do not, and thus may be ambiguous. Like Austin, Searle suggests a kind of trade-off between the contributions of textual and contextual information to our identification of speech acts: it is possible to perform an act "without invoking an explicit illocutionary force-indicating device where the context and the utterance make it clear that the essential condition is satisfied" (Searle 1962: 68). Thus, just as text (e.g. illocutionary force indicating devices) can assign an act a single identity, so too can context. But the question of how multiple identities are contextually assigned (or contextually separated) is not discussed at length in orthodox speech act theory.

In sum, an utterance can do more than one thing at a time. Some utterances have multiple functions because one act is being performed by way of another: these are called "indirect" speech acts. The conditions underlying speech acts provide an analytical resource for indirectness. That conditions can have this analytical function is possible because they have a critical role in our knowledge of speech act types. When more than one act is performed by a single utterance, the conditions for the two speech acts nevertheless have a systematic relationship to one another. Thus, it is relationships between underlying conditions that allow utterances to do more than one thing at a time.

2.5 *Summary: meaning, use, and actions*

We have seen in this section that speech act theory is basically concerned with what people "do" with language – with the functions of language. Typically, however, the functions focused upon are those akin to communicative intentions (the illocutionary force of an utterance) that can be performed through a conventional procedure and labelled (cf. that have a performative verb). Even within this relatively well-defined set of acts, the act performed by a single utterance may not be easy to discover: some utterances bear little surface resemblance to their underlying illocutionary force.

Despite the emphasis on language function, speech act theory deals less with actual utterances than with utterance-types, and less with the ways speakers and hearers actually build upon inferences in talk, than with the sort of knowledge that they can be presumed to bring to talk. Language can do things – can perform acts – because people share constitutive rules that create the acts and that allow them to label utterances as particular kinds of acts. These rules are part of linguistic competence, even though they draw upon knowledge about the world, including an array of "social facts" (e.g. knowledge about social obligations, institutions, identities), as well as knowledge about the grammar of language.

3 Sample analysis: questions, requests, offers

Now that we have discussed some of the key insights and concepts critical to speech act theory, let us see how it applies to discourse analysis. Speech act theory provides a framework in which to identify the conditions underlying the production and understanding of an utterance as a particular linguistically realized action. Utterances perform different acts because of their "circumstances" (Austin) and because of the knowledge that we have of the conditions and rules that constitute particular acts (Searle). We see in this section that our knowledge of the constitutive rules for acts provides a systematic framework in which we can not only identify relationships between different speech acts (e.g. understand how a threat differs from a promise), but also use a single utterance to perform more than one speech act at a time (section 3.1). We also see that this knowledge can be put to use as a way to understand sequential relationships between utterances (section 3.2).

Before beginning, it is important to note that although speech act theory began in philosophy (and relied upon hypothetical utterances), it has also been developed extensively in linguistics. We noted above Austin's (1962: 100) view that words "are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange." Yet many linguists (e.g. the collection in Cole and Morgan 1975) rely upon constructed utterances and hypothetical context as data by which to analyze speech acts. (In this sense, they are following Searle's (1969: 56) view that abstraction and idealization are crucial to systematization and theory construction.) Other scholars have relied upon actual utterances to try to answer the same sorts of questions concerning speech act conditions (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1987; Ervin-Tripp 1976), contexts (e.g. participant identity and relationship: Cherry 1990; Herbert 1990; Holmes 1989, 1990), modality (Pufahl 1988; Stubbs 1986), and categories (e.g. Halliday 1973, 1975; Labov and Fanshel 1977). Although these analyses sometimes considered speech acts in connected discourse, they did not apply their analyses to the sequential relationships between utterances themselves (but see Ferrera 1985; Labov and Fanshel 1977). Nor did they consider how utterances can define one another's speech act functions (but see Clark 1979; Schegloff 1987). If we want to consider speech act theory as an approach to discourse, however, we need to consider both of these issues: how speech act function contributes to sequential coherence, and how the speech act function of one utterance contributes to that of another.

As I noted in chapter 2, one focus of our sample analyses in this book is question–answer sequences. We begin in this section by analyzing how a single utterance fulfills the conditions of a question (section 3.1.1); we then go on to see that this same utterance also acts as a request (section 3.1.2) and an offer (section 3.1.3). This will help to illustrate how the underlying conditions of these different acts can be used to try to identify the functions of a specific

utterance in talk. We then go on to analyze the utterances following the question/request/offer in terms of their relationship with the multifunctional utterance (section 3.2). This will allow us to see how the underlying conditions of acts have an effect on relationships between utterances, and on the sequential organization of talk.

The data that I use are an excerpt from an interaction among four people (Henry, Zelda, Irene, and Debby (myself)). At the time of the conversation, Henry and Zelda were in their late fifties, Irene was in her mid thirties, and I was in my mid twenties. Henry and Zelda are married; Irene is their next door neighbor and close friend. I was visiting Henry and Zelda's home for a sociolinguistic interview (see Schiffrin 1987a: 41–7; chapter 5 of this book). (1) occurs just after Henry, Zelda, and Irene have been discussing a recent funeral (of a teacher at their neighborhood school) that Irene and Zelda had attended. (1) also precedes the more formal beginning of our sociolinguistic interview.

(1)
HENRY: (a) Y'want a piece of candy?
IRENE: (b) No.
ZELDA: (c) [z]She's on a diet.
DEBBY: (d) [z]Who's not on [a diet.
IRENE: (e) [I'm on-
I'm on a diet
(f) and my mother: [buys-=
ZELDA: (g) [You're not!
IRENE: (h) =my [mother buys these mints.=
DEBBY: (i) [Oh yes I amhhhh!
ZELDA: (j) [Oh yeh.
IRENE: (k) The Russell Stouffer mints.
(l) I said, "I don't want any Mom."
(m) "Well, I don't wanna eat the whole thing."
(n) She gives me a little tiny piece,
(o) I eat it.
(p) Then she gives me an[other,=
HENRY: (q) [Was =
IRENE: (r) =so I threw it out the window=
HENRY: =there a lot of people?=
IRENE: (s) =I didn't [tell her. =
HENRY: (t) [Was there=
IRENE: (u) =She'd kill me.
HENRY: =a lot of people at the house?
ZELDA: (v) All: the teach[ers.
IRENE: (w) [A lot of teachers will- probably will all be there till late.
HENRY: (x) Je:sus Christ.
ZELDA: (y) All: the teachers.
HENRY: (z) What a heartache

As I noted above, my initial focus is on the very beginning of (1): I use Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?* to consider how speech acts are identified (3.1). In section 3.2 I turn to Irene's *no* (3.2.1), Zelda's *She's on a diet* (3.2.2), and Irene's story about her diet (3.2.3), in order to discuss speech act sequences.

There are two broad issues critical to the application of speech act theory to discourse; the analysis will be concerned with both. First is the identification of speech acts *per se*: how to identify an utterance as a particular speech act (3.1). Although identifying speech as action requires knowledge of the constituent rules for speech acts, it also depends upon an assumption that what is said can be "mapped onto" what is done – an assumption sometimes difficult to uphold given the fact that utterances may have multiple functions (chapter 2: pp. 33–8; also, recall the speech act view of this in section 2.4). The second issue is the sequential arrangement of speech acts: how an initial speech act creates an environment in which a next speech act is (or is not) appropriate (3.2). This issue bears centrally on discourse analysis simply because discourse (by definition) is comprised of sequentially arranged units, and because sequential regularities (sequences that fulfill our expectations) are a key ingredient in our identification of something as text.

Although I discuss these two issues separately, it will become clear that they are intimately related to each other: we cannot discover whether a particular string of utterances forms a "well-formed" sequence of acts unless we are reasonably certain of what actions those utterances are performing. Thus, despite the difficulty of making secure judgements about utterance–action correlations, this initial step is critical to the second issue with which we will be concerned, and ultimately, with the application of speech act theory to discourse. Put another way, identifying the speech act performed by an utterance is critical to the application of speech act theory to discourse: we need to know the units of a discourse before we can seek to discover, and explain, the principles responsible for their arrangements, i.e. the reason why some sequences seem coherent, but others do not.[2]

3.1 *Identifying utterances as speech acts*

In this section, I show how Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?* can be identified as a question (3.1.1), a request (3.1.2), and an offer (3.1.3); a key part of my analysis is that these three acts are themselves intertwined (3.1.4).

Before we begin, note that we will be focusing on the *process* of identifying utterances as sequences of speech acts: I try to show the sorts of issues and problems with which a researcher might have to deal while doing a speech act analysis of discourse. Although this might seem laborious at times, it is important for two reasons. First, analyzing the process by which people identify speech acts is a critical part of speech act theory: thus, although uncovering bits and pieces of our knowledge (some of which might seem to be just "common sense") is tedious, this is exactly what speech act theory is concerned with.

Second, the way analysts try to resolve methodological problems stemming from analysis of this process forms a key part of the speech act approach to discourse analysis.

3.1.1 "Y'want a piece of candy?" as a question

We noted above that speech act theory defines underlying conditions (including considerations of speaker intent, desired outcome, and so on) that must hold for an utterance to be used to realize a particular speech act. These rules – and the felicity conditions they create – often require consideration of both what is said (its form, its meaning, how information is presented) and the context in which it is said. For example, since a promise is an obligation to undertake a future act that the hearer is assumed to want, one cannot enact a promise using a past tense verb; nor can that future act be one deemed harmful to the recipient – and this is a matter of social and personal value.

To identify *y'want a piece of candy?* as a question, we need to consider how particular conditions are both linguistically met and contextually satisfied. We begin with Searle's (1969: 66) rules for questions, and then consider how we might argue that Henry's particular utterance realizes those rules. Here are Searle's rules:

QUESTION	
Types of rules	
Propositional content	Any proposition or propositional function
Preparatory	(a) S does not know "the answer," i.e. does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly (b) It is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked
Sincerity	S wants this information
Essential	Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H

The rules above show that a question is constituted under the following conditions: the speaker lacks knowledge of a particular state of affairs (preparatory rule) and wants to gain that knowledge (sincerity rule) by eliciting information from the hearer (essential rule). We will go through these rules in more detail to see if *Y'want a piece of candy?* counts as a question.

Consider, first, that it would be helpful if *Y'want a piece of candy?* could be considered a reduced form of an interrogative: interrogative sentences are well suited to the function of questions. Because interrogatives are incomplete propositions, they fulfill Searle's first preparatory rule (the speaker lacks knowledge as to how to complete a proposition). The first preparatory rule also specifies two possible gaps in S's knowledge: S can lack either knowledge of the truth of a proposition or information needed to complete a true proposition. These two sources of propositional incompleteness parallel the syntactic and semantic difference between closed and open questions. Closed questions are those in which the subject noun phrase and verb auxiliary are inverted (e.g. *Does Andy want to go?*, *Is Betty there?*). Closed questions are propositionally incomplete due to a lack of knowledge as to whether a proposition is true (we don't know if "Andy wants to go" is true or not). What provides their completion is drawn from a closed set of options (e.g. *yes* or *no*) that fixes a positive or negative polarity, or allows an inference of confirmation or disconfirmation. Open questions also have subject/auxiliary inversion, but are initiated with a WH word (*who*, *what*, *when*, *which*, *how*, *where*, *why*) that specifies the source of their incompleteness. A question such as *who was there?*, for example, presents a proposition whose argument is not specified. Open questions are incomplete because the speaker lacks information sufficient for completion of a true proposition; in contrast to closed questions, their completion is relatively open-ended.

The form–function correlation between interrogative sentences and Searle's preparatory rule often leads to the view that interrogatives are the unmarked syntax for question asking (e.g. Geis 1989). This is important for our purposes: if *Y'want a piece of candy?* is an interrogative, it would then be fairly easy to say that it fulfills the preparatory rule for questions. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that *Y'want a piece of candy?* is an interrogative. Although it may very well be a reduction of *Do you want a piece of candy?* (and thus an incomplete proposition), its surface syntactic form is a declarative sentence – a complete proposition that seems not to fit the preparatory condition of questions at all.

Note, however, that I have transcribed *Y'want a piece of candy?* with a question mark: this reflects its final rising intonation. In prior work (Schiffrin 1987a), I followed the practice of many scholars (e.g. Quirk et al. 1972: 386; Stenstrom 1984) and identified declarative sentences with final rises as questions. (See also Selting (1992), who argues that prosody is one system of constitutive cues for questions – sometimes the only distinctive cue.) Still other scholars have identified sentence fragments as questions even when a fuller interrogative form of those fragments is not unequivocally recoverable. Merritt (1976), for example, identifies the elliptical *Coffee to go?* and *Cream and sugar?* as questions, even though they are not clear reductions of any single fuller form (i.e. they can be expanded into a number of different interrogatives, e.g. *Do you have/can I buy coffee to go?*). Instead of depending on syntax as criterial for questionhood, such analyses seem to place more weight on final rising intonation.

Research on intonation suggests that final rising intonation may very well be an illocutionary force indicating device for some kinds of questions. Bolinger (1982), for example, suggests that final rises convey incompleteness (the first preparatory rule). Others suggest that final rises convey uncertainty in domains other than propositional knowledge, e.g. uncertainty about listener comprehension (Guy et al. 1986) or adequacy of a contribution to conversation (Lakoff 1975). Still others (e.g. Brown et al. 1980; Stenstrom 1984) suggest that final rises demand a response (the essential rule). Thus, some of the meanings that have been associated with final rises are compatible with the rules underlying questions.

Here I present some examples that support the idea that final rising intonation is an indicator of questions (cf. Geluykens 1988, 1989). All the examples suggest that final rises convey uncertainty (not propositional incompleteness) that may be interactionally motivated (e.g. by a prior question from H) and/or resolved (e.g. by an implicit or explicit acknowledgment from H). First is one of Guy et al.'s (1986) examples, along with a parallel interchange from one of my own sociolinguistic interviews:

(2) INTERVIEWER/H: (a) What's your name?
INFORMANT/S: (b) Maria Martinetti?
(3) IRENE/H: (a) What's your name.
DEBBY/S: (b) Debby Schiffrin?

In (2), the interviewer asks for the informant's name; in (3), these identities are reversed. S is the person upon whose utterance (2b, 3b) we are focusing; H is the person asking a prior question (*What's your name?*) and receiving the information that he has sought and that is being provided by S.

(2) and (3) both illustrate several important points about final rising intonation as an illocutionary force indicating device. Because final rises are used in these examples with information about which S does know (i.e. S's own name), the utterances *Maria Martinetti?* and *Debby Schiffrin?* do not seem like questions, i.e. they violate the preparatory rule of questions that S not know "the answer." However, there is uncertainty in this exchange – in fact, two sources of uncertainty. First, H does not know S's name: it is this uncertainty to which the propositional content of S's response is addressed. Second, although the propositional content of *Maria Martinetti?* and *Debby Schiffrin?* provides an answer to *What's your name?*, S cannot be certain how this information will be taken. In other words, it is not propositional content *per se* about which S is uncertain, but the adequacy of propositional content for H's needs (cf. the gloss "Is that what you meant?") or the adequacy of H's reception of the information (cf. the gloss "Did you get that?"). Note, finally, that S's response opens a third part of the exchange: it is up to H to let S know whether S's information is adequate for H's needs, i.e. to resolve S's uncertainty about the sufficiency of the response (Guy et al. 1986: 26). Thus, (2) and (3) suggest that intonation can serve as an illocutionary force indicat-

ing device based on the role of an utterance in an exchange – a role that supplements the contribution of propositional content to communicative function.[3]

The proposed function of the final rises in (2) and (3) can be related quite easily to the conditions underlying questions. We can restate what I just suggested above in terms of the rules for questions: S wants information about H's reception of information (the sincerity rule) that S does not have (the preparatory rule) and that S is attempting to elicit from H (the essential rule). Before returning to *Y'want a piece of candy?*, let me present several other examples also suggesting that final rising intonation can evoke the constitutive rules of questions.

(4) is from the opening portion of a phone call.

(4) Phone rings.
CALLED: (a) Hello?
CALLER: (b) Yeh, hi. This is Debby, David's mother?
CALLED: (c) Oh hi . . . how are you . . .

Final rising intonation on *Hello?* (a) is suited to its dual function as answer to the summons provided by the phone ring, and, question as to who is on the other end of the line (Schegloff 1972). Similarly, final rising intonation with caller self-identification (*David's mother?* (b)) suggests its dual function as answer to the prior *Hello?* and attempt to elicit recognition of the self-identification. (Note that *David's mother?* follows a preliminary self-identification *Debby,* to which Called did not respond).

(5) is an example from a phone call in which I am providing my social security number to an insurance company agent. (Social security numbers are orthographically and conventionally, even when presented orally, broken up into three segments.)

(5) DEBBY: One two four?
AGENT: Um.
DEBBY: Three two?
AGENT: Okay.
DEBBY: Nine four six six.

In (5), I segment the sections of the number sequence and show by final rises on the first two segments that they are preliminary to completion of the full sequence. Prior to my continuation of the next segment, the recipient acknowledges receipt of each intermediate segment; the last segment has falling intonation.

A final example is (6):

(6) ZELDA: (a) The following year, his son, who ha- was eighteen years old just graduating from high school.

(b) Was walking through the em . . . the fountain, Logan Square Library?
(c) Y'know that fountain?
DEBBY: (d) Yeh.
ZELDA: (e) Bare footed, and stepped on a- a bare wire.

In (6), Zelda is telling me a story about her neighborhood doctor (Schiffrin 1988b) and is fixing a location important to a key event in the story: she presents that identificatory information in (b) and (c) with final rising intonation to elicit my recognition of those locations prior to continuing her story.

Although some of the specific meanings of final rises in these examples differ, what they share is the following: S elicits from H a response concerning something (a referent, a proposition) that S has put forth in response to an inferred (or actual) "uncertainty" from H; S then pursues some other goal or activity that had been dependent upon H's receipt of the information put forth by S. Note that when expressed in these terms, the function of final rises comes very close to fulfilling the sincerity, preparatory, and essential conditions of questions. Final rising intonation marks S's uncertainty about how information provided to H will be taken: what S is questioning is not propositional content *per se*, but the adequacy of propositional content for H's needs. Thus, what S wants is information about H's reception of information (the sincerity rule) that S does not have (the preparatory rule) and that S is attempting to elicit from H (the essential rule).[4]

Let us return now to *Y'want a piece of candy?* I have just suggested that the intonation of this utterance realizes the preparatory, sincerity, and essential rules of questions. The propositional content of *Y'want a piece of candy?* also helps realize these same conditions: in speech act terms, we may say that both are illocutionary force indicating devices. Consider, also, the meaning of the verb *want*. Since verbs like *want* (*like*, *feel*) describe a state internal to the person of whom that state is predicated, being in a state of "wanting" cannot be verified by an examination of external evidence and cannot be something about which another person is certain. Furthermore, since a state like "wanting" is inherently subjective (and thus "knowable" only by its experiencer), assertions about that state are something to which its experiencer should respond. When S questions H's wants, then, it is up to H to either confirm or disconfirm the accuracy of those wants (cf. Labov and Fanshel 1977). Thus, *Y'want a piece of candy?* conveys S's lack of information (the first preparatory rule) and counts as an attempt to get H to provide that information (essential rule).

Note that we have moved from a discussion of S's uncertainty to ways to resolve that uncertainty. Once we begin to talk about H's responsibility to provide information to S, we have moved from the preparatory rule to the essential rule of questions – arguing, in effect, that *Y'want a piece of candy?* counts as S's attempt to elicit information from H. Thus, an expression of uncertainty *per se* does not tell us that *Y'want a piece of candy?* counts as an

attempt to elicit information from H: people often express uncertainty about a state of affairs without trying to elicit information from another that will resolve that uncertainty. Rather, it is because it is up to H to confirm (or disconfirm) what S has said about her that *Y'want a piece of candy?* realizes both the first preparatory and the essential rules of questions.

We began our analysis of *Y'want a piece of candy?* by noting that we cannot be sure that this utterance is a reduced form of an interrogative sentence – an important consideration since it would be that form (an incomplete proposition) that would most easily allow us to argue that this utterance conveys lack of speaker knowledge. We then focused on other linguistic qualities of *Y'want a piece of candy?* – intonation, meaning – that seemed to converge as indicators of the same underlying rules. We argued that the final rising intonation of this utterance could be considered an expression of lack of speaker knowledge; this interpretation fit with the inherent uncertainty of predicating another's wants. We also argued that final rising intonation conveyed the speaker's desire to resolve uncertainty by appeal to the hearer; this interpretation fit with the essential rule for questions. Thus, our consideration of the linguistic qualities of *Y'want a piece of candy?* has ended up showing that Henry's utterance realizes one of the preparatory rules of a question (S does not know "the answer"), the sincerity rule (S wants this information), and the essential rule (it counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H).

One preparatory rule has not yet been considered: it is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked (Searle 1969: 66). We really have no way of knowing for sure that Irene would *not* tell Henry that she wants a piece of candy if Henry did not ask her about this. We can guess that Irene might not tell Henry directly that she wants candy: she might not say *I want candy* simply because of the asymmetrical status or intimacy that such a statement implies. But we cannot be sure that Irene would not request that Henry give her candy ("Can I have a piece?") or hint that she would like candy ("That looks good"). Thus, all we can say is that *Y'want a piece of candy?* conveys Henry's desire (the sincerity condition, see below) that Irene provide information that she might not otherwise provide (the second preparatory condition).

Finally, we could also construct contextual arguments for the fulfillment of the felicity conditions. Recall that the sincerity condition underlying questions is that S wants this information (Searle 1969: 66). There are social and interactional reasons for arguing that Henry wants this information. First, it is considered impolite to eat candy without finding out if others also want some: candy is considered "a treat" in many middle-class American households that should be shared with others. Second, Henry and Irene are good friends who (despite open forms of competition: Schiffrin 1984a) build on each other's sense of well-being by not offending one another (e.g. not criticizing too harshly: Schiffrin 1985b), and by defending one another. Such a relationship is built upon a continued display of sensitivity to what the other wants

and needs; thus, it is in the long-term interest of their relationship for Henry to continue to find out what Irene wants – in this case, whether she wants candy that he is eating.[5]

We have now examined Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?* from several directions, and found linguistic clues that support our identification of this utterance as a question. Thus, we have relied primarily upon *how* something was said as a clue to the sincerity, preparatory, and essential conditions underlying questions.

3.1.2 *"Y'want a piece of candy?" as a request for information*

In addition to identifying *Y'want a piece of candy?* as a question, we might also identify it as a directive, specifically a request for information. Before we do so, however, it is important to note that requests and questions have a long and complicated relationship in speech act theory. Focusing first on their differences, note that *directives* (the larger speech act type of which requests are a subtype) differ from questions in an important formal way: the syntactic structure assumed to most directly manifest a directive is the imperative (e.g. *Come here*) whereas the basic syntactic structure for questions is assumed to be the interrogative. This form–function correlate, however, is not absolute. We saw in section 2.4 that many speech acts are performed by way of sentence structures other than those assumed to provide their most direct form: either declaratives (e.g. *I need water*) or interrogatives (e.g. *Can you pass the salt?*), for example, can be used with an intended directive force.[6] The problematic relationship between questions and requests is illustrated by the fact that one of the key puzzles in analysis of requests like *Can you pass the salt?* is how they are understood: does interpreting *Can you pass the salt?* as a request for salt require prior inference from an understanding of its linguistic meaning as a question about ability (2.4) or is it so conventionally used as a request that its interpretation bypasses identifying (and understanding) it as a question (Morgan 1975).

Many studies of directives have also shown that they are typically performed indirectly. Scholars often allow directness to be indicated not just by unmarked syntax (interrogatives for questions, imperatives for directives, declaratives for assertives), but also by the use of performative verbs. Given the latter criterion, it is quite clear that some directives do have a direct form: one can say *I request that you arrive by 9:00, I order you to pay your taxes, I warn you to stay away from there.* Regardless of which criteria of directness we apply, however, directives are realized as imperatives and through performative verbs only under fairly limited conditions, e.g. intimacy and/or expediency for the former (Brown and Levinson 1987; Ervin-Tripp 1976) in relatively formal, institutional, written modes of communication for the latter (Pufahl 1988). Thus, requests are typically performed in a number of very different (but also quite

regular) ways (Ervin-Tripp 1976; Gordon and Lakoff 1975; Pufahl 1988; Searle 1975).

Let us now return to *Y'want a piece of candy?* to see how this question can also be a request. Again, let us start with Searle's (1969: 66) felicity conditions:

REQUEST	
Type of rule	
Propositional content	Future act A of H
Preparatory	(a) H is able to do A. S believes H is able to do A. (b) It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord.
Sincerity	S wants H to do A.
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A.

The rules for requests should seem familiar: they are very similar to the rules for questions. Requests and questions share some of the same conditions:

Preparatory	
It is not obvious to both S and H that H will:	
do A in the normal course of events of his own accord [request]	provide the information at that time without being asked [question]
Sincerity	
S wants:	
H to do A [request]	this information [question]
Essential	
Counts as an attempt to:	
get H to do A [request]	elicit this information from H [question]

This comparison shows that the preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions for questions and requests are similar: since it is not obvious that H will provide information without being asked (preparatory condition for questions), or that H will do A in the normal course of events of her own accord (preparatory condition of requests), both questions and requests count as attempts to get H to do something (their essential conditions) that S wants (their sincerity conditions). The difference between questions and requests is that what a speaker wants through a question ("elicit information") is more specific than what a speaker wants through a request ("do A"). But what this suggests is

that questions are one specific type of request: questions are attempts to get a hearer to do a certain A – to provide information (Searle 1969: 69). It is the provision of information that is the future act of H (the propositional content condition of the request). By fulfilling the conditions for a question, then, *Y'want a piece of candy?* fulfills the condition for a particular type of request.

In sum, we have seen in this section that *Y'want a piece of candy?* is both a question and a request. It enacts a request for Irene to undertake a particular verbal action, i.e. to provide information about whether she does or does not want candy. This is a future act (the propositional content condition) that will resolve Henry's uncertainty about what Irene wants (the preparatory condition for questions). We see in the next section that *Y'want a piece of candy?* has still another speech act identity: it is an offer.

3.1.3 *"Y'want a piece of candy?" as an offer*

Although I spent a great deal of time arguing that *Y'want a piece of candy?* is a question (3.1.1) and a request for information (3.1.2), I continue our sample analysis by proposing that it can also be identified as an *offer*, i.e. Henry is using the utterance to make something available to Irene.[7] In some ways this seems to be the action that is most conventionally identified with *Y'want a piece of candy?* Finding the speech act labels that people would typically use to categorize the illocutionary force of an utterance is important. Speech act analysts assume that interlocutors agree on the speech act performed by a particular utterance: this intersubjective agreement is a prerequisite to communication that is assumed to proceed through the reciprocal processes of producing and interpreting speech acts (Taylor and Cameron 1987: chapter 3; see chapter 11 of this book). Put most simply, it is by finding the "unit" into which an act fits – the unit intended by S – that H can present a next act.

But if "offer" seems to be the speech act most conventionally associated with *Y'want a piece of candy?*, why have we spent so much time showing that this utterance could be a question and a request? Here I propose that the function of *Y'want a piece of candy?* as an offer is intricately tied to its functions as question and request – such that we needed to understand this utterance as both question and request before we could understand it as offer. The relationship between question/request and offer also illustrates the application of important aspects of speech act theory to discourse: both the principles by which speech acts are classified (2.3), and the view that utterances are multifunctional because of relationships between their underlying conditions (2.4), can be incorporated into speech act applications to discourse. Finally, analyzing the multifunctionality of utterances helps to reveal the different response options made available by an utterance, and thus the possibility of underlying sequences bound by different functional relationships.

Before we begin, it is important to note a general difference between directives (the larger class of speech acts encompassing requests) and commissives

(the larger class of speech acts encompassing offers): directives are attempts by S to have H do A; commissives are commitments from S to do A for H. Many utterances are requests but not offers: if I ask you to pass the salt, I have not committed myself to any action beyond using the salt in some way. But the asymmetry in who does what for whom that divides requests from offers can also disappear, such that many acts are simultaneously offers and requests (cf. Wierzbicka 1987: 190–7). Take, for example, the speech act "invitation." Although Searle (1979: 11) and Leech (1983: 217) view invitations as directives, they may also be analyzed as both offer and request: if I invite you to a party at my house, I am simultaneously offering you access to an event of which I am a sponsor and requesting access to your company at a future time (cf. Schiffrin 1981b: 239–40). Note, also, that Searle (1979: 11–12) assigns the same direction of fit (world-to-words) to both commissives and directives, noting that classifying speech acts would be simpler if they were really members of the same category (e.g. promises could be requests to oneself). (See also Leech's (1983: 206) suggestion that directives and commissives be merged into a "superclass.")[8]

We begin our analysis of *Y'want a piece of candy?* as an offer by noting the general conditions underlying commissives. Searle (1979: 11) defines commissives as "illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker (. . . in varying degrees) to some future course of action." Commissives differ among themselves in terms of S's degree of commitment. When making a promise, for example, S undertakes an obligation to perform A in the future (essential condition); S also believes that H would prefer A being done to A not being done (preparatory condition; Searle 1962). When making an offer, however, the essential and preparatory conditions of promises do not hold. Furthermore, the reason the essential condition does not hold is because the preparatory condition does not hold.

The chart below reformulates the difference between promises and offers in terms of knowledge (as reflected in preparatory conditions) and commitment (as reflected in essential conditions):

Promise	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Knowledge [preparatory]	S knows H wants A	———	———	——→
Commitment [essential]	S commits to do A	———	———	——→
Offer				
Knowledge [preparatory]	S does not know if H wants A	S finds out if H wants A	S knows H wants A	
Commitment [essential]				S commits to do A

This suggests that a key difference between an offer and a promise is the knowledge that S has about what H wants (the preparatory condition noted

above). It also suggests that reducing S's uncertainty about H's wants can alter S's commitment to do A. Recall that uncertainty is a preparatory condition for questions and requests: thus, we might very well expect S to ask a question to find out what H wants before committing herself to do A. This is what I suggest at stage 2: S finds out if H wants A by requesting information from H. Given affirmation that H does want A, S's uncertainty is then reduced (stage 3) and S commits to do A (stage 4). This view of the difference between promises and offers allows us to see that questions (i.e. requests for information) can play a critical role in offers: they reduce uncertainty about whether H wants A, thus, potentially leading to a commitment to do A.

The relationship can be summarized in slightly different terms:

Act 1:	"S give H candy"
Offer	S intends act 1
Question	S does not know if H wants act 1
So Request	S wants H to do act 2: tell S if H wants act 1

This analysis suggests that we may paraphrase *Y'want a piece of candy?* as "I intend to give you candy if you want it." Note the important role of the conditional in the paraphrase: it is because S does not know if H wants candy (a preparatory condition of questions) that S wants H to tell S if H wants candy (a preparatory condition of requests). Once this uncertainty is reduced – with an answer to a question – S can undertake a commitment to do A for H. Thus, asking a question about the preparatory condition for promises (H prefers A to not A) can lead S to undertake an obligation to do A. We see in a moment that this relationship is reflected in the way people make offers.

The relationship between offers and requests described above suggests that people can make offers either with two separate utterances or with one utterance. The two-utterance possibility would occur if S were to elicit some go-ahead (e.g. approval, endorsement, confirmation) from H about the benefits of A for H, prior to committing to do A for H. Thus, the interchange in (a) and (b) of the hypothetical (7) could precede the offer in (c):

(7) CLIFF: (a) Do you want help?
DIANE: (b) Yes.
CLIFF: (c) Well, here, let me help you then.

It seems, however, that speakers usually do not try to explicitly gain confirmation that H wants A prior to offering A. The reason is what I have been hinting at above: questions can act as offers when they question (i.e. request information about) a preparatory condition of promises (H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A and S believes this).

In order to see how the one-utterance possibility for offers works, we need to note yet another connection among the conditions underlying different speech acts. The preparatory condition of promises noted above (to simplify:

S believes that H wants A) has an interesting similarity with the sincerity condition of requests (S wants H to do A) and an important effect on indirect speech acts. Observe, first, Searle's (1975: 65, 72) suggestion that S can issue an indirect directive by stating that the sincerity condition obtains. This strategy accounts for the use of statements such as those in (8) to make requests:

(8) (a) I would like you to go now.
(b) I want you to do this for me.
(c) I'd rather you didn't do that anymore.
(d) I wish you wouldn't do that.

Each of the utterances in (8) uses a verb that states (and thus fulfills) the sincerity condition for requests, i.e. S wants H to do A. Although a question about whether the sincerity condition obtains cannot issue a request, it is just such a question that can issue what we have been calling offers – just so long as we switch the role of subject and object. (9), for example, contains counterparts to (8) that I believe we would interpret as offers:

(9) (a) Would you like me to go now?
(b) Do you want me to do this for you?
(c) Would you rather I didn't do that anymore?
(d) Do you wish I wouldn't do that?

The syntactic reversal between statement-based requests (in 8), and question-based offers (in 9), reflects the different roles played by S and H in relation to A – whether it is S or H who wants A. That is, what changes is our assumption about for whose benefit A is intended and who it is that wants A: the request seems to benefit S and the offer seems to benefit H. Note that this is entirely consistent with the different conditions underlying requests and promises. Whereas the sincerity condition of requests is that S wants H to do A, a preparatory condition of promises is that H would prefer (cf. want) S's doing A to his not doing A and that S believes this. Thus, stating that S would like A is a request because it states a speaker-based sincerity condition of requests; asking if H would like A is an offer because it questions a preparatory condition of promises. As we saw in the chart on page 73, the establishment of this preparatory condition (S's reduced uncertainty about H's wants) paves the way for S to undertake an obligation to do A.

Returning now to Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?*, we see that this utterance is exactly parallel to the hypothetical "do you want X?" (8b). Not only does it question whether H wants A, but (as we see in a minute) it can receive a response appropriate to either a request for information or an offer. Multiple response possibilities provide important evidence in speech act theory: the availability of more than one response type shows that a single utterance performs more than one speech act. That one can respond to *Do you have the*

time? by saying either *Yes, ten o'clock*, or just *Ten o'clock*, for example, indicates its potential understandings as either question or request (Clark 1979) (section 3.2 discusses the sequential effects of multifunctionality).[9] (10a) and (10b) show two different responses to *Y'want a piece of candy?*

(10a) S: Y'want a piece of candy?
H: Oh yes.
S: Here it is.
H: [takes it] Thanks.
(10b) S: Y'want a piece of candy?
H: [takes it] Thanks.

(10a) and (10b) illustrate that a respondent to *Y'want a piece of candy?* may choose between two alternative courses of action. The response in (10a) depends upon the literal meaning of *Y'want a piece of candy?* as a question (and request); the response in (10b) depends upon its primary (indirect) use as an offer. These two possibilities highlight the multiple speech act identities of *Y'want a piece of candy?*

In this section, we have seen that offers are commissives: S proposes a future A for H; S's uncertainty as to whether H wants A reduces S's obligation to do A. Although one way for S to resolve uncertainty is through a sequentially prior question that asks whether H wants A, it is also possible for S's question itself to act as an offer if the propositional content of the question focuses on the preparatory condition of a promise. Put another way, an offer can be a "primary" speech act (2.4) performed by way of a question (the "literal" speech act (2.4)) about H's desire for A; it is this question that allows S to find out whether A is what H wants before undertaking an obligation to do A.[10] Thus, when Henry says *Y'want a piece of candy?*, he is indeed making an offer to give Irene candy. However, his offer simultaneously questions Irene, requesting that Irene tell him whether she wants the candy.

3.2 *Identifying speech act sequences*

Built into the felicity conditions of questions, requests, and offers is a need for hearer response. Recall, for example, the essential condition of questions (an utterance counts as S's attempt to elicit information wanted from H) and requests (an utterance counts as an attempt to get H to do A). Similarly, offers require H to indicate interest in what A has conveyed a willingness to do. What this need for response suggests is that an analysis of a single utterance as a question, request, or offer leads naturally to an analysis of the utterance(s) that follow. Consistent with the notion that utterances perform speech acts, an analysis of succeeding utterances becomes an analysis of speech act sequences. As noted by Taylor and Cameron (1987: 58), however, "the question of how illocutionary acts are sequenced in actual episodes of connected speech

is not one that looms large in the lives of philosophers. . . . For the analyst working with natural data, however, it is an issue on a par with that of classification/identification." Thus, although the identification of speech acts *per se* is central to the discourse application of speech act theory, and to speech act theory itself, the combination of speech acts into well-formed sequences is important only to discourse analysis.

Despite the sequential focus of this section, I begin again with the problem of identifying units, this time the second unit in a sequence. We see almost immediately that the "identification" issue differs dramatically for a unit in "second place," simply because the unit in "first place" provides information central to the identification of the next unit. We have just seen that *Y'want a piece of candy?* can be analyzed as three different speech acts: question, request, offer. This suggests that what follows *Y'want a piece of candy?* can also be classified in more than one way, such that the act performed in response to an offer is as multilevelled as the offer itself. I consider three responses: Irene's *No* (3.2.1), Zelda's *She's on a diet* (3.2.2), and Irene's story about her diet (3.2.3).[11]

3.2.1 Irene's "No": answer, compliance, and rejection

We saw above that Irene says *No* immediately after Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?* It is relatively easy to identify *No* as an answer: although it is elliptical, we (as hearers and as analysts) rely on the content of the prior question to expand *No* and to understand that it provides the polarity left open by that question, thereby semantically completing the proposition. In addition to answering Henry's question, Irene's *No* also complies with Henry's request for information: Irene provides the information that she does not want candy. Finally, Irene's *No* also responds to Henry's offer of candy: she does not accept (she rejects) the offer of candy.[12]

Note, now, that the sequential consequences of our analysis would differ tremendously if we analyzed Irene's *No* only as an answer. The main difference is that question–answer sequences are structurally complete after the provision of their second part: despite the addition of other relevant material, e.g. an explanation for a negative answer, such material is not necessary for the sequence and the sequence is coherent on its own. If we analyze the sequence as having an initial request or offer, however, it is a little more difficult to argue for structural completion. Although *No* does comply with a request for information, either a positive or negative response alone seems incomplete. If Irene had said *Yes*, for example, she might then be expected either to wait for Henry to explicitly offer her candy, or to actually take the candy. And the *No* response seems to call either for a conventional marker of politeness (e.g. *no thanks*) or an explanation.

But why should Irene's *No* – which does supply the requested information and does respond to the offer – create a third slot in the sequence? Although

many linguistically oriented speech act analysts have proposed answers to this question (e.g. Davison 1975; Green 1975), a more thorough account comes from more socially oriented analyses of politeness (discussed in chapter 4). We now go on to see what else actually does follow Irene's *No*.

3.2.2 *Zelda's "She's on a diet": expansion and account*

After Irene says *No* to Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?*, Zelda says *She's on a diet.*

(1) HENRY: (a) Y'want a piece of candy?
IRENE: (b) No.
ZELDA: (c) [z]She's on a diet.

Our discussion of Zelda's remark will raise two sets of questions critical to applications of speech act theory to discourse analysis. First, what is the range of acts that can be performed through speech? Put another way, what is the overall inventory of acts for which utterances can be used and onto which utterances can be mapped? Questions such as these go to the very heart of speech act theory – for some of the acts that we discuss in this section are not those that would ordinarily be included in an orthodox speech act taxonomy that focused solely on those acts whose illocutionary force might be indicated by performative verbs (2.3). Rather, these are acts that are sequentially emergent: they arise only in relation to another prior act. The second set of questions concerns exhaustiveness: is everything that is said a realization of a speech act in a well-formed sequence? In other words, do we have to pack every utterance into a speech act that has a sequential relationship with other speech acts? This set of questions is also central to speech act theory: the assumption that the speech act is the basic unit of linguistic communication (2.2) leaves little room for communication by way of utterances that are not speech acts.

Here I will propose two different speech act identities of *She's on a diet* – the first more challenging to speech act theory than the second. Consider, first, the possibility that *She's on a diet* is an *expansion*: a sequentially dependent unit which adds information supplementary to a prior unit. Calling *She's on a diet* an expansion seems to capture the way that Zelda's remark develops, adds to, or follows up on (Coulthard et al. 1981) what Irene has said. But giving such a unit a place in a speech act sequence raises several concerns. Expansions are totally dependent on prior units, such that it would be difficult to state the rules for expansions independent of sequentially prior speech acts. Expansions are difficult to differentiate from other units in other ways: not only are there no clear criteria by which to identify them, but they do not meet Searle's necessary and sufficient conditions for a speech act.

Let me more fully explain these problems through some examples. Consider, first, that expansions need not be tied to answers: they may be expansions of

virtually any other unit in a structure. Also in (1), for example, is a section where Henry repeats a question:

(q) Was there a lot of people?
(t) Was there a lot of people at the house?

Another way of looking at (t), however, would be to say that the addition of *at the house* to the initial question in (q) makes the question in (t) an expansion of the question in (q). But does this then mean that *all* additions are expansions? Does it also mean that *only* additions are expansions?

(11) suggests that additions are neither necessary nor sufficient criteria for counting a remark as an expansion. (11) is also from one of my interviews.

(11) DEBBY: (a) Do you think there's much prejudice between like other groups-
(b) Other ethnic groups?
(c) Other nationalities?

There are two changes in (11) that we might call expansions. First, if we view the change from *other groups* (a) to *other ethnic groups* (b) as an addition (simply because I have added *ethnic*), then we might call *other ethnic groups* an expansion. However, the change from (a) to (b) is the sort of addition often described as a self-repair (e.g. Schegloff et al. 1977). When a speaker repairs a word or expression, it is usually assumed that what is received by a listener as the message is the *replacement* itself (e.g. *other ethnic groups*), not the repairable (e.g. *other groups*) plus an addition (e.g. *ethnic*). But if it is only the repair that contributes to the message, we would probably not want to call *other ethnic groups* an expansion; instead, we might want to call it a replacement or even just a continuation (or completion) of the same prior unit (see e.g. Polanyi 1988). Thus, what the change from (a) to (b) suggests is that not all additions of lexical information are expansions.

The second change to consider is from *other ethnic groups* (b) to *other nationalities* (c): this suggests that just as additions are not sufficient criteria for expansions, nor are they necessary criteria. "Nationalities" does not add lexical information to "ethnic groups"; nor does it supplement the semantic meaning of "ethnic groups."[13] But note how I intended this change: I was trying to clarify what I meant by *ethnic group*. Couldn't we therefore call the change from *other ethnic groups* to *other nationalities* an expansion of my meaning, i.e. an expansion of what I intended to convey?

These examples have illustrated several problems. First, at a very general level, we can identify many different utterances as expansions – expansions of answers, expansions of questions – and see them all as having the same role. On a more particular level of analysis, however, this would be very misleading. The specific identity of an utterance as an expansion *of something* is intimately tied to the identity of that of which it is an expansion: a question expansion

is thus as different from an answer expansion as a question is from an answer. Second is a methodological repercussion of allowing some units to be so dependent on, and non-autonomous from, what precedes them: our analysis of a single discourse unit rests critically on our analysis of its precursors in the text. Thus, if we are wrong in analyzing the status of an initial utterance, we cannot help but be wrong in analyzing the status of subsequent utterances. And our opportunities for being wrong thus multiply with each succeeding utterance.

Now that we have considered some problems with identifying *She's on a diet* as an expansion of an answer, let us turn to its possible function as an account – as an explanation for Irene's rejection of Henry's offer. Like expansions, accounts are relational: they provide reasons and/or motivations for some prior action that has been considered marked (e.g. inappropriate, impolite, insulting) in some way (Scott and Lyman 1968). Because they provide explanations, accounts are causally linked to prior actions, as if the person is saying "I did X because of Y." Zelda's *She's on a diet* acts as an account for a very simple reason. Our knowledge about candy and diets tells us that being on a diet provides a reason for not accepting candy: candy is fattening and diets don't allow fattening food; therefore, being on a diet is a reason for not accepting candy. Note, also, that the concept of "diet" is nicely fit to the content of Henry's asking about what Irene "wants": diets require people to forgo their more immediate "wants" (fattening food like candy) for the sake of their more long-term "wants" (losing weight).

To conclude: we can describe the sequential structure of (1) in two different ways: as a two-part sequence of S-question/H-answer with H's optional answer expansion, or we can see it as a three-part sequence of S-offer/H-rejection/H-account. Thus, our identification of *Y'want a piece of candy?* as multifunctional (question, request, offer) can lead us to see sequential completion after either a second act or a third act. In the next section, we show how Irene's *I'm on a diet* story provides another account.

3.2.3 *Irene's "I'm on a diet" story: expansion and account*

Although Zelda accounts for Irene's refusal of Henry's offer of candy, Irene also provides her own account, first by saying *I'm on a diet* in (e), and then by telling a story (e to u) about her diet:

IRENE:	(e)	=I'm on a diet
	(f)	and my mother [buys-=
ZELDA:	(g)	[You're] not!
IRENE:	(h)	=my [mother buys these] mints.=
DEBBY:	(i)	[Oh yes I amhhhh!]
ZELDA:	(j)	[Oh yeh.
IRENE:	(k)	The Russell Stouffer mints.

(l) I said, "I don't want any Mom."
(m) "Well, I don't wanna eat the whole thing."
(n) She gives me a little tiny piece,
(o) I eat it.
(p) Then she gives me an[other,=
HENRY: (q) [Was =
IRENE: (r) =so I threw it out the window=
HENRY: =there a lot of people?=
IRENE: (s) =I didn't [tell her. =]
HENRY: (t) [Was there=
IRENE: (u) =She'd kill me.

As I noted above, it is not merely saying *I'm on a diet* that provides an account, but Irene's entire story about her diet. Treating a story as a speech act raises important issues for the application of speech act theory to discourse – since it implies that an entire discourse unit can perform a speech act. (I consider consequences of this shift in unit size in section 3.3.) We will proceed by examining the content of Irene's story as a sequence of speech acts within the story world; we will also pay attention to how the story is linguistically tailored to the conversational world, i.e. as an account for the rejection of an offer.

Consider, first, how Irene opens her story:

I'm on a diet
and my mother buys- my mother buys these mints.
The Russell Stouffer mints.

The clause *my mother buys these mints* is not concurrent with speaking time: it shifts backward in time to locate an event as part of a previous experience (I comment on the use of the present tense below). Shifts in reference time often help to initiate a story world, separating it from an ongoing conversational world. Despite this shift, *my mother buys these mints* is syntactically connected with *and* to *I'm on a diet*; it is also presented in the same intonation unit. These linguistic connections link the first part of Irene's account (*I'm on a diet*) with the story told to expand that account. Note, also, that mention of *mints* establishes a cohesive tie with Henry's prior offer of candy.

The use of the present tense in *my mother buys these mints* is ambiguous: it can suggest either that buying mints is a repeated, habitual action or it can be a use of the historical present tense, a tense typically reserved for narrative events within the story world itself (Schiffrin 1981a). The latter interpretation is intriguing: it is a marked use of the historical present (since the HP is unusual in story abstracts) that could be said to have an evaluative, highlighting function, showing how critical buying candy is to later events. Introduction of the mints with the indefinite *these* can also be considered evaluative, but interestingly in a pejorative sense (Wright and Givón 1987), thus prefiguring

the disdain that Irene will show towards her mother's offer. Finally, the addition of detail through *The Russell Stouffer mints* also draws attention to the candy (Tannen 1989a: chapter 5). Use of a proper name to identify the mints makes a claim about their "knowability" (i.e. they are recognizable; see chapter 6). Postponing that name to the initial introduction of the mints iconically marks that information as supplementary – a way of conveying increased relevance (see chapter 6). Thus, the story abstract establishes a cohesive tie with what Henry has just offered and reveals the centrality of the candy bought by Irene's mother to the upcoming story events.

Although a story about a past experience can never really tell us what actually happened during that experience, we can still interpret how a story – as a version of the past – fits into a present conversational world. In other words, we can examine Irene's story to see how Irene constructs a version of her experience that fits her current conversational needs, i.e. that addresses a current topic and accomplishes a current purpose.[14] A convenient way to see how Irene accomplishes these goals is to dissect the story into actions – in effect, to perform a speech act analysis on the events in the story (cf. Labov 1984). In addition to providing another application of speech act theory to discourse, this analysis also provides further insight into offers and their rejections. Thus the actions underlying Irene's reported experience are:

Actions in the story world			
MOTHER:	Offer 1: S will do A	[unstated]	
IRENE:	Rejects Offer 1	I said, "I don't want any Mom."	(l)
MOTHER:	Explains Offer 1	"Well, I don't wanna eat the whole thing."	(m)
	does A	She gives me a little tiny piece,	(n)
IRENE:	Accepts Offer 1	I eat it.	(o)
MOTHER:	[no Offer 2]		
	does A	Then she gives me another,	(p)
IRENE:	Rejects A	so I threw it out the window.	(r)
Reactions to the story world			
		I didn't tell her.	(s)
		She'd kill me.	(t)

Note that Irene's mother makes an offer (although it is not explicitly stated in the story; see below). Irene rejects the offer (l), although the rejection is ineffectual (the mother gives Irene the candy anyway (n)). Irene's mother then repeats the act (p) without first offering to do so.

We spoke earlier of the conditions underlying offers, suggesting also that offers contain implicit requests about whether H wants the A that S is making available. Although Irene does not report her mother's offer of candy, I believe we can infer that an offer was made (either verbally or nonverbally, e.g. by holding out the box of candy). We saw earlier that a precondition for an offer of goods is the availability of those goods to S: the fact that Irene reports

herself as addressing her mother (*I don't want any, Mom* (l)) suggests that her mother is the one with the available goods (the candy). We also saw that S cannot be sure that H wants A: we can infer that Irene's mother is S and that she is guessing that this is something that Irene might want. (Note the importance of the negative in *I don't want any, Mom*: negative statements typically imply a contrast with expectation; Givón 1979; Horn 1988.)

Additional evidence that Irene's mother has offered her candy is that Irene's mother then explains why Irene should take candy: *Well, I don't wanna eat the whole thing* (m). *Well* in (m) helps establish the sequential location of this utterance. More specifically, it is third in a sequence in which the initial move set up an option (an offer of candy), the second move deviated from that option (*I don't want any, Mom* (l)), and the third responds to the deviation (Schiffrin 1987a). Since Irene's mother does not want *the whole thing*, it seems reasonable that she would be trying to give candy away by offering it to Irene. A final reason to infer that an offer was made stems from our earlier observation that offers make goods or services available to another. Irene's mother actually *gives* Irene candy (*She gives me a little tiny piece* (n), *Then she gives me another* (p)). These are actions that physically realize exactly what an earlier offer would have made available.

After Irene's initial refusal of her mother's offer, Irene does accept the candy: *I eat it* (o). Note that Irene's mother has forced a compromise by appealing to Irene for help: *Well, I don't wanna eat the whole thing* (m) solicits Irene's help in preventing her from doing something that she herself does not want to do. (Irene's mother does not want to eat the whole thing because she does not want to get fat; but if she doesn't eat the whole thing, she may have to throw the rest away, thereby wasting the candy.) This appeal transforms the mother's offer into an act that will not *just* benefit Irene (recall that offers are beneficial to H, e.g. candy is supposed to taste good), but will also benefit the mother herself. If Irene does accept the candy, then, she can be seen to be putting aside her own best judgement in an effort to help her mother. And if Irene helps her mother, she can be seen as a good daughter – one who ignores her own reservations in order to comply with her mother's wishes.[15]

Because Irene's initial rejection of A was ineffectual, the mother's repetition of A (*Then she gives me another* (p)) has added social and personal implications. Irene reports that her mother just gives her the candy the second time around: S does A without asking whether H wants A and without trying to justify A. Irene does not attempt to reject this candy: rather, she avoids the need to do so by throwing the candy out the window (*so I threw it out the window* (r)). This action is important for it allows Irene to maintain the *appearance* of deference to her mother. That is, Irene manages to look as if she is doing what her mother wants, but she also maintains her own desire not to have her own wants (to stay on her diet) impinged upon. As Irene reports, there are consequences if her mother discovers this deception: *she'd kill me* (u). But it is precisely the fact that Irene is willing to risk these

consequences that underline her seriousness about her diet and, thus, take us back into the conversational world in which her story provides an account for her refusal of Henry's offer of candy. Irene has gone to such great efforts to avoid eating candy – even to the extent of deceiving her mother – that she is not going to undo the product of those efforts just for Henry (see also Schiffrin, forthcoming).

Earlier I focused on the linguistic details of Irene's introduction of the candy into her story – details that established a cohesive tie with what Henry has just offered and showed the importance of the candy for the upcoming story events. Now that we have seen how a speech act analysis of the story world can help us interpret it as a speech act in the conversational world, it is worth noting again that the story is told in ways that help fit it into the conversational world. Note, for example, the alternation of tenses in which the main events are reported: preterite in (l), shift to historical present in (n), (o), and (p), then shift back to preterite in (r). The events reported in the historical present are those that provoke Irene's drastic action of throwing the candy out the window:

(n) She gives me a little tiny piece,
(o) I eat it.
(p) Then she gives me another,

Since it is the mother's persistence that creates the dilemma that Irene faces, these events are important for the point of Irene's story. The use of the historical present in (n), (o), and (p) also highlights these events not only in the story world, but in relation to the conversational world (Fleischman 1990; Schiffrin 1981a; Silva-Corvalan 1983): had Irene's mother not been so persistent, Irene would not have been forced to defy her mother. Thus, Irene will refuse an offer of candy despite persistent offers from her mother or from Henry.

In sum, Irene's story shows her sincere efforts to diet: the only time she accepts candy from her mother (even *a little tiny piece*) is when greater social and personal damage would be created by refusing candy. Irene's reported display of will and sincerity provides an account for why she has rejected Henry's offer of candy: Irene feels so strongly about her diet that she is willing to throw candy out the window, thereby deceiving her mother and facing the risk incurred by that rejection and deception (*she'd kill me* (u)).[16]

3.3 Summary of sample analysis

In sections 3.1 and 3.2 we considered the performance of several different acts through four chunks of speech: Henry's *Y'want a piece of candy?*, Irene's *No*, Zelda's *She's on a diet* and Irene's "I'm on a diet" story. To summarize:

Utterances		*Sequence 1*	2	3
Henry:	*Y'want a piece of candy?*	Question	Request	Offer
Irene:	*No.*	Answer	Compliance	Refusal
Zelda:	*She's on a diet.*	{Expansion}	Account	Account
Irene:	*I'm on a diet* + story	{Expansion}	Account	Account

This section summarizes and makes more general points concerning the utterance–act pairs (3.3.1) and the act sequences (3.3.2).

3.3.1 Utterances and actions

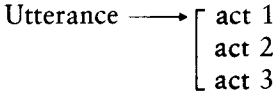
We began our application of speech act theory to discourse by analyzing relationships between utterances and actions: we showed how *Y'want a piece of candy?* is a question, request, and offer (3.1). We saw that the basis for our identifications of speech acts varied. In identifying questions, we relied largely upon linguistic clues. Requests and offers required that we try to judge communicative function. Instead of focusing just on the linguistic characteristics of utterances, we relied more upon our knowledge of the general background conditions necessary for an utterance to have a particular function (to count as a particular kind of action) and the applicability of those general conditions to particular circumstances. We also saw that identifying speech acts is complicated by the fact that utterances and speech acts need not have a one-to-one relationship. In analyzing how an utterance could perform more than one act simultaneously, we suggested that multifunctionality could arise (in part) from the way that underlying conditions for speech acts are themselves related to one another. We also saw that more than one utterance could figure in the performance of a single act, i.e. Irene's story served as an account. In brief, rather than "one form for one function" we found "one form for many functions" and "many forms for one function."

One-for-many and many-for-one relationships between form and function raise problems that affect the application of speech act theory to discourse analysis. Consider, first, problems stemming from "one form for many functions" relationships. Although the acts that we considered above (question, request, offer) are typical of those treated by philosophically oriented speech act theorists, many scholars who have taken a more social interactional approach to speech acts (e.g. Ciccourel 1980; Halliday 1975; Labov and Fanshel 1977; Schegloff 1987) have located acts quite unlike those that we have discussed. The relevance of their discoveries for the "one form for many functions" relationship is that these interactively embedded acts are often not performed alone, i.e. their identity is often dependent on the performance of another, simultaneously performed act. The challenges identified by Labov and Fanshel (1977: 93–7), for example, are second-order functions of repeated requests. Speech acts such as these raise problems: should we assign

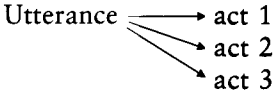
speech act labels to acts that emerge only as byproducts of other actions? Put another way, do we want to say that all of the many functions realized through a single utterance are speech acts? And do we then need to include all of these functions in the classificatory schema of speech acts assumed to be part of communicative competence? (Compare the taxonomies of those noted above, for example, to the taxonomies of Austin (1962) and Searle (1976), discussed in section 2.3.) How we answer such questions depends, of course, on how broadly we view speech acts: if we adopt Austin's relatively narrow view of speech acts, for example, then we cannot have a speech act without a performative verb (such a criterion would allow an act like "challenge" into the inventory, for example, but not an act like "tease"). Although these problems are not *created* by the existence of "one form for many functions" relationships, they are highlighted by them. Once we start finding multiple functions, we realize that not all of the many layers of functions that are realized through speech are as easily codified as those that have been more typically considered by speech act theorists, i.e. not all are first-order functions associated with communicative intentions.

"One form for many functions" relationships not only highlight problems already implicit in speech act theory, they also create new problems. For example, I suggested that *Y'want a piece of candy?* enacts three speech acts: question, request, offer. Questions, requests, and offers are intricately related to one another. Similar conditions underlie questions and requests: both count as an attempt to get H to do something that S wants; questions are a more specific attempt to get H to provide information that S does not have and that S wants. The question–request interdependence also arises because S's attempt to get H to tell him or her something ("I want you to do this: tell me if X") is based on the preparatory condition of questions, i.e. that S does not yet have information about X ("I do not know if X"). And offers may contain implicit requests that the hearer provide the speaker with information about the desirability of the act, thereby fulfilling the sincerity condition of requests.

Relationships such as these imply that a "one form for many functions" relationship may arise (at least partially) because of links among the acts (functions) themselves:



Are other mappings also possible? For example, can a single utterance also be used to perform acts that are not themselves related? If so, then the mapping relationship might be more like this:



Such possibilities imply very different interpretive processes: the former, a single link between form and function, with links among related functions; the latter, multiple links between form and a number of independent functions. Thus, the existence of "one form for many functions" relationships not only forces us to consider links among different speech acts themselves, but also raises the possibility of different interpretive processes linking form and function.

The opposite mapping problem – "many forms for one function" – also creates dilemmas for the application of speech act theory to discourse. Complications can stem simply from the fact that it is discourse, rather than a single sentence, that is said to have a function. For example, we are used to the idea that a discourse itself has functions: stories are used for instruction (Heath 1982), for involvement (Tannen 1984), for self-aggrandizement (Labov 1972b; Schiffrin 1984b), for socialization (Gees and Michaels 1989). Furthermore, speakers may very well orient toward discourse level goals (e.g. thematic goals) even in the most minute details of individual utterances (e.g. Bamberg 1992). However, it need not follow that every linguistic feature or quality of that discourse serves the same, single function, or that every detail has a speech act function. Nor is it always easy to decide which particular discourse functions to assign to small details of utterances. Although we considered the historical present tense (HP) in Irene's story to have an evaluative function, for example, Wolfson (1979) has argued instead that it is the switch between the HP and the preterite that has a discourse function (to separate episodes). Finally, there is sometimes a circular quality to arguments about discourse function. Drawing again from our analysis of the HP in Irene's story, we claimed that events reported in the HP were being highlighted to relate the mother's persistence in offering Irene candy to Irene's defiance of her mother. We then claimed that, because it was this sequence of events that was being evaluated, it was this sequence that had a conversational relevance. But had other events been in the HP, we could just as easily have argued that it was those events that had conversational relevance for the central speech act function of Irene's story. *I threw it out the window* (r), for example, is central to Irene's account because it shows her willingness to defy her mother's repeated offers of candy.

Another problem stemming from "many forms for one function" relationships is that language rarely serves just a single function (Jakobson 1960; see chapters 2, 11). Thus, not only does a discourse itself probably have multiple functions (i.e. a "many forms for many functions" relationship), but there is also a good chance that individual utterances (or groups of utterances) within a discourse themselves perform acts. This suggests that we could conceivably end up finding hierarchies of speech acts, in which smaller speech acts would nest within more global speech acts, e.g. we might say that the clauses in Irene's story are all assertions (representatives) that build her account.

The most general lesson to be drawn from all these specific problems is that it is difficult to provide criteria allowing us to decide what counts (or doesn't

count) as an instance of a speech act in such a way that other investigators would identify the act in the same way (see Kreckel 1981). This is often known, in social science research, as problems of validity and reliability: do our analytic categories correspond to similarities, and differences, among entities in the real world? Would others agree with our analytic categories and be able to discover them independently of our own efforts? Such problems are troubling to all research and can potentially occur at many stages of an analysis. Yet because the identification of utterances as actions is so important to later stages of speech act approaches to discourse – to describing relationships among units and combinations of units into larger patterns – trying to achieve validity and reliability at this first stage is especially important.

At the same time that we need to stress social scientific notions of reliability and validity, it is also important to note the inherent futility (and to some scholars, the foolhardiness) of trying to assign an understanding or function to an utterance with which all would agree (cf. chapter 4). Thus, despite our attempt to base our analysis of *Y'want a piece of candy?* on both the specific details of what was said and the general knowledge responsible for interpreting what was said as action, we cannot really be sure that we have "correctly" identified the speech act(s) performed by the utterance. Furthermore, we cannot really be sure of what we mean (or want to mean) by "correct." Many analysts shy away from grounding correctness in what speakers themselves would say they meant, i.e. the answer we would get if we were to ask Henry what he intended to do with his words. One reason for this is that different people tend to give very different answers to such questions. This discovery has led some to doubt the possibility of speech act taxonomies at anything other than the level of individual knowledge (Kreckel 1981; Taylor and Cameron 1987). Another reason is that the aim of linguistic inquiry (even one dealing openly with what sounds like psychological constructs of "wanting" and so on) is generally not seen as accounting for what someone "really means" (cf. Labov and Fanshel 1977). Rather, most analysts proceed in one of two directions. They may work backwards from what is said to infer what the possible meanings of those words could be and in which contexts. Or they may attribute a hypothetical intention to a speaker: if S wants to do/mean X, what are the possible ways that S might do so? (Bilmes 1985; Martinich 1984; Recanati 1987). Given such analytical routes, we might then say that a "correct" result is one that allows *Y'want a piece of candy?* to be used as question, request, and offer, provides a description of the conditions under which it may be so used, and explains why these are the conditions allowing these functions.[17]

3.3.2 *Sequences of speech acts*

In section 3.2 we showed how we could analyze sequences of speech acts: we viewed Irene's *No* as a rejection of Henry's offer, Zelda's *She's on a diet* as

an account for Irene's rejection, and Irene's story (prefaced by *I'm on a diet*) as her own account for her rejection of Henry's offer. This analysis not only showed how our identification of an initial speech act defined our inventory of sequential possibilities, but it highlighted problems stemming from unit size and decisions about sequential appropriateness.

Let us focus first on the observation that, depending on how we identify an initiating speech act, the length of a sequence can differ. We saw that sequences initiated with a question can be closed with an answer, followed by optional expansions. Sequences initiated with a request can be closed with a compliance, although a non-compliance typically leads to an account (Davison 1975; Green 1975). Sequences initiated with an offer are similar to those opened with a request. Although they can be completed with a second part if that second part is an acceptance, refusals often lead to third parts, i.e. accounts. Thus, depending on how we identify an initial action, we end up with a different view of the expected length of the sequence initiated by that action.

It is important to note that more than mere sequence length is at issue here. What holds a question–answer sequence together – the basis for its coherence – is quite different from what holds an offer–rejection sequence together. Whereas question–answer coherence is based at least partially on propositional information, sequences initiated by offers are based on personal commitment toward action. If H accepts S's offer, S is committed to do A (and H is committed to allowing A to proceed); if H rejects S's offer, S has to alter a prior course of proposed action. The role played by personal commitment suggests that the reason why rejections to offers demand accounts has less to do with the constitutive rules of those speech acts themselves, than with what those rules imply about social relationships. Because speech act theory itself offers little to say about social relationships, I reserve discussion of the social coherence underlying speech act sequences for chapter 4. Here we can note, however, that the coherence of the offer–rejection–account sequence is grounded in the social meanings of these acts and their relationships to one another. This suggests that the basis for sequential coherence between speech acts can lie as much in the social and interactive world as in the cognitive world of speech act categories and rules.

4 Speech act theory as an approach to discourse

In this chapter, we discussed some of the central ideas of speech act theory as formulated by the philosophers Austin and Searle, and then applied these ideas to a particular set of speech acts in a discourse. In this concluding section, I briefly summarize how speech act theory provides an approach to discourse analysis.

The essential insight of speech act theory is that language performs communicative acts. In Searle's (1969: 21) words:

> The hypothesis that the speech act is the basic unit of communication, taken together with the principle of expressibility [whatever can be meant can be said], suggests that there are a series of analytic connections between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are.

Speech act theory, then, is basically concerned with what people "do" with language – with the functions of language. Typically, the functions focused upon are those akin to communicative intentions (the illocutionary force of an utterance) that can be labelled (cf. that have a performative verb) and realized in a single sentence. Even indirect speech acts (those that are performed "by way" of another act: Searle 1975) fall into this group: they are drawn from the same labelled taxonomy as direct speech acts.

Language can be used for speech acts because people share rules that create the acts: utterances "count as" successful and non-defective performances of speech acts when they fulfill certain conditions. The rules and conditions draw upon linguistic knowledge (e.g. the relationship between tense and the reference time of an event) and knowledge about the world (e.g. that people may be obliged to behave in certain ways) that allows certain linguistic devices to indicate illocutionary force. These two bodies of knowledge, and how they interact with one another, are assumed to be part of competence.

The conditions underlying and defining speech acts are central to speech act theory: they are the basis for the way we recognize and classify speech acts (and thus identify an utterance as a particular type of "unit") and for the way a single utterance can have more than one function (i.e. be more than one "unit"). Note that the knowledge that participants use in linguistic exchanges is thus relatively static knowledge: knowledge of what constitutes an act, what type of act it is, and whether more than one act is involved in its realization is brought "ready made" to each linguistic exchange. Yet such knowledge is also critical to the ongoing processes of communication: it is by identifying the units (acts) created by constitutive rules that communication proceeds. Although what happens during such an exchange can help to fulfill the conditions underlying a specific speech act, the circumstances of the actual exchange do not fundamentally define or alter those conditions.

In sum, by focusing upon the meanings of utterances as acts, speech act theory offers an approach to discourse analysis in which what is said is chunked (or segmented) into units that have communicative functions that can be identified and labelled. Although we can describe such acts in different ways (e.g. as realizations of constitutive rules, as the product of form–function relations, as the outcome of different textual and contextual conditions), the

import of such acts for discourse is that they both initiate and respond to other acts. Acts specify (to a certain degree) what kind of response is expected: they create options for a next utterance each time they are performed, and thus provide a local, sequentially emergent basis for discourse. Since an utterance can also perform more than one act at a time, a single utterance creates different response options for a next utterance. Above I noted that what allows us to identify what others are doing is our relatively static speech act knowledge. This is not to say, however, that what we know about speech acts *prior to* any one particular linguistic exchange cannot alter the direction of an exchange. Recall that it is our speech act knowledge that allows us to infer not only that an interlocutor is doing something with words, but also that an interlocutor is doing more than one thing at once with words. Mappings between one form and multiple functions thus gives our exchanges a certain degree of flexibility: if we do not respond to one possible speech act interpretation of what someone has said to us, we may respond to another. This flexibility has an important analytical consequence: it means that a single sequence of utterances may actually be the outcome of a fairly wide range of different underlying functional relationships.

Exercises

1 People sometimes provide explicit speech act labels for their utterances: we might think of this as a metaspeech act, as the speech act of "defining," or as metapragmatics (cf. Lucy 1992). Below are examples of speakers using several different speech act labels.

(1) During a speech in which he was discussing the United States' reaction to the Iraqi take-over of Kuwait (October 1990), President George Bush said the following:

Iraq will not be permitted to annex Kuwait.
That's not a threat,
it's not a boast . . .
That's just the way it's gonna be.

(2) Parents of a three-year-old are discussing the new shoes they have just bought their son. Both parents had previously noted that because the shoes have a lot of laces, they will be hard to pull off the son's feet.

FATHER: (a) You'll have to untie them.
MOTHER: (b) Oh I know, it's okay.
FATHER: (c) That's not a criticism, it's a reminder.
MOTHER: (d) Oh no, I like the shoes!
FATHER: (e) No, I mean you'll have to untie them.

For both of the examples, discuss the different conditions that would have to hold for each of the acts that are explicitly named. Are the conditions related

to one another? Are there other labels that might have been assigned to these acts? (Consider, for example, what act is conveyed in Bush's statement "That's just the way it's gonna be.") What does the availability of multiple labels suggest about our organization of speech act knowledge and the way we use this knowledge during our communicative exchanges?

2 American children celebrate the holiday of Halloween by dressing in costumes and going around to their neighbors' houses to collect candy. After knocking on doors, and having the door opened, children say "Trick or treat."(Berko-Gleason and Weintraub (1976), discusses how children are socialized into this routine.) This formula is differently interpreted in different parts of American society and these different interpretations require different responses. The different interpretations are as follows:

(1) Give me a treat.
(2) Give me a treat, or I'll do a trick.
(3) If you give me a treat, I'll do a trick.
(4) Do you want a trick or a treat?

How would speech act theory explain these different interpretations? In what way does the syntactic structure of "Trick or treat" and its intonation (usually falling) convey these interpretations? (It may help to compare other "X or Y" utterances, e.g. "Coffee or tea.")

3 Presented below are several different examples of interactions. Each contains an utterance that can be interpreted as doing more than one speech act. (The target utterance in each case is marked with *.)

(1) *CUSTOMER: (a) Coffee to go?
SERVER: (b) Cream and sugar?
CUSTOMER: (c) Just cream.
SERVER: (d) /provides coffee/
CUSTOMER: (e) /pays/

(2) CUSTOMER: (a) Can I have an espresso?
SERVER: (b) You sure can!
(c) /prepares coffee/
(d) /provides coffee/

(3) A commuter is at the Metro station with a $20 bill, and no fare card. She approaches a Metro employee.
*COMMUTER: (a) Do you know where I can get change for $20?
EMPLOYEE: (b) You'll have to go into a store or something
(c) There are plenty outside of the station.
COMMUTER: (d) Well there's really nothing near by.
(e) What should I do?
EMPLOYEE: (f) What you should do is check your money before you leave home, and make sure you have the right change.
COMMUTER: (g) Well I was really in a hurry and just didn't have a chance.
(h) Anyway I thought I had it.
(i) Couldn't you just give me change if you have it?
*EMPLOYEE: (j) Why don't you rely on the goodwill of your fellow riders?

(4) *LIBRARIAN: (a) Can I help you?
PATRON: (b) Yeh maybe.
(c) I'm uh- I've been working up in New York City in the theater doing acting and stage managing and one thing and another.
(d) And I'm looking to try and get over to public relations which is why I'm down here.

(5) Professors A and B are colleagues at the same university. A is on leave in another city. B is in her university office, preparing for class. A calls Professor B on the phone: B tells A that she has a few minutes to talk. After spending a few minutes discussing an upcoming meeting, the following occurs:
*PROF A: (a) Would you like to call me back?
PROF B: (b) No that's okay, I don't have that much more to say.
PROF A: (c) No, I meant use university money instead of mine!
(d) I have some things I have to ask you.

(6) Father of a six-year-old is on the phone with "Grandmom."
*FATHER: (a) Would you like to say hello to Grandmom now?
CHILD: (b) No thank you.

(7) A and B are commuters on a daily train. A notices a newspaper on an empty seat next to where B is sitting.
*A: (a) Is that your paper?
B: (b) Yeh, but you can have it.

Identify the speech acts that are being performed in the target utterances. How does the context (including other utterances) influence your analyses? Are there other (hypothetical) sequences in which the target utterances could perform other speech acts? How would these sequences differ from the actual sequences? Finally, is multifunctionality of utterances ever an issue for interlocutors? Is multifunctionality solved (or exacerbated) by the fact that an utterance occurs in a sequence of other utterances?

Notes

1 Many scholars have already found speech act theory to be an important source of insight into discourse (e.g. Labov and Fanshel 1977; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). Others have made observations similar to the essential insight of speech act theory, e.g. Halliday's (1978) thesis that language is the realization of meanings. But just as some have embraced the application of speech act theory to discourse, others have been more reluctant to transfer insights. Taylor and Cameron (1987: chapter 3), for example, have questioned the wisdom of relying so heavily on rules; Levinson (1983: chapter 5) has doubted the possibility of specifying mapping relationships between utterances and actions; Searle (1989) himself has suggested that discourse is more readily viewed in terms of speaker goals than felicity conditions and rules. Despite the interest and relevance of such a debate, it is important to note that I am neither endorsing nor criticizing the use of speech act theory for discourse analysis: rather, my goal is a neutral discussion of that application that can then be compared with the approaches created by other perspectives (part III).

2 Note that I am intentionally speaking of coherence rather than well-formedness. The question of well-formedness is a complicated one in discourse analysis (cf. chapter 2). As we will see in succeeding chapters, not all approaches (even all structurally derived approaches) hold the distinction between ill-formed and well-formed to be a valid one to apply to discourse. Replacing the notion of well-formedness with coherence not only allows for a more gradient view of sequential regularities, but it also gives interpretive processes a greater analytical role in the differentiation of sequences that "make sense" from those that do not.

3 Using intonation as a formal clue to the functional identification of *Y'want a piece of candy?* as a question, however, brings up still other dilemmas. First, intonation is not really linguistic *form*: Austin (1962: 74), for example, goes so far as to include it in a list of items illustrating the *context* of utterance production. Thus, we might be better off talking not of form *per se*, but in more general terms of *linguistic qualities* of an utterance. Second, it is extremely difficult to say that intonations have meanings that are independent of their contexts (e.g. Ladd 1978).

4 See chapter 5 for discussion of these questions as information-checking, rather than information-seeking, questions. The main differences are the scope of what is being questioned and the type of response sought: the information being sought is not the completion of a proposition, but reception of a referent or proposition; the response is not completion of a proposition but acknowledgment of information status.

5 Just as different forms of a single speech act may vary depending on social relationship, so different speech acts are differently associated with what some researchers have called the "social distance" variable. Wolfson (1988), for example, suggests that both compliments and invitations are less likely among intimates and strangers than among casual friends and acquaintances. Boxer (1993) suggests that indirect complaints (unlike compliments and invitations), on the other hand, are not equally likely among strangers and intimates.

6 Note, however, that depending on what is needed, by whom the need is felt, and to whom the need is expressed, the more specific directive force of a "personal need" statement can vary tremendously: *I need these letters typed by 3 p.m.* said by a boss to a secretary is more likely to be interpreted as an order (a relatively non-negotiable directive), whereas *I need a vacation* said by one spouse to another would receive quite a different interpretation.

7 Note that we need not interpret *Y'want a piece of candy?* as an offer, e.g. if Henry is not assumed to have candy available to him:

HENRY: Y'want a piece of candy?
IRENE: Yes.
HENRY: Well, it's in the living room.
[or] Okay. I'll put candy on the shopping list.

An example we consider later has the same possibilities:

CLIFF: Do you need help?
DIANE: Yes.
CLIFF: Why don't you call the plumber then?

8 There are other relationships between directive and commissives that deserve consideration.

First, whether a single utterance serves as directive or commissive may depend on the social identities of speaker and hearer. "Let me come with you," for example, is an offer if said by a parent to a three-year-old child. But said by a three-year-old child to a parent who is about to leave the child with a babysitter, "Let me come with you" is clearly a directive. Although these different interpretations rest upon social identity, they also depend upon whom the act is deemed to benefit. In line with this point, some "let" statements have multiple functions whose beneficial value is not quite so clearcut: when a nurse tells a patient "Let's get dressed," for example, one might argue that both directive and commissive are being realized – and that both speaker and hearer will benefit.

Second, offers can be seen as pre-emptive versions of requests (Schegloff 1979b): instead of waiting for H to ask S to do A for H, S can present H with the option of actually doing A through an offer. Alternatively, H can try to elicit an offer of A from S, rather than request that S do A, e.g. through a "pre-request." Note that the view that S's offer allows H to avoid a request coincides with our cultural interpretation of offers as polite speech acts. By removing the need for H to make a request by making an offer, S makes it possible for H to avoid an act that is face threatening, i.e. H's request would restrict S's ability to decide upon his or her own next action (thus threatening one's negative face: Brown and Levinson 1979), as well as do an act that benefits H rather than S (Goffman 1971b). Put another way, by anticipating what another person wants, then one has allowed the other to avoid having to impose upon one's own course of action. Note that this reflects a general civic belief that "good citizens" are supposed to avoid self-interest (e.g. avoid making requests) and highlight altruism (e.g. make offers).

9 Note, also, that the request *Can you tell me the time?* can be easily analyzed as a request for a verbal action (the provision of the time) or a request for physical action (displaying one's watch to provide the time) – as indicated by the substitutability of *give* for *tell*.

10 The relationship between questions and offers can be posed in terms similar to the relationship between questions and requests, cf. discussions as to whether "can you pass the salt" is both question and request.

11 Two points. First, one issue that we will not address in this chapter is the fact that Zelda's *She's on a diet* is an account being offered *for someone else* (we consider this in chapter 4). To do so would require us to consider other actions even more abstract than question, request, and offer, e.g. giving solidarity, competing for the floor. I am avoiding such analyses here in conformity with the guidelines of fairly orthodox speech act theory, which focuses just on those speech acts whose intended communicative (illocutionary) function can be directly performed (e.g. through a performative verb) in a single utterance.

Second, we have already seen that *Y'want a piece of candy?* performs three acts, all of which can initiate a sequence. Note, also, that this utterance opens a side sequence (Jefferson 1972) that shifts the topic of the prior discussion (from a recent funeral to candy; see example (21) in chapter 5). This suggests that *Y'want a piece of candy?* initiates a new speech act sequence, rather than adds to or completes a prior speech act sequence.

12 Semantic dependency is a very general property of questions and answers: as Halliday and Hasan (1976) point out, ellipsis (i.e. recoverable deletions of text) is a common way to show cohesion (semantic ties) across clauses in discourse.

13 Ethnic groups are typically defined as subgroups within a culture or society that are differentiated by various complex criteria, including religious, ancestral, physical,

and/or linguistic characteristics. The importance assigned to ethnic distinctions, however, is often economically and socially determined.

14 The way stories are fit into conversations – in terms of turn-taking adjustments, topic, and so on – is an issue considered more by conversation analysts than speech act analysts. See e.g. Jefferson (1978).

15 Evidence that compliance with a parent's wishes is desired behavior (even for adult daughters and sons) is found elsewhere in my interviews with Irene, Zelda, and Henry. Henry, for example, boasts that his children "did what we wanted!" when they married within their own religion; Irene complains that children do not always "listen" nowadays. Zelda remarks that one of her daughters-in-law and her son followed her advice to call their in-laws "Mom" and "Dad"; she labels the situation with her other daughter-in-law (who does not call her "Mom") as a "sore spot" (see example (13) in chapter 8).

16 Note, also, that by reporting a deception, Irene alters the relationship she has with her audience: she creates a collusion and pulls the audience into a "secret." Elsewhere (Schiffrin 1984b), I have discussed how secrets create bonds of loyalty and solidarity: thus, the fact that Irene reveals a secret to Henry can be seen as a way to provide compensatory strength to their relationship – strength possibly threatened by her having turned down his offer.

17 We will meet these problems again in chapter 11 when we discuss communication and intersubjectivity, although we will discuss them there in relation to whether participants in an exchange agree on the meaning of what is said, rather than whether analysts of an exchange agree on its meaning.